

Other Otherwheres in Lyonesse

VIE Vol. 36, Suldrun's Garden, 2002

VIE Vol. 37, The Green Pearl, 2002

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Key: Vol. 36 = SG
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Vo. 38 = M

Other Otherwheres:

Most prominent in the whole series would obviously be Tanjecterly. Second most likely would be Irerly, having the talking mountains that bear an echo (at least to me) of the denizens of Cugel's contest entry 'Nowhere'. {*}

{* footnote: vis-à-vis reminisces, the thirteen gems from Irerly, each of a different color not in our visible spectrum, embraces an echo to zamanders that Cugel collects in an analogous trans-dimensional world. In turn, a further evocation: the marked coruscation of zamanders seem a hint back to coruscation of Tschai sequins.}

In *Lyonesse* Jack outlays further esoteric otherwheres:

- Arcady – where dryads but not fairies can go (SG p. 482)
- Thinsmole – home of the skites (SG p. 481)
- Hai-Hao – a nexus fascinating to the fairies (GP p. 242)
- Xabiste – a demon domain (M p. 174)
- Mang Seven – an efferent domain (M p. 274)
- Mel – a demon domain (M p. 274)
- Dadgath – a demon domain (M p. 274)
- Myrdal – the place of pink at war with Xabiste (M p. 539)

It is interesting to speculate that alignments of the seven rotating disks of the magical artifice 'Lucanor' (M p. 521) (pp. 520-1 contain the longest footnote in *Lyonesse*), might correspond with certain other of these otherwhere worlds. Irerly too, aside from Xabiste, might possibly be represented by some discrete overlapping disk combination . . . I ponder this because Melancthe knew of Irerly's opened portal, but only because she was working under Tamurello's direction, and Tamurello owned Lucanor. Shimrod acquired Lucanor from Tamurello's magical hoard once he was overpowered.

Of greatest import, the green magic of an otherwhere seems to be the source of Desmei's confounding, mysterious magic. This is hinted to be so with the appearance of the demon-changeling Zagzig who Shimrod must confront. Having Xabiste behind the stage appears to be clarified at Torqual's mountain hideout when the insubstantial nude shape of a woman having a dim green glow – Desmei – possesses the beautiful shell that is Melancthe: "*Melancthe's voice was heavy and strong; she stood with head thrown back, eyes showing a green glitter*" (M. p. 527).

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[ibid.] [Melancthe] "Arm yourself and bring up the horses. We leave this place at once."

Torqual glowered across the fire. He controlled his voice with an effort. "I obey neither man nor woman. I go where I choose, and do only as I find needful."

"The need has come."

"Ha! The need is not mine."

"The need is yours. You must honour the compact you made with Zagzig the shybalt."

Torqual, taken aback, frowned across the fire. He said at last: "That was long ago. The 'compact', as you put it, was only loose talk over wine."

"Not so! Zagzig offered the most beautiful woman alive, who would serve you as you wished and wherever you went, so long as you defended her and her interests in time of need. To this you agreed."

So the clues appear to align with Xabiste being [a] the long sort-for hideout of Desmei, given she can at last manifest from Xabiste at the proper indication of Lucanor, [b] the source of her inimical green magical power, and [C] the cement via Zagzig in tying Torqual to Desmei's ultimate machinations. Zagzig is the promissory tie of Torqual to Desmei (newly hosted in Melancthe's body), and is referred to incontrovertibly as "*Zagzig the shybalt from Xabiste*" (M p. 183). Thus all the linkages forming this chain – where the symbol '=>' means 'implies' – are these: Xabiste => shybalt, shybalt => Zagzig, Zagzig => tie to Torqual, Torqual => Desmei's effectuator.

Therefore, {a} & {c} are the best established. And {b} is not; it's an open question.

As to [b] and the green emanation that always attends Desmei (including its concentration into the green pearl), we learn that in hunting for Desmei, Shimrod is proscribed against using sandestin magic because, Murgan warns, "*she will sniff you out on the instant, since the green comes from demonland*", (M p. 274, UL added). A separate implication chain thence is: demonland => green magic, green magic => Desmei (radiant from her incorporeal self, and also the residue green pearl from her).

Would it not seem as if demonland green magic implies Xabiste?

Well . . . it does not!

In contradiction to this inimical green being of Xabiste, Travec (a disguise of Shimrod's) says this to his sentinel efferents, Voner and Skel: "*notify me when you sense the green fume of Mel. We will then try to locate the source and destroy the node*", (M p. 279). Earlier (p. 274) Murgan had introduced them as "*These two are hither projections of two Mang Seven efferents. They dislike all things from both Mel and Dodgath.*"

Where is the mention of Xabiste to Voner and Skel? Are they instructed to be on the lookout for any shybalts? The answers are NONE & NO. So we now have two otherwheres in contention for Desmei's green magic, Xabiste and Mel.

I aver the best resolution to all this is that [a] Desmei's hideout was in Xabiste, given that Gaeen Earth was habitable to shybalts, likely Xabiste could be inhabited by an incorporeal Desmei; also Zagzig was an agent of Desmei; and Desmei could manifest on Gaea Earth from Xabiste at the rare indication from

Lucanor; [b] Mel is the source of this demonland green magic; [c] Zagzig/Xabiste was the means by which to enthrall Torqual.

In my research in JVMB, it is a common error to think that the demon green magic used by Desmei is from Xabiste. But it is not, expressly as written by Jack, and as I've proven. The only 'out' is to propose that Xabiste = Mel, i.e., Xabiste is another word for Mel. But there is zero evidence to support that.

Still the efferents from Myrdal, who are at war explicitly with Xabiste (Mel not mentioned) -- into which Murgan was almost abducted (not Mel) -- sop up all residue of 'green', and destroy all of it in Myrdal such that "*neither jot, atom, breath, thought nor tittle remain*" (M p. 539). Narrative like this lends to an impression that the green from demonland was Xabiste; Mel seems forgotten. But the conceptual resolution that makes everything okay, even though it was never expressed, is that Xabiste works as an mediating agency enabling one to use or manipulate the ultra-mephitic green magic of the Mel demonland. Not unlike a pair of gloves to handle things scorchingly hot. Thence, Myrdal would still sanitize Murgan's room of all that is Xabiste, therewith all that is Mel.

Anyway . . .

In sum, there are nine unrelated esoteric otherwheres in *Lyonesse*.

Tanjeterly is a little different in that it is a member of a trans-dimensional otherworld-system comprised of 10 worlds (GP p.449) – to include Gaean Earth – that maneuvers in arcane synchronicity wherewith the entirety had been skewed onto an axis (perhaps 10-dimensional?) by the elder god, Chronos, (GP p.450).

{Jack does not specifically say if there are 10 dimensions, nor use 'elder' for Chronos – the Greek Golden Age god of Time.} This total 10-world system is called the 'Dekadiade' (GP p. 513).

(Jack's neologism Dekadiade – (if we don't count Frisian wherein it means 'decade'!) – is an odd portmanteau word. 'Deka' = 10 {Greek}, but 'diade' = {Italian} couple, dyad. So: 10-couples?)

Along with Gaean Earth and Tanjeterly, the other eight are:

- Paador warned against by Twitten
- Nith warned against by Twitten
- Woon warned against by Twitten
- Hidmarth purulent place infested by demons
- Skurre purulent place infested by demons
- Cheng possible home to the sandestins
- Pthopus a single torpid soul, truly insipid
- Underwood empty save for a moaning sound

So, counting our own Gaean Earth not as our 'where' but in a larger overall class of all 'otherwheres', there are nineteen dimensional worlds in *Lyonesse*, ten of which organize into a rationally repeatable synchronicity for which a mystic Lucanor-type device that magically divines an irrational tracking isn't required.

Now then . . . a little regret felt on my behalf:

It is in Tanjecterly that we encounter two named swords, Zil from the formidable knight Zaxa, and Kahanthus from the even more daunting Sir Lulie his sire. Toward the end of the unhappy sojourn into Tanjecterly, prompted by the sharp urging of Glyneth, Shimrod brings both swords thru the portal to Gaean Earth, while "*staggering under the weight of the two swords*", (GP p. 527).

And then . . . NOT to be used again in Lyonesse! After that special effort to lug them across to Earth!?!

In literature, especially for plays and short stories, this transgresses the bylaw 'Chekhov's Gun': a dramatic principle stating that every element in a story must be necessary, and irrelevant elements should be removed; elements should not appear to make "false promises" by never coming into play. {Online, paraphrased} Often it is restated: "If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there."

Not that Jack must kowtow to Chekhov's Gun! Ernest Hemingway mocked the principle once in an essay {Wikipedia}. For Jack, it mayn't be a matter so much as any mindful noncompliance, but a thing simply overshadowed by his effusive imaginative fecundity. Or also . . . he forgot about the swords!

Dear Jack, I've always felt this as a lost opportunity! By way of my personally alleviating this loss (as always: your mileage may differ), I imaginatively play out this scenario this way . . .

Dire demons, one from Hidmarth, one from Skurre, are individually conjured into the Dekadiade world Gaean Earth, each to be confronted in two separate situations. Differences in their comportment, since from very distinct otherworld's, would be pure provender for the likes of Jack's imagination! Alas!

Any Earthly sword of hardened iron or steel (India, 400 BC) simply melts upon contact with the demon in one case, or transforms into talc in the other – talc being the weakest mineral on earth. Here is where the 'stuff' of Tanjecterly proves its efficacy against Hidmarth and Skurre! Sword Zil kills one demon but in turn dissolves into sparkling motes which shudder into the ground. Kahanthus kills the other but sublimates into a gas cloud of earsplitting shriek, quickly blown away. Or both swords survive, instead becoming heirlooms eventually to be lost in time.

Wait while I speak to Jack . . . I will get out my Ouija Board. JK, I sold it to a witch for \$7.

<https://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/infrastructure/a20722505/history-of-steel/>

Post #2

Purely as a point of information, here is the endnote from the indefatigable Dave Kennedy at the first appearance of Mel and Dadgath:

"TEXT-QUERY 349; Mel/Xabiste; the Ace edition changes all references to Mel to Xabiste, although the one reference here was missed. This change may have been made to resolve a number of inconsistencies in the manuscript. First, Desmei is using green magic and beings from Xabiste to perform tasks, so it makes sense that the efferents should be sensitive to them. Second, Mel is mentioned later as the source of the green fume, but Murgan indicates earlier that the origin of the fume (and green magic) is Xabiste (Chapter 5, part 2, p. 130 in Ace hardcover edition)."

As for the swords, I suspect they wound up in the same mental bit bucket as the Knight of the Empty Helmet from the epilogue to *Suldrun's Garden*: "...how does he comport himself at Castle Rhack?" How indeed?

Post #3

Perhaps the good Dave Kennedy was – at least here – not so indefatigable. First: Ace hardcover edition? The WOJV does not list a hardcover from Ace, just the paperback iterations. But Chap 5, Section 2, page 130 is correct in that particular paperback.

Good David has made a mistaken assumption in his TEXT-QUERY 349. Let's look at it.

As to "inconsistencies in the manuscript":

"First, Desmei is using green magic" is True. *"and beings from Xabiste to perform tasks"* is also True, in that ZagZig the shybalt is Desmei's agent. David's conclusion *"so it makes sense that the efferents should be sensitive to them [shybalts]"* is NOT justified.

Efferents need NOT necessarily be sensitive to shybalts just because Desmei used one as an agent. There is NO provable connection between shybalts and green magic. NONE. And indeed as I presented above, the efferents are NEVER enjoined to be on the lookout for shybalts or Xabiste elements. They are ONLY on the lookout for indications of demon green magic! Xabiste is an irrelevancy.

The unwarranted assumption here is that "green magic" has anything to do with shybalts, or to extend this, has anything to do with Xabiste. Let's develop this further.

"Mel is mentioned later as the source of the green fume" is true and what I had cited above from p. 279 of the VIE edition.

"but Murgan indicates earlier [Ace pb p. 130 = VIE Vol. 38 p. 174] that the origin of the fume (and green magic) is Xabiste", and this is a FALSEHOOD.

Murgan does NOT indicate the origin of the fume (and green magic) is Xabiste.

Murgan, rather, indicates two things, both quoted here from said reference, p. 174:

1. *“Desmei in her creation of Melancthe and Carfilhiot used a demon magic derived from Xabiste.”*
2. *“The green gas may itself be Desmei, in a form imposed upon her by the conditions of Xabiste.”*

We can all take #1 as True . . . Desmei used Xabiste magical techniques to render her creations – TO INCLUDE the Green Pearl! BUT RENDERING THE GREEN PEARL DOES NOT MEAN IT ORIGINATES THE RESIDUE THAT COMPRISED THE GREEN PEARL!

THAT is precisely the faulty assumption.

As to #2, it may well be Murgan’s supposition, but even IF taken as True, IT DOES NOT MEAN that green demon magic DERIVED from Xabiste. It merely means Xabiste imposes the green demonic magic agglutinated onto or within Desmei to take a gaseous form due to conditions of Xabiste, and that therefore Desmei takes on a gaseous form. That is all that he is supposing.

In other words, any denizen of Mel would have to convert to gaseous form if going to Xabiste.

And look, that may well be the answer to why Desmei got involved with Xabiste in the first place: Xabiste worked as a kind of abating antidote to Mel influences, forcing Mel into weakened gaseous forms.

The unspoken resolution to all this is REQUIRED to be that Desmei had once had involvement with Mel, and as I conjectured above, mayhap via Xabiste elements that afforded her protective manipulation of Mel demonic green magic. And as perilous & toxic as Mel evidently is, no matter what her precautions were, some of it agglutinated onto Desmei. Tsk, tsk, Desmei played with Mel fire.

In one sort of way, perhaps this is why Desmei chose a suicide-like disappearance from the world, even though she always intended to return to defeat Murgan. But in a loose manner, that sense has its own merit.

Of course, all this is to suppose that Jack Vance didn’t make a continuity blunder. My predilection is to not “go” for a Vance error, but to simply round out something he forgot to explicate.

Which is this: Desmei had had involvement with Mel, and some of its essence attached to Desmei’s own essence, to create the demonic green miasma. This is exactly what the Mang Seven efferents were on the lookout for, NOT indications of Xabiste, and NOT shybalts. This essence is part of Desmei, but thence evilly accentuated by the demonic greenness.



The thing about the Knight of the Empty Helmet and Castle Rhack is merely, as I’ve always taken it, Jack’s jokey flippancy . . . neither Empty Helmet nor Rhack have any connection to SG. I’ve always thought it was nicely in the mode of Jack satirizing the “What Next ...?” syndrome!

That’s my How Indeed. Thusly it doesn’t truly capture about the swords.