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A Cloudish Word-Hoard, by Michael Swanwick

Being a By No Means Comprehensive Selection of Obscure and/or Interesting Words of Particular Interest to the Reader of Greer Gilman's *Moonwise* (1991 Roc; 2005 Prime Books).

A

airt: A direction, or point of the compass. [The tinker had marked from what airt of heaven Mally's cloudgeese had flown, and had set out contrary.]

aldercarr: The alder, *Alnus glutinosa*, is a tree related to the beech and common to wet places. A carr is a fen or bog.

Anthelion: One of Sylvie and Ariane's invented (or, possibly, discovered or intuited) worlds. Literally, "a luminous, white, halolike area occasionally seen in the sky opposite the sun on the parhelic circle." However, the word is derived from the Greek *anthelios*, meaning "opposite the sun," which is the more likely meaning.

anyroad: Modern Northern dialect for "anyway." ["Don't trouble. Time I were up fort milking anyroad. Phoebe's up."]

arain: The North country word for spider. It is hardly a coincidence that Ariane, mazed and patient and wandering, has a name only a letter away from Ariadne. Arainwebs are of course spider webs.

arfish: Old Norse and Northern dialect meaning cowardly, pusillanimous, timid, fearful; but also inert, sluggish, lazy, slow, loath, reluctant; as well as unwilling, indisposed, disinclined.

[“Hedgehogs’ll say owt. They’s arfish.”]

arval: A funeral-cake. Capitalized, it is the name of an invented king.

arveth: Difficult or hard. This word appears only once in *Moonwise*, capitalized, as the name of a king.

ash-keys: The fourteenth definition for “key” in the OED is “A dry fruit with a thin membranous wing, usually growing in bunches, as in the ash and sycamore.” The entry also cites Turner’s *Herbal*: “They are called in Englishe ashe Keyes, because they hangh in bunches after the manner of Keyes.” In the Vermont of my childhood, maple-keys were called “helicopters.”

attercap: A spider; also an ill-natured or foolish person.

B

Babylon: Of this ancient city, Gilman writes, “It’s not the Babylon of the hanging gardens, but the Babylon of the nursery rhyme: ‘Can I get there by candlelight? Yes, if your legs are long and light, there and back again.’ In my head, anyway, it’s Elsewhere and Otherwise, the place beyond the fields we know; and if the candle should go out, it never was. Could be that the traveller vanishes as well. It’s a riddle and a danger and a will o’ the wisp.”

bearward: A bear-keeper, one who leads a bear about for exhibitions, public display, and the like.

The Beano: A British children’s weekly comic book. A much-loved and emphatically childish miscellany, it debuted in 1938 and is still published today.

belantered: Belated or benighted. [All ways were dark; belantered and amazed, he lapsed into stumbling forgetfulness and babble, hush ba and lilly ba, fa and lillylow.]

biel: A shelter.

bodhran: A traditional Irish hand-held drum with a wooden body and a goatskin head. It is played with a double-headed stick.

bojangles: In context, dancing globules of quicksilver. Taken from the great dancer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, whose nickname may have meant happy-go-lucky or else squabbler or even been a vulgarization of the name of a Frenchman in Robinson’s home town whose missing beaver hat, in an apocryphal tale, mysteriously appeared on Robinson’s head.

bosky: Literally, having trees or shrubs. Figuratively, tipsy.

breastknot: A knot of ribbons worn on the breast.

broch: A fortified dwelling in the form of a circular stone tower, found in Scotland, the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and the Hebrides.

brock: As a verb, to crumble, as an adjective grey, and as a noun a badger.

brumal: Belonging to winter, wintry.

budget: A pouch or bag, usually of leather.

Burd Ellen: The sister of Childe Rowland, who in the fairy tale and ballad bearing her name runs around a church the wrong way and is captured by the fairies. In “Burd Ellen and Young Tamlane” she (or another of the same name) is an unwed mother betrayed by her lover.

bourdon: The drone of a bagpipe.

burr: The circle of light around the moon. The original sense, according to the OED, “seems to have been merely ‘circle, halo’; but in modern use there is usually the notion of a nebulous or nimbus disc of light enfolding the luminary.” In *Moonwise*, it is applied not only to the moon, but also to candle flames and even to green nuts “burred in their prickly husks.”

C

Caedmon: A seventh-century English poet and saint. The Venerable Bede relates that when Caedmon was a laborer at the monastery of Whitby, he left the company of his fellows one evening in shame because they passed around a harp and he had no skill in poetry or song. That night an angel appeared to him in his sleep and told him to sing of Creation. His spontaneous verse, called Caedmon’s Hymn, survives to this day.

Caldbeck: Literally “cold brook.” In our world, a village in the Northern Fells of the English Lake District.

canny: Clever, of course, but also prudent [“Best go canny, lad; tha’st drunk five hundred year already.”], and agreeable to the eyes [Poor awd attercap, she thought, poor Mally: thowt I’d look canny on thy shelf, didsta?]. It also means supernatural or endowed with occult power, as does its negation, uncanny.

cat-ice: Thin ice that would not support the weight of a cat.

Hence, dangerous ice to try to cross.

ceint: A girdle, a belt.

celadon: A pale shade of green, like that of the willow’s leaf. According to Littré (or so says the OED), the color was named after Celadon, the hero of Honore d’Urfé’s pastoral romance *Astrée*.

cere: To wrap something, especially a corpse, in a cerecloth. [Cered in mortality, she would dwindle, mute, translating tallow

briefly into flare and reek, devoured and devouring.]

clabbery: Muddy.

clagg: To stick mud upon.

clarty: Smearred with sticky mud; dirty, nasty.

clew: A clew is both the yarn and the ball into which it's wound; the thread itself and its function as a guide through mazes, both literal and metaphoric; and of course it is also a hint as to the true nature of things.

cloud: A hill.

cludder: To crowd together.

cobbish: A cob is a spider, whence the term *cobweb*. Thus, cubbish means spiderlike. [The children ran, dragging their cobbish sacks like shadows, imps and urchins of the dark; their old, wild, joyful terror flying out behind, like fire from a shaken brand.]

coinstruck: Minted.

collop: A small slice of meat.

corbel: A stone bracket projecting from a wall and supporting a ceiling, beam, or shelf. The word is ultimately derived from the Latin *corvus*, raven, for its beaklike appearance.

corpse-candle: Our old friend Will-o'-the-Wisp or *ignis fatuus*, the misleader and sometime drowner of travelers, often identified as marsh gas. In Welsh superstition, a small flame foretells the death of an infant and a large flame that of an adult.

craobh: Irish for branch or bough. Pronounced "creeve." Capitalized, the name of the lightborn child Ariane finds.

cratch: A crib to hold fodder, a manger.

cromlech: This word applies with equal validity to a stone circle or to a single dolmen. In *Moonwise* it has the latter meaning.

crowd, crowdy: A musical instrument, a fiddle.

crumhorn: A curved wooden wind instrument.

cruck: A pail or can.

cuddy's egg: Cuddy is a name for the hedge sparrow or dunnoek, also for the moor hen, as well as the donkey. [Splashing in the shoals, he halted laughing: the child had set his feathered hat sailing bravely down the beck. It foundered, overfraught. "Hey up, yon duck's rigged ower. Were hatched frae cuddy's egg."]

D

Dhurry: In *Moonwise*, the name of a sheep dog. That it is named after a type of Indian cotton carpet with fringes suggests it is particularly shaggy.

donkey-stone: A scouring stone, originally used in the textile mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire, to clean stone surfaces such as stoops and doorsills.

dotish: Foolish.

doucely: In English, sweetly, but in Scottish, soberly or sedately.

dowce: Sweet.

draggle: To make wet or dirty or both by allowing (a cloak, etc.) to drag through muck or wet grass; also to drag something in the dirt.

dragonsblood: There are many substances with this name, derived from the juices or resins of the dragon-tree, *Dracaena draco*; the palm, *Calamus draco*; *Pteroparcus draco*; *Croton draco*, etc., etc. Some of these substances are (or were) used by apothecaries. One was employed to color the wooden stairs in my house. However, Gilman employs it literally, if only in a figurative turn of phrase.

dubbin: A combination of oils and waxes used to soften and waterproof leather.

duergar: Old Norse for dwarf.

Dulle Griet: “Mad Meg” is the old woman so fierce and formidable that the Devil himself fears her. Pieter Bruegel the Elder painted a marvelous picture of her harrowing Hell.

dunnoek: The hedge sparrow.

dunt: To strike with a dull sound; spoken of the heart, to beat violently. [Stiff and shy, the ghostly Ariane of years ago still fumbled with her scarred unwieldy ranks of silver, knives and forks, her heart dunted with amaze.]

dwine: To waste away, wither, or decline in strength.

E

eddered: Bound together by flexible wood worked into the top of hedge stakes.

elfshot: A disease supposed to be caused by evil spirits; also small stone arrow-points which the medievals, finding in their fields after a rain, believed had been employed by malicious elves to inflict said disease on passersby.

etenish: Like an eten, gigantic. The taxonomic distinction between etens (or ettins) and common giants is probably lost in the elaborations of literature. Tolkien populated his Ettenmoors with stone giants.

eyot: A variant of “ait,” a small island.

F

faas: Gypsies, tinkers. This is a proper noun turned common, like valentine or hamburger. “The Faas have long been accepted as the ‘royal house’ of the Scottish gypsies, but it is possible that at one time they had rivals in the Baillies.” Also, “A.D. 1756 Frances Heron King of the Faas a sort of gypsy people living near the Borders was buried in Jarrow churchyard.” Sylvia Townsend Warner writes of the Queen of the Faas, and Davie Faa shows up in ballads.

fairing: A present or gift bought at a fair, and hence a complimentary gift of any kind.

fallow: Fallow has many definitions. Among others, it can mean a piece of plowed land; farmland that has been left uncropped; anything that has been left fallow; or even a pale brownish or reddish yellow color, as of sere grass or leaves. *Moonwise* employs all four of these meanings.

fardel: A bundle and hence a burden.

farouche: Fierce, wild. Also, of withdrawn and shy temperament coupled with a cranky and even sullen fey charm.

Farrander: The adjective “farrand” applied to a person means comely, handsome, well-favored (applied to an object it means becoming, dignified, and pleasant); so the Farrander family may be construed to be well-beloved by their author.

fell: A hill or mountain; also a wild, elevated stretch of waste or pasture land, a moorland ridge, a down; also a marsh or fen.

fettle: To make oneself ready, to prepare, particularly for a battle.

[“Is tha fettled? Tha mun travel light.”]

fey: Though those of us in the fantasy biz tend to use (and overuse) this word to mean unworldly or even elfin, it originally meant doomed or fated to die, with secondary meanings of accursed or unlucky, and feeble, timid, and sickly. *Moonwise* combines the first and second meanings to suggest madness.

flacker: To flap, flutter, throb, as do a bird’s wings.

flapdragon: Flapdragon (originally snapdragon) is an amusement in which raisins are snatched out of burning brandy and the flames extinguished by closing one’s mouth about them and eating them, and also the raisin itself. Hence, the nonce-word means to swallow something as one would a flapdragon.

Flawing: Ruffling, as a flaw (a sudden gust or blast) of wind does.

[Flawing wildly and furling, the fire dwindled to a sullen squint.]

flaycraw, flaycrow: A scarecrow and also, by association, Tom a' Dreams. The Flaycraw is a Cloudish constellation as well. "Flay" is a variant of *fley*, to frighten.

fleer: To make a contemptuous face at; also to laugh at mockingly or scornfully. Poul Anderson, whose first-rate fantasies were overshadowed by his science fiction, loved this word to excess.

forby: Like most prepositions, forby is a multi-purpose word. It can mean close by, past, near, or beside.

foxfell: A fell is the skin or hide of an animal, "but often associated (in my mind anyway)" Gilman says, "with 'a hill, mountain . . . a wild, elevated stretch of waste . . . land; a moorland ridge.' The beast and its terrain."

frails: A frail is a kind of basket, woven of rushes, used for packing figs, raisins, or the like. It holds thirty to seventy-five pounds of dried fruit.

frowst: A warm stuffy atmosphere in a room. Hence, *frowsty* means unpleasant-smelling, musty.

frouncing: Gathering into plaits or wrinkles.

furbelow: A flounce; the pleated border of a petticoat or gown. Often employed contemptuously in the plural for excessive decorations or trimmings, especially of a lady's dress. [The next that comes in is Awd Nan Furbelow; she's as ragg'd as a sheep and as black as a crow.]

G

gabbleratchets: Ratchets were spectral hounds, akin to the guytrash; a pack of them was known as gabbleratchets for the gabbling sound they made as they chased across the sky.

gan: The obsolete infinitive of go.

garth: A small piece of enclosed ground, usually by a house, used as a yard, garden, or paddock.

gauded: Ornamented, decorated with gauds. [Or a witches' castle, a hold for such ill-fated sheep as they'd seen lying dead and raven-worried on the moor, with rings and gauded hair.]

ghyll: A deep wooded ravine; also a mountain stream. It is derived from the Norse *gil*. The variant spelling was apparently invented by Wordsworth.

gingernuts: There are many recipes for ginger nuts. Pretty much

all they have in common is the presence of ginger.

girling: (Scots) Complaining whiningly, or else grimacing.

goatstar: Capella, in the constellation of Auriga, the Charioteer.

goose-summer: A late and unseasonable warm spell (Indian summer, essentially) occurring in November. “Goose summer” gave rise to the word “gossamer,” describing the delicate strands of spider webbing common during spells of warm, calm weather in autumn.

gowk: A cuckoo.

gramarye: Magic. Originally, grammarie meant simply booklearning. But in the Middle Ages, learning fell into disrepute and became associated with the black arts.

greylagged: Anserine.

grough: A deep gully in a peat moor.

grykes: Exposed limestone pavements such as those dominating the Burren in the West of Ireland, are made up of clints and grykes. Clints are the blocks of limestone that constitute the paving, their size and shape directly dependent upon the frequency and pattern of the grykes. Grykes are the fissures that separate the individual clints.

guisers: Mummers.

H

hag: An infernal being in female form, of course. But also a peat bog (as in Soulsgrave Hag), a hedge, wooded enclosure, coppice or copse (as in “a weaver of thorn-hags”), a solid bit of ground rising out of a peat bog, and many other things as well. Its usage in [“Moon’s haggling,” he said. “A’ but dark.”] evokes, as Gilman writes, “a Cloudish usage: of the moon on its way from gibbous to sickle, bent over like an old witch with a bundle of sticks on her back,” but draws upon its meanings of *to torment or terrify as a hag*; *to trouble as the nightmare* (Samuel Butler: “That makes ’em in the dark see Visions, And hag themselves with Apparitions”), *to fatigue, tire out, “fag”* (“I’se fair hagg’d off my legs”), *to go wearily* (Byron: “We hagg’d along the solitary Road.”), and a touch of (obs.) *a kind of light said to appear at night on horses’ manes and men’s hair* (“In my head,” Gilman notes, “the horses are nightmares”) and (dial.) *a white mist usually accompanying frost*. “Inexhaustible word, hag,” the author observes. “The witch/frost/light/nightmare/fog/thorn/hedge complex is pretty well entangled in my head: one thing.”

hagged: Either bewitched or haglike. In *Cloud*, the distinction is moot. [“As lief gan mowing hell wi a moonbeam. And I dare not. Hay’s hagged, right enough.”]

hagtree: A tree that is regularly coppiced for firewood.

Hallows: All Hallows Day, when Annis wakes and hunts souls. November 1 or Samhain, depending on which calendar one uses. Hallow means holy or sacred; but to hallow is to chase with shouts or even to rouse to action with a sharp cry.

hallybairns: Literally, holy children.

handfast: Pledged or contracted by the joining of hands. In a handfast marriage, the couple pledge their troth privately and decide a year later whether to continue the marriage formally.

the Harp of Bone: This is, Gilman relates, “A constellation, a fiddle made of a dead girl’s body, pegged with her fingerbones and strung with her hair. It plays of itself, the same tune always: the true tale of her death; also the Totentanz, the skeletons that dance to Death’s fiddler.” In “Jack Daw’s Pack,” it is called the Crowd of Bone.

horse and haddock: The words of a traditional spell to make broomsticks fly. According to Margaret Murray’s *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, Isobell Gowdie, in a confession of witchery made in 1662, testified,

I haid a little horse, and wold say, “Horse and Haddock, in the Divellis name!” And than ve vold flie away, quhair ve vold, be ewin as strawes wold flie wpon an hie-way. We will flie lyk strawes quhan we pleas; wild-strawes and cornestrawes wilbe horses to ws, an ve put thaim betwixt our foot, and say, “Horse and Haddock, in the Divellis name!”

The fairies also employed this phrase. In the seventeenth century, the Laird of Duffus was walking in the fields when he heard a whirlwind and voices crying “Horse and haddock!” Injudiciously, he repeated the cry and found himself transported through the air by the fairies to the French king’s wine cellar in Paris, where all drank copiously. He was discovered there alone the next day, with a silver cup in his hand and explanations to be made.

harled: Tangled, twisted, and confused.

haver-bread: Oat-bread.

headrail: In medieval times, a woman’s kerchief or headdress. [“Cawd night to walk abroad in,” she said, heeling off her pattens; and she twisted up her flagging headrail, her elbows jutting and jerking.]

headwark: A headache.

Hecate: A Greek goddess of the moon, earth, and underworld, associated with witchcraft and sorcery, and often depicted with the heads of a dog, a snake, and a horse. She was the goddess of crossroads, the “Hag of the Dead,” and was also called “the most lovely one,” a title of the moon. In the Middle Ages, she became the goddess of witches.

hempen hampen: Reginald Scot, in *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584) wrote,

Your grandam’s maids were wont to set a bowl of milk before him . . . for grinding of malt or mustard and sweeping the house at midnight. He would chafe exceedingly, if the maid of the goodwife of the house, having compassion of his nakedness, laid any clothes for him. For in that case he sayeth, “What have we here? Hempen, hampen, here will I never more tread nor stampen.”

Most likely, this is a reference to the fairy practice of stealing hempen stalks from the field and converting them to riding horses.

King Herla: Herla, a king of the Britons, went with his men to the underworld and when he returned, centuries had passed. Some say that he and they are now the Wild Hunt.

Hedge-backward: From the phrase, “pulled through a hedge backwards” to connote bedraggledness.

hob: A part of the fireplace where things are left to keep warm; [“Could yer gi’s a hand wi sheets folding? Tea’s been stood out hob.”] Also a shortening of hobgoblin (unless, of course, hobgoblin is a lengthening of hob). [“There’s hearthtales telled by fires, rimes and ballads sung o’t lightborn, though they call us out of our names, hobs and hallybairns.”]

Hodge and Tib: The common folk, specifically common country folk, Hodge being the familiar for Roger and Tib a shortened form of Isabel or Tibet. “As fit . . . as Tibs rush for Toms fore-finger,” says Master Shakespeare.

hollins: Hollies.

hoodie-crow: A crow with a grey body and black head. The hoodie-crow has deep roots in folk mythology. The Irish for hoodie crow, *babhbh*, also means a fairy and a scold. “The Hoodie Crow” is to be found in Andrew Lang’s *Lilac Fairy Book*.

holly-warded: The holly is a plant with strong pre-Christian

associations. Planted near a house, Pliny tells us, it repels poison, lightning and witchcraft. Useful stuff.

I

Irene: Not the goddess of peace but Princess Irene of George MacDonald's Curdie books.

J

jack-in-the-wanleaf: "Wan-" is a negating prefix, so this would be a leafless jack-in-the-green. The jack-in-the-green is a woodland guardian spirit, most commonly encountered in Britain in the form of a shrubby-covered mummer on May Day. In the winter he presumably, like the robin, retreats into the deep wood.

jackstones: A precursor to the game of jacks. Take five pebbles and toss them into the air, trying to catch as many as possible on the back of the hand. If none are caught, the turn is over. If a few were caught, they are tossed back in the air from the back of the hand, and then caught in the palm. If at least one stone is caught, the rest are thrown on the ground and the game proceeds.

jauncing: Prancing.

Lang Jenny-wi't-lantern: Will o' the Wisp is only one of a great family of supernatural light-bearers who lead travelers astray. Lang Jenny is one of his more obscure relations

jennywrens, jenny wren, Jenny Wren: Jenny Wren is the sweetheart of Robin Redbreast. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* reports that:

Robin promised Jenny, if she would be his wife, she should
"feed on cherry-pie and drink currant-wine"; and he says:

"I'll dress you like a goldfinch,

Or any peacock gay;

So, dearest Jen, if you'll be mine,

Let us appoint the day."

Jenny replies:—

"Cherry-pie is very nice,

And so is currant wine;

But I must wear my plain brown gown,

And never go too fine."

K

keeping-room: The sitting room, the parlor. [Here was the keeping-room, with its wide cracked boards and blood-of-nightingales

scabrous rug, on which she and Sylvie and Cat and Thos, Nan's grandchildren, had played wild scrabbling flighty games of cards]

keld: A fountain or spring. Also a deep, still part of a river.

kist: a chest or coffer

kittle: Ticklish or tickling. [Cold and ticklish perplexity: a throng of holly-leaves, hailsharp as a whirlwind of witches, as thick as hell's thatch, with quickset thorn, a cross-grained wicked crowd of twigs and knees and jostling elbows, firs prickly as frieze; and cold kittle feathers everywhere, or eider-drifts of snow.]

kizzened: Parched or over-roasted.

knarry: knotted or gnarled.

knarl: A tangle or knot.

knop: A knob or nub, especially of an ornamental nature. [By one and one, derisive, loving, wary, they dropped what they had brought, from beaks and talons: sallow heavy knops of bronze, that scattered where they fell, on ashes, rushes, slutswool, or in her standing cup.]

knowe: The Scottish and Northern English form of *knoll*—a hillock, rising ground.

knucklebones: A game played with the metacarpal or metatarsal bones of sheep, tossed up and caught in various ways. Also called *huckle-bones* or *dibs*. Suspected by many—but who knows?—to be derived from some ancient means of divination.

L

lagman: As Gilman explains, this is the hindmost, the guy bringing up the rear, with the devil nipping at his heels. ["Come, lagman, all are folded; come, by the star I bid you sleep . . ."]

laik: To play or sport, occasionally in an amorous or obscene sense. Children laik and so do adults; but in different manners. Also, dialectically, to take a holiday from work or to be unemployed, and hence in *Moonwise*, occasionally, used in the sense of idling or abiding. From Old Norse.

lait: To search for or seek after.

laithe: A type of barn. Gilman notes, "The Brontës use that one. In Yorkshire, out back of beyond: you can't get a wain up those hills, and it's just too difficult to drag the hay to the farmstead, sledge by sledge, they have field barns."

Langneb: "Long-nose," an epithet name for Tom a' Dreams.

lappet: A streamer or loose piece of cloth hanging from any kind

of headwear.

law: In Yorkshire, a roundish hill, also a word for a monumental tumulus, a cairn of stones.

lief: Depending on the context, either willingly or dear.

ligging: Lying. “By t’water I were, all my lone, ligging i’t leaves and laiking, cracking nuts.”

Lightfast Kindling: Candlemas.

Long Meg: Long Meg and her Daughters is the name of the third largest stone circle in England, after Avebury and Stanton Drew. The largest of its outlying stones is Long Meg, the “mother stone.”

lowse: Lose.

lullayed: Lullabyed.

lyke: A corpse. A *lyke-wake* is the watch kept over a dead body.

Lyonesse: The legendary land, emblematic of all things lost and yearned after, which sank beneath the sea, destroying Merlin’s army after the death of King Arthur. The westernmost kingdom of Arthur’s realm, it originally joined Cornwall with the Isles of Scilly. On the day when Arthur returns, Lyonesse shall rise again from beneath the waters.

M

Mad Maudlin: “Mad Maudlin’s Search for Her Tom of Bedlam” was published 1720 by Thomas D’Urfey in *Pills to Purge Melancholy*.

It begins:

To find my Tom of Bedlam
 Ten thousand years I’ll travel,
 Mad Maudlin goes on dirty toes
 To save her shoe from gravel.

Chorus: Still I sing,
 Bonny boys, bonny mad boys,
 Bedlam boys are bonny,
 For they all go bare and they live by the air,
 And they want no drink nor money.

maggot: A maggot is not only the larva of a fly but also an odd whim or notion. A head may be as maggoty as a fruit, but with ideas rather than insects.

mandrake, mandragora: The mandrake, or mandragora, is an actual plant used for various medical purposes in classical and Medieval times, due to its high levels of scopolamine, mandragorin, and

hyosciamine. Because the root was roughly homuncular in form, the folkloric belief arose that the root screamed when it was pulled from the ground and that the sound of that scream could deafen or even kill its auditor. Gilman appears to employ *mandrake* when evoking its mythical properties, and *mandragora* when referring to the actual plant.

mawks: Maggots. Hence, *mawky* means maggoty.

Mawk-town Strutters' Ball: A play upon the "Darktown Strutters' Ball," one of earliest jazz songs to become a standard. The version recorded in 1917 by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band may be the first commercial jazz recording.

missel-thrush: *Turdus viscivorus*. A common member of the thrush family found in open woods and cultivated land all over Europe. Its diet includes insects, worms and berries. A great number of missel thrushes feeding upon a hawthorn foretells a harsh winter.

mollock: An alteration of "morlock," to frolic, dance, cavort, or play. Specifically to engage in sexual play.

mow: To make a wry face.

moonbow: Though less common than solar rainbows, a bright and full moon in a dark sky can produce a moonbow if the moon is less than 420 high and it's raining on the opposite horizon. Because it is rarely strong enough to activate the color receptors in human eyes, the moonbow almost always appears white.

N

neave: Var. of "nieve," a clenched hand, a fist.

noll: The head, and specifically the crown of the head.

numen: A divine power or spirit, a numinous creature.

O

oatstraw pipe: Musical, rather than for tobacco. This may come from a poem by Edward Taylor:

A shadow, Lord, not such as types show here

Nor such as Titerus his broad Beech made

In which he with his Oat straw pipe't there

A Forrest march, such his dark blackish trade.

ogham: Ogham is a twenty-five-character alphabet used for stone and wood inscriptions in Celtic lands, a group of twenty sacred trees that give names to those letters, a calendar of thirteen months named for some of those trees, and a system of divination in Celtic paganism

that may or may not be related to the runic alphabet.

Orion: The Cloudish Orion, Gilman writes, is called by many names: the Hanged Lad in Hallows and the Fiddler at Lightfast, when he plays for the guisers and the starry hey to dance. (In a ballad, Jack Orion is a fiddler “who could fiddle the milk from a maiden’s breast”; he played the lord asleep to bed his lady, but his knavish boy forestalled him: for which he hanged the boy.) In spring, he is the Flaycraw, who wards the seeded sky; and in summer, the Sheaf, whose binding is a belt of stars.

owled after: To hunt as the owl does, silently, stealthily, and with a sudden swoop upon the prey.

P

pace-eggs: Pace-eggs are an ancient Lancashire custom. The eggs are wrapped in onion skins and boiled, giving them a mottled golden color, for Easter.

pancheon: A wide earthenware bowl or vessel, larger at the top than the bottom, most commonly used for setting milk in to separate out the cream. But of course, all kitchen tools are put to multiple purposes.

parkin: A kind of gingerbread made from oatmeal and treacle.

patten: A kind of overshoe or sandal, consisting of a wooden sole with a leather loop around the instep attached to an oval iron ring or the like, to raise the wearer’s feet out of the mud or wet. Mally’s pattens are of course made of cold iron.

Phebe: See Silvius.

Phoebe: The feminine form of the Greek work for bright or radiant, and hence the name for Artemis or Diana in her persona as goddess of the moon; the moon personified. Phoebus is of course the god of the sun.

pibrochs: A series of variations for the bagpipe, primarily martial but also dirges.

pinchbeck: An alloy of zinc and copper which makes a fair imitation of gold, and is used in making cheap jewelry, watches, and the like. It was named for its inventor, Christopher Pinchbeck (1670–1732), a watch- and toy-maker of Fleet Street, London. The term has since been extended to apply to all substitutes for gold.

pluff: To blow out or swell up, to puff. [There was a criss-crossing of scarves and pairing of great ill-assorted hollow boots that dropped and

pluffed at every step, and a fierce brief skirmish over the tinker's hat.]

poddish: Pottage or porridge.

Pyewackett: A traditional name for a witch's feline familiar.

Matthew Hopkins, the self-styled Witch-Finder General of Essex and author of *The Discovery of Witches*, declared that Pyewackett was a name "no mortal could invent."

pyke: to peck

Q

quain: A variant of *quoin*, a corner-stone or angle-stone.

[There were fans of cloud, pale as Thule or louring, and quains of broken stone, of bronze-veined greyish-black, all splashed with drops of crimson; it was bound with Lapland witches' knots, that rein the wind.] Hence *quaining*, the stonework making up the angle in a wall.

quern: A small hand-mill for grinding corn, made up of two stones. [Somewhere, everywhere, dull and dreadful, was a roaring, a rumor of the querns of giants, grinding bones.]

quickset: A hedge, particularly of whitethorn, created by setting slips or cuttings in the ground to grow.

R

Rach: Proper name. Perhaps derived from Middle High German *rach* "rough" or "stiff," a nickname for someone affected by hard work. [Rach was not the attendant spirit of the bath, but an older child, mole-dark and greyer eyed, with a knotted dangling red ribbon clenched in a very skimpy lock of hair.]

rache-hound: A hunting dog which tracks its prey by smell.

rade: Variant of "ride," meaning a group or procession of horsemen. [They were good mugs, a little crazed, but handpainted: Titania and her green rade, horsed upon swift-running hares; and the babes in the wood, dying rosily beneath their coverlet of birds.]

ramp: To rush about in a wild and excited manner.

rant: In dialect, "to be jovial, boisterous, uproariously gay or merry; to lead a gay or dissolute life; also, to sing loudly" [OED] or to dance.

rantipole: in a romping, rude, or noisy fashion; In the canting tongue, "to ride rantipole" means to jig it wench uppermost, the dragon on St. George.

ratted: Rutted. [Turning from the ratted lane, they went up onto the bare rigg behind the farm, scrunching and backsliding on the sheep-gnawed brittle grass.]

rattlebag: A rattle in the form of a bag. By transference, something rattling or reckless. [Old rattlebag, old scarecrow, rags and bones.]

rede: As a noun, counsel or advice. As a verb, to counsel or advise.

reet: A variant of right. [“Forby you’re reet mucky fort house.”]

Rianty: Riant means cheerful or gay. It seems unlikely that Ariane’s nickname in *Cloudlaw* is anything less than meaningful.

riddle: Both the Sphinx’s enigma and a kitchen sieve. The latter meaning is why we say that something is “riddled with holes.”

rigg: A ridge.

riving: Tearing at or asunder.

roke: Steam, smoke, vapor, fog, mist, drizzling rain—which is to say that a roke is none of these things but their visual impression.

rolag: A roll of cotton or wool fibers prepared for spinning. [Her wolf-toothed carding combs lay by the hearth, ensnarled with rolags of stormcloud.] Capitalized, it is the name of one of Maire’s cats.

roof-tree: A ridgepole.

Childe Rowland: Cunningly enough, Rowland’s name (“Childe” is an archaic term for knight) evokes two separate poems in *Moonwise*, first, by proximity to that of Burd Ellen, his sister, to the ballad “Childe Rowland” and second, by mention of his tower to Robert Browning’s “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.”

rune: Both a riddle and a running onward, a flow, such as a rune of blood or a rune of stars: which is their rise and turning.

runestave: A runic letter or symbol. Not to be confused with a runestaff.

rush-candle, rushdip: A dipped candle with a rush for its wick. The common Candle Rush grows in wet meadows, and along brooks and ponds, and has a round, green stem filled with a soft, white pith. The outer skin is peeled and the center dried and then dipped in a boiling mixture of saved household fats and grease, with beeswax or mutton suet added to the mixture if available. When skillfully made a rush candle would last for hours and burn with a clear light. Hence,

rushlight, rushlit.

Tom Rynosseros: Tom O' Bedlam's characterization of himself as a fierce and dangerous fellow in "Tom O'Bedlam's Song."

S

sadcake: So called because the cake falls during baking and comes out looking flat and "sad." Here's an untested recipe:

Beat 4 eggs and 2 1/4 cups packed brown sugar until creamy.

Add 2 cups biscuit mix, 1 cup flaked coconut, 1 cup chopped pecans, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, and mix thoroughly.

Pour into a greased and floured pan. Bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool before cutting.

sain: To make the sign of the cross, and hence to bless.

sallowed: Grown sallow; turned a sickly yellow color.

saltbox: The saltbox, a frame house two stories high in front and one in back with an uneven pitched roof, is quintessential vernacular New England architecture. [Illyria, caught spare and sailing into light, was a saltbox, slanted house among tall trees and a hodge-podge of sheds.]

sark : Shirt.

scarry: Depending on its context, covered with scars, rocky and precipitous, or thin and meager.

scried: Saw images in crystal, water, or the like, of the future or of distant affairs. But also, simply, descried or perceived. It may not be entirely coincidental that a *scry* is, like a riddle, a kind of sieve.

scutter: To move hastily, with much fuss and bustle. [He bent toward Craobh, and all his throng of shadows swaled and scuttered, goblin-beaked and backed, and etenish.]

seely: Holy or right. *Unseely*, therefore, means unholy, evil, or unnatural

Shawn: A musical instrument, a woodwind.

Silvius: A young shepherd in love with the disdainful Phoebe in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. [Their bodies were exalted by their act, their mooncurved cheeks and chins turned silver, their faces and their flying hair to gold; each Phebe and her Silvius to sun and moon.]

sithe: To sigh. It is perhaps a coincidence that a *sithe* is also a

sieve.

skirring : Sliding or skating swiftly.

skirret: *Sium sisarum*, a species of water parsnip, formerly much cultivated in Europe for its tubers.

slather: This appears to be a back-construction from *slathery*, which means slippery. [They stood all of a row like mummers, in the cloudy raw of winter, in the goose-green slather of the yard.]

slutswool: A slut was originally nothing more than a slovenly housekeeper. Hence the term “slutswool” for what we now call dust bunnies.

smallpipes: A Northumbrian instrument, bellows-driven bagpipes essentially, with distinctive features that make it much beloved by its advocates.

sneck: The latch of a door or gate. As a verb, to latch.

spinney: A small wood or copse, especially one planted or maintained for sheltering game birds.

splodge: A thick, heavy splotch, a dollop.

springe: A snare for catching small game.

squinny: To squint, to peer.

stane: Stone (dial.). The Hill o’ Many Stanes in the Scottish highlands, has some 250 neolithic standing stones, not a one of them taller than your knee.

strake: To whet. [He straked his knife against the stones, trying its edge, and let it fall.]

stravage: To wander about aimlessly.

stridor: A harsh, grating, or creaking sound.

sunwise: Clockwise, anti-widdershins. But also, in a separate usage, wise in the ways of the sun.

swale: To move or sway up and down or from side to side. But also to be consumed with fire, and specifically of a candle, to melt away, to gutter. So that the answer to the first half of the riddle Malykorne poses to Ariane (“What’s wick i’t shadows? Swale-anddie. What’s sharper nor thorn? Sword i’t leaves. See tha don’t cut thysen”) is a candle, whose flame dances as it dies and which is both wick/quick/living and tallow around a bit of rush or flax.

syne: Like many small and simple words, syne has many meanings. The two employed in *Moonwise* are “directly after” and “long time later.”

T

tabor: A small and shallow hand-held drum.

tatterwag: Defined by Gilman as: “A fluttering tatter or rag; the tinker or trollop or beggar wearing same, or turning into them. Probably, in my private iconography, with reference to autumnal trees.”

teind: Literally, a *tenth*. Among Christians, the portion of one’s income it is thought proper to give to one’s church. Hence, a spiritual offering of any kind.

thole: To endure, bear, or suffer.

thrang: A variant of *throng* [a thrang of birds] or *thronged* [The nuts were brown and ripe; they clustered, thrang as stars] but also meaning *busy* as well [Mally went owling about her hovel, thrang at her obscurer wintry tasks]. “She’s thrang as Throp’s wife” is idiomatic for being over-ears in work.

thrawed: Twisted, turned awry.

thrawn: Crooked or misshapen.

thruff: Through.

Thule: The ancient Greek and Roman name for the uttermost northern land in the world. Though it has been variously identified with Iceland, the Shetlands, and so on, its true identity is uncertain, and it may in fact be mythological. [There were fans of cloud, pale as Thule or louring, and quains of broken stone, of bronze-veined greyish-black, all splashed with drops of crimson; it was bound with Lapland witches’ knots, that rein the wind.]

Tib’s eve: Of St. Tib’s Eve, *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* says, “Never. A corruption of St. Ubes. There is no such saint in the calendar as St. Ubes, and therefore her eve falls on the “Greek Kalends” (*q.v.*), neither before Christmas Day nor after it.”

Tib’s Maggot: A maggot is a whimsy and it is in this sense that it enters into the titles of many dance tunes. This particular title is of Gilman’s own invention.

Timour the Tartar: This is taken from a British folk song of the same name. Timour was none other than Tamburlaine.

tisane: An herbal infusion; a medicinal tea.

touse: To tussle, or to worry at.

tumbril: A cart so constructed that the body tilts backwards to empty out the load; nowadays chiefly identified as the vehicle that served Lady Guillotine.

tup: A male sheep, a ram, from whence come the verb for fornication and that for placing horns on a cuckold's head.

U

un-: In *Moonwise* the negative prefix is featured in more than two hundred seventy separate words and variants (unable, unadorned, unafraid, unamazed, unassailable, unattended, unaware, unblanced, unbeneful, unbrered, unbeing, unbidden, unbind, unbinding, un-unbinding, unbirth, unblind, unblinding, unbodied, unbraided, unbranched, unbreaking, unbroken, unbroched, unburning, unborn, unborne, unbound, unbowered, uncalled, uncanny, uncarved, uncaught, uncertain, uncertainly, unchance, unchancy, unchanged, unchanging, unchild, unchilding, unchildlike, uncircled, unclenched, unclouded, unclose, unclosed, uncloudish, unclouding, unCloudish, uncolored, uncombed, unconcerned, unconsciously, unconsented, unconsidered, unconsumed, unconsuming, unconstellating, uncorrected, uncorrecting, uncoveted, uncreated, uncreating, uncrumpling, uncurtained, uncrystal, uncurl, uncurled, uncurtained, undanced, undark, undarkly, undarkfast, undead, undesiring, undid, undo, undone, undoing, undreamlike, undreaming, undying, unearthed, unearthing, unearthly, unearthliness, unease, uneasy, unencumbered, unending, unendurable, unenskied, unentangled, unestranged, unexpectedly, unfallen, unfamiliar, unfast, unfelled, unfestive, unflawed, unfuscated, unfold, unfold, unfoldly, unforeseeing, unfull, ungarlanded, ungainly, unglazed, unglazen, unglinty, unglutted, ungraved, ungreen, unhallowed, unhallows, unhappily, unharvest, unheard, unheavens, unheeded, unheeding, unhinged, unholding, unholy, unhooked, unhorned, unhorsed, unidyllic, unimpassioned, unirised, unislanded, unjudging, unkempt, unkindling, unknotting, unknowing, unknown, unlaired, unleaf, unleapt, unleaving, Unlethe, unlidded, unlight, unlightborn, unlightfast, unlightning, unlike, unlookedfor, unloosing, unmade, unmantled, unmoon, unmoonwise, unmoving, unmoved, unnamed, unnamings, unnumbered, unnuminous, unpatterned, unpatterning, unpinned, unplayed, unpleating, unpossessed, unquenched, unquiet, unrailed, unravel, unravelled, unravelling, unravelment, unread, unreal,

unreason, unrecallable, unregarded, unregretful, unremorseful,
 unresolved, unrestful, unreversed, unriddle, unriddling, unrimy,
 unripe, unrooted, unrucked, unruefully, unsalt, unscathed,
 unseeing, unseely, unseen, unseene foreeing, unseizing,
 unshadow, unshadowy, unshadowed, unshaken, unshells,
 unshrouding, unsight, unsilvering, unskain, unskied, unsleeping,
 unsought, unsoul, unsouled, unsorting, unsought, unspeaking,
 unspell, unspelled, unspells, unspelling, unspelt, unspilled,
 unsprung, unstarred, unstarry, unsteadily, unsteady, unstony,
 unstrangely, unsummoned, unsunwise, unsure, unsuspecting,
 unswept, untaken, untelled, unthinking, untold, untrampled,
 untranscended, unturned, unturning, unvengeful, unvented,
 unvexed, unvoiced, unwadded, unwadding, unwaking, unwaked,
 unwalking, unwalked, unwalking, unwalking, unwalking,
 unwary, unwearied, unweaving, unwedding, unwieldy, unwilling,
 unwilled, unwindowed, unwinged, unwinking, unwitched,
 unwithering, unwitting, unwittingly, unwondering, unwood,
 and unwove) and while some of these were surely unavoidable in
 an English-language novel, taken together they suggest that in
 Cloud a thing's negation is as real as the thing itself.

urchin: A hedgehog

Urne Burial: The full title of Sir Thomas Browne's book is
*Hydriotaphia, Urne-burial: Or, A Discourse of the Sepulchral Urnes
 lately found in Norfolk. Together with the Garden of Cyrus, or the
 Quincuncial Lozenge, or Net-work Plantations of the Ancients,
 Artificially, Naturally, Mystically, considered. With Sundry
 Observations.* The discovery of Bronze Age burial urns in Norfolk
 during the seventeenth century prompted Browne to meditate on the
 burial customs of ancient races and on the inevitability of death and
 led to this famously difficult but rewarding book.

V

Vallombrosa: From Milton's *Paradise Lost*, I. 303ff, wherein

Lucifer:

stood and called

His legions, angel forms, who lay entranced

Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks

In Vallombrosa.

The name means "shady valley" in Italian, and echoes "valley of the

shadow of death” in Psalm 23. Gilman notes, “Rather a portentous chord for a basket of darning, which is the joke of it; but remember that Mally’s washing is souls. Clothwork—weaving, washing, ironing, or mending—tends to be magic in my stories. All part of the numinous commonplace.” Also that, “the Milton goes with the glances at Dante: ‘selva oscura’ / Sylvie / unselving.” [Mrs. Owlund and Mrs. Woodfall were darning stockings, thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, with the basket set between them.]

W

waft: An apparition or wraith.

waking: An essential pun here, both arising from sleep and mourning the day. *Waking wood* means both to bring the wood to consciousness and (because “wood” also means “mad”) waking up insane. Gilman explains: “Tom a’ Cloud was told to ‘wake wood.’ That is, to rouse himself, to rise up mad. Another essential pun. To wake wood is to call from sleep the Wood Above, the Unleaving: the pack of tales that is Cloud. It is also to keep watch, to shepherd it; and also to mourn its passing. His dream is this world.”

wakerife: Indisposed to sleep, wakeful, vigilant. [“Peace, hawd thy clack. Tha’s like a cat I’ pattens, back and forth. Gan spin, an tha’s wakerife, but let be.”]

St. Walpurgis: An eighth-century English missionary to Germany and abbess of a Benedictine nunnery which she founded. Because her feast day is May First (“Walpurgisnacht”), the same as a heathen festival marking the beginning of summer, she has become associated with witchcraft and is regarded as the protectress against magic arts. [But that was all at first, when caught, baffled, she had thumbed through the ruined palimpsest of tape, hearing islands in unmeaning tumult: a grand daemonic St. Walpurgis station, beneath the iron and the veniced glass of northern lights; a stridor and a gibbering—*light leaves*—of spectral geese, of daws—*and catch*—a cry of gabbleratchets; witches’ sabbats, hurling backward on the whirlwind—*turn*—and raving; tumbrils of apocalypse, and the rancor of the horns.]

wanleaf: Leafless.

wan-wood: The prefix wan- means *without*. Ariane’s fugitive thought, “*Though worlds of wan-wood leafmeal lie*” is taken from Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “Spring and Fall,” dedicated *to a young child*:

MÁRGARÉT, áre you gríeving
 Over Goldengrove unleaving?
 Leáves, líke the things of man, you
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
 Áh! ás the heart grows older
 It will come to such sights colder
 By and by, nor spare a sigh
 Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
 And yet you wíll weep and know why.
 Now no matter, child, the name:
 Sórror's spríngs áre the same.
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
 What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
 It ís the blight man was born for,
 It is Margaret you mourn for.

wark: Dialect for work.

weal: Wealth, riches. [It was a heron-grey morning, in the
 backend of the year; cold and bright the springs of water ran, and
 wealed the moor with silver.]

welter: As a noun, a state of confusion, disorganization, or
 turmoil. As a verb, to roll or twist the body, to turn, writhe, or
 tumble about.

wethers: Male sheep, particularly gelded rams.

wherret: To give a blow or slap to. [Mally wiped her moonblank
 rimy glasses on one of her petticoats, perched them on
 again askew, and unrucked her skins, wherreting them with the
 whirr and flap of sparrows in the dust.]

whinnymoor: John Aubrey, he of the *Brief Lives*, wrote: "The
 belief in Yorkshire was amongst the vulgar (perhaps is in part still) that
 after the person's death the soule went over Whinny-Moore . . ."

the Abbess of Whitby: St. Hilda presided over the double
 monastery (men and women lived in adjoining quarters) of Whitby.

The herdsman Caedmon was one of her subjects.

windeye, wind door: Window.

wind-egg, windegg: An imperfect or sterile egg, from the
 popular superstition that such an egg was fathered by the wind. Thus,
 an enterprise with little chance of success.

winsey: A cotton and wool mix cloth resembling linsey.

woodwose: A wild man of the wood.

wraprascal coat: A long-obsolete type of coarse overcoat with a delightful name.

“Wreck of the Deutschland”: A poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, dedicated “To the happy memory of five Franciscan Nuns exiles by the Falk Laws drowned between midnight and morning of Dec. 7th. 1875.”

wren: A Cloudish constellation, and a power as well. Of this bird, Gilman writes: “The wren is the winter king, the sun that dies and is reborn at solstice. So they say. The wren is sacrosanct, tabu: it is the blackest of bad luck to do him harm. But at the turning of the year he must be hunted, caught, and killed. His corpse is then displayed with pomp, ‘in ribbons so rare,’ and borne from door to door with the bidding, ‘Please to see the king.’ (In Ireland, boys have been known to take round a potato stuck with feathers.) For their pains, the wren boys are given ale or coins or cakes: the sort of offerings one gives the dead.”

wried: The past tense of “wry,” in the sense of contorting one’s features, making a face.

writhen: Either subjected to writhing, twisted out of shape, or plaited, twined, convoluted or coiled. The word is used in both senses in *Moonwise*.

wrying: Turning aside from the correct course, twisting, bending. [Stubbornly, with all her wiry strength, she bent the wrying ends together, warping, sliding, biting deep into her hands.]

wuther: A variant on “whither,” to tremble, shake, quiver, or to make a rushing noise, to whizz, to bluster and rage, as a wind. This is the derivation of the title of *Wuthering Heights*.

wyrm: A worm, in Old English, was any serpent, snake, reptile, or dragon, though the title has since devolved upon their lowly, soilcreating cousin. Beowulf died of wounds incurred fighting a wyrm.

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