

The Unnamed Queen

Session 11

1. Hunting Cycles.

	1	2	3
1st Branch	Pwyll hunts Arawn's stag.	Pwyll hunts Rhiannon. Rhiannon catches Pwyll.	Monster claw hunts Pryderi.
	(mortal hunts supernatural)	(mortal hunts supernatural; supernatural catches)	(supernatural catches mortal)
3rd Branch	Pryderi hunts white boar		Annwfn catches Pryderi
	(mortal hunts supernatural)		(supernatural catches mortal)
4th Branch	Lleu "hunts" wren	Gronw "hunts" Lleu who becomes an eagle	Lleu Kills Gronw
	(mortal hunts bird)	(mortal kills mortal who becomes supernatural)	(supernatural bird kills mortal)

1st	3rd	4th
Pwyll hunts Arawn's stag.	Pryderi hunts white boar.	Gronw hunts exhausted stag.
Pwyll meets The Unnamed Queen	The Golden Bowl.	Gronw meets Blodeuedd.
Self-restraint.	No self-restraint.	No self-restraint.
Unnamed Queen honoured.		Goewin / Arianrhod / Lleu Betrayed.
Rhiannon escapes patriarchy.	Pryderi's capture results in Rhiannon's capture.	Goewin / Arianrhod dominated by patriarchy.
Rhiannon marries Pwyll = heir.	Manawydan relinquishes the Mouse Queen.	Arianrhod denies Lleu a wife = no heir.

2. King Herla's Hunt.

- Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, trans. M.R. James (Oxford 1983), 27-29 [paraphrased GMB]:

Herla was a king of the most ancient Britons, and one day he came across a peculiar looking 'pigmy'. This little creature was mounted on a large goat, says the tale, and might be described in the same terms as Pan; his visage was fiery red, his head huge; he had a long red beard reaching to his chest, which was gaily attired in a spotted fawn's skin: his belly was hairy and his legs declined into goats' hoofs. He tells Herla that he's a king of kings amongst his own people and has come to Herla with a certain request. He wants to attend Herla's wedding, and for Herla likewise to attend his wedding the following year. The pigmy king then foretells the arrival of messengers sent to Herla by the king of France, offering Herla his daughter's hand in marriage.

As the pigmy king predicted, the messengers arrive and Herla agrees to the marriage. The wedding is arranged between Herla and the French princess and, as agreed, on the day itself the pigmy king attends with so vast a crowd of similar beings that the tables were filled and a larger number sat down to meet outside the hall than within it, in pavilions brought by the pigmy, which were set up in a moment of time. Out of these pavilions darted servants bearing vessels each made of a single precious stone, by some inimitable art, and filled the palaces and the tents with plates of gold and jewels; no food or drink was served in silver or wood. Wherever they were wanted, they were at hand: nothing that they brought was from the royal stock or elsewhere; they lavished their own provision throughout, and what they had brought with them more than satisfied the utmost wishes of all. Nothing of Herla's preparations was touched.

A year later, when it comes to Herla's turn to attend the pigmy king's wedding, he and his retinue are guided to an underground kingdom through a cave in the face of a cliff. In this lamp-lit underworld Herla arrives at the mansion of the pigmy king and finds it as comely in

every part as the palace of the Sun. After attending the wedding of his strange host, Herla departs laden with gifts of horses, dogs, hawks, and every appliance of the best for hunting or fowling. As Herla was leaving, the pigmy king gave Herla a small bloodhound, warning the mortal king and his company not to dismount until the dog has leapt down from Herla's arms. Upon their return to the surface world, Herla asks a nearby shepherd if there was any news of his queen, to which the shepherd replied:

'Sir, I can hardly understand your speech, for you are a Briton and I a Saxon; but the name of that Queen I have never heard, save that they say that long ago there was a Queen of that name over the very ancient Britons, who was the wife of King Herla; and he, the old story says, disappeared in company with a pigmy at this very cliff, and was never seen on earth again, and it is now two hundred years since the Saxons took possession of this kingdom, and drove out the old inhabitants.'

Even though Herla and his retinue believed they had spent no more than three days in the underground kingdom, in truth they had been absent for two hundred years. During this time the invading Saxons had succeeded in driving the Britons from what is now Southern England. At this news, some of Herla's men leap down from their horses, and as soon as their feet touch the ground they turn to dust. Understanding the fate that has befallen them, Herla quickly orders the rest of his retinue to stay mounted until the small bloodhound leaps down.

But alas, the dog never did leap down. And the story says that this King Herla still holds on his mad course with his band in eternal wanderings, without stop or stay. Many assert that they have often seen the band: but recently, it is said, in the first year of the coronation of our King Henry, it ceased to visit our land in force as before. In that year it was seen by many Welshmen to plunge into the Wye, the river of Hereford.

3. The Sovereignty.

The Unnamed Queen

Rhiannon

Branwen

The Mouse Queen

Arianrhod

- ‘Lord,’ said Gwydion son of Dôn, ‘it is easy to advise you— Aranrhod daughter of Dôn, your niece, your sister’s daughter.’ She was brought to Math. The maiden entered. ‘Maiden,’ he said, ‘are you a virgin?’ ‘That is my belief.’ Then he took his magic wand and bent it. ‘Step over this,’ he said, ‘and if you are a virgin I shall know.’ Then she stepped over the magic wand, and as she stepped she dropped a large, sturdy, yellow-haired boy. The boy gave a loud cry. After the boy’s cry she made for the door, but as she went she dropped a small something. Before anyone could get a second glimpse of it, Gwydion took it and wrapped a sheet of brocaded silk around it and hid it. He hid it in a small chest at the foot of his bed.