

AND DID THOSE HOOVES

Pan and the Edwardians



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“...a goat’s call trembled from nowhere to nowhere..”

James Stephens, *The Crock of Gold*, 1912

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Abstract

A surprisingly high number of the novels, short stories and plays produced in Britain during the Edwardian era (defined in the terms of this thesis as the period of time between 1900 and the beginning of World War One) use the Grecian deity Pan, god of shepherds, as a literary motif. Writers as diverse as Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster, Frances Hodgson Burnett and G.K. Chesterton made Pan a fictional character or alluded to the god of shepherds in more subtle ways.

The mystery of why the Edwardians used an ancient Greek god as a symbol requires a profound interrogation of the early twentieth century British soul. The Edwardian era was a narrow corridor of time between the Victorian age and the birth of modernism with the First World War, a period characterised by vast social and political transition, as a generation began to comprehend change they equally feared and desired.

Pan was an equivocal figure: easily portrayed as satanic due to his horns and goatish nature, but as the kindly god of shepherds, also a Christ-like figure. Such ambiguity made Pan an ideal symbol for an age unsure of itself and its future. Writers like Maugham and Machen, afraid of social and sexual revolution, portrayed Pan as diabolical, a tempter and a rapist. E.M. Forster, a homosexual man hopeful about the possibility of change, made Pan a terrifying but ultimately liberating figure for those ready to accept the freedom he represented. Kenneth Grahame, desiring the return of a Luddite, Arcadian past that had never truly existed, wrote of Pan as Jesus on the riverbank, sheltering the lost and giving mystic visions to the worthy.

Pan represented a simultaneous craving in the Edwardians to flee to the past and to embrace the future, an idealism of the primitive coupled with hope for the future. What he also symbolized was anxiety about the future and the desire to not return to the horrors of the past, fears of the primitive suggested in the nightmarish atavism of Saki's "The Music on the Hill" and the fears of what society might become expressed in Forster's "The Machine Stops".

The Edwardian Pan eventually reached its culmination in J.M. Barrie's twentieth-century fairy tale *Peter Pan*, in which the eponymous character, seeming at first so different from the ancient Greek mythological figure, became an embodiment of everything the Edwardian Pan phenomenon represented. With the nightmarish yet fascinating figure of Peter Pan, the Edwardians had created a new Pan, reborn for their age. With the beginning of World War One, the Pan figure would begin to fade into insignificance, with only one major work later published which could justifiably be called part of the phenomenon; Lord Dunsany's *The Blessing of Pan*, a fitting elegy for the Edwardian Age.

Introduction
Pan and the Edwardians

“On atavism, the machine can have no mercy,” E. M. Forster wrote in his 1909 dystopian novella, “The Machine Stops” (*Collected Stories* 128). Set in a version of the future where humanity lives underground, communicating largely through electronic media, “The Machine Stops” has been hailed as highly prophetic. It is also a story that captures the unique anxieties of its era; the conflict between progress and primitivism and the contradictory desires for both a better future and the return of a semi-mythical Luddite past. The Edwardian Age, sandwiched as it was between the age of the Victorians, typed as repressive, and the vast social change of the twentieth century, was an era which produced significant literary work and fostered a boom in supernatural and fantasy writing, with authors like Saki, Forster, Barrie, Algernon Blackwood and E. Nesbit writing works that continue to be reprinted and anthologised to the present day.

A notable aspect of Edwardian supernatural writing is the presence of the Greek god Pan. The goat-god of Arcadia appeared as a nightmare of the Edwardian British in short stories like “The Great God Pan” by Arthur Machen and novels like *The Magician* by Somerset Maugham, and as a neo-pagan saviour in *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame. Pan, as befitted his time, was an ambiguous figure, “equivocal” in Saki’s word (185). The explosion of Edwardian Pan stories is one that has been noted by many critics. Pan was hailed as the “wild god of nature and spiritual core of the Edwardian classics” by Jackie Wullschläger (178). So far only one major academic study on Pan’s appearances in literature has appeared, *Pan the Goat God*, written by Patricia Merivale and published in 1969. *Pan the Goat God* is an overview of every fictional Pan from Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* in the second century AD until the 1970s, though the study now appears somewhat dated and includes an excessive focus on the novels of D.H. Lawrence.

This thesis is distinct from Merivale’s work in that it will be restricted to one country, Britain, in a narrow time period, the one-and-a-half decades from 1900 to the start of the First World War, a period which is commonly defined as the Edwardian age. Naturally, there have been many Pan stories written outside the British Isles, for instance William Faulkner’s 1934 short story of supernatural horror “Black Music”. And unsurprisingly, Pan has appeared as a fictional character since Longus wrote *Daphnis and Chloe* in the second century, but for the purposes of this thesis I will focus exclusively on British and Irish Pans, and, with a few exceptions, on fiction written during the Edwardian era.

The Edwardian age was one of immense social and scientific change. People’s beliefs about themselves and their relationship with the world around them were profoundly shaken.

The discovery of the theory of evolution had inspired a deep, existential anxiety about the origin and future of the human race. Darwin “had shown that humanity was only a few million years removed from the apes and some ... concluded that man might some day slough off civilisation and return to his origins” (Rose 151). The possibility of atavism was very real and frightening to the intelligentsia. The Morlocks and Eloi of H. G. Wells’s 1895 novel *The Time Machine* give an idea of how much evolution and its shadow-side, devolution, terrified the Edwardian mind. Along with evolution came new discoveries about the age of the Earth, scientific advances that proved that the book of Genesis was not literally true. The challenge to the Bible shook the intellectual elite’s dependence on Christianity as a source of moral guidance and artistic inspiration, though Nietzsche’s 1888 proclamation that God was dead was something of an exaggeration. The British were seeking a new spirituality, which sometimes took the form of the worship of art and culture itself, and sometimes manifested as a romantic neo-paganism which brought Pan so much into the public consciousness. It was in Victorian and Edwardian times that spiritualism and contact with the dead became increasingly popular, to the point where Edwardian Britain had its own Union for Mediums.

The period from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the Great War has been known by historians as ‘the Second Industrial Revolution’. Massive advances in technology and an increasing shift from rural to urban lifestyles marked great change in the life of the average British worker. This was the mind-set that produced Thomas Hardy’s tragic novel *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, where nature appears as an innocent female victim of the urbanised male. In James Stephens’s novel *The Crock of Gold*, a character ruefully comments that “mankind has declared war on nature and we will win ... being a female she is bound to give in when challenged” (79). In western culture, nature was traditionally seen as feminine. Lord Dunsany’s short stories portray her as an elderly woman wounded by the behaviour of her errant children, humanity.

Additionally, industrialism and capitalism had created the concept of national efficiency, reducing the poor to commodities in the economic system. The United Kingdom’s population had increased from 10 million in 1801 (*The Independent*) to 38 million by 1900. Cities were filled with vast slums where the impoverished starved. Because of “the wretchedness of the working classes: people without adequate housing, food, sanitation, medical care and technical education ... unproductive workers”, Britain was in serious danger as a nation-state both economically and militarily (Rose 117). Conscription for the Boer War had revealed that malnutrition and preventable disease had left vast swathes of the male working classes unfit for service. Large-scale poverty and urbanisation had caused disease, dehumanisation and a

profound sense of alienation. A return to rural life was increasingly romanticised. The church of industrialisation had made the worship of nature an act of rebellion.

Victorian colonialism had popularised the concept of the ‘noble savage’, a concept dating back to Rousseau. The noble savage was an idealised version of the ‘primitive’ New World native, a natural man living in harmony with his surroundings, free from the corruptions of society. The noble savage concept challenged traditional ideas of humans as inherently fallen and sinful, and suggested that instead society was to blame for humanity’s removal from its naturally good state. In the late 1880s, Paul Gauguin had painted idealised images of Polynesian women, rejecting the traditional subjects of the Western artist to declare, “I’m a primitive” (Hanson 142). Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Books* of the 1890s romanticised a purer existence in the jungles of India, where Mowgli lived as a brother to the animals. The *Tarzan* stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, first published in 1912, used a similar narrative of an uncorrupted man brought up by gentle apes. Mowgli was a native Indian, though notably Tarzan was white despite his residence in the jungles of Africa. Centuries of institutional racism meant the average Edwardian reader was more comfortable identifying with a European hero in the role of the ‘natural man’ instead of a dark-skinned ‘other’. Tarzan was a noble savage, but one physiologically similar to the white British reader.

A further expression of the British desire to return to nature was Baden-Powell’s founding of the scout movement in 1908, which sprang from “not merely a faddish enthusiasm for woodcraft and wild life” but out of his proto-fascist “fears that the race was deteriorating ... [with] flight from the land ... the unmistakable signs of incipient degeneration” (Brendon 239). The British intelligentsia turned to the past in their search for progress. The Guild Socialist movement advocated a return to the Mediaeval Guild System, offering the worker more control over industry. They called the “revolt against industrial autocracy ... one of the most significant features” of the modern progressive movement (Nathan Carpenter 143). The fetishisation of mediaeval life became increasingly popular, with writers like G. K. Chesterton and Arthur Conan Doyle lionising the Middle Ages.

The British were looking for a new god, to replace the empty space in cultural iconography that the declining Christian religion had left. If the British Isles had ever had any native religion of its own, now was the time it would have been revived. There is some evidence of a Druidic renewal, connected with the upsurge in secret societies and occult practices. Notably, the Ancient Celts had worshipped a now almost entirely forgotten nature god named Cernunnos, who like Pan, wore horns or sometimes antlers. As *A History of Witchcraft* by J. B. Russell notes, “horns are a worldwide symbol of power, fertility, and plenitude of game” (40). Cernunnos is

known to have been worshipped from at least the first century and, like Pan, was associated with animals and the natural world. It is possible to view Pan as a substitute Cernunnos, and the British fascination with him as the genetic memory of their forgotten god. Many prominent British neo-pagans and occultists were drawn to Pan as more than a symbol. Aleister Crowley felt a “devotion to Pan, half-serious as it was” (Russell 136). Perhaps the resemblance between Pan and Cernunnos was merely coincidental; perhaps the British had a natural disposition toward horned gods, representing as they did the animal in man as something sacred, not regressive. Why then, were there not stories of Cernunnos appearing amongst the oaks and frightening picnickers? Cernunnos was a much more nebulous figure than Pan, who with his Arcadian origins, court of nymphs and satyrs and patronage over shepherds had a far more concrete and distinctive myth.

It seems many British writers chose to return to the classical mythology of their schooldays to find a new spiritual direction. And the god they chose was a particular one unique among the pantheon of the Greeks, that is to say, Pan. Pan was a minor figure in the classical pantheon. The true origin of his cult is unknown, but he presumably sprang from the shepherd country of Arcadia. The Greeks were both polytheistic and syncretic in their beliefs, and regularly incorporated local gods and forgotten deities into their increasingly crowded pantheon. Pan’s father was sometimes said to be Zeus, more often to be Hermes. His mother was the nymph Penelope, sometimes conflated with wife of the cuckolded Odysseus. No myth exists to explain Pan’s half-goat, half-man appearance.

Pan’s name is often incorrectly said to be derived from the Greek *pān*, meaning all, but most likely the true origin is from *pa-on*, grazer. As Merivale pointed out, “the history of Pan would gain as much in logic as it would lose in variety and charm if this etymology had been pointed out from the beginning” (9). The fallacy of Pan meaning *all* has become a crucial part of his myth and therefore his use as a literary motif. What might have otherwise been an obscure demigod has now become a stand-in for what E. M. Forster called “Universal Nature” (*Collected Stories* 60).

Historically, Pan has always been a contradictory figure. The word *panic*, originally meaning the sense of fear felt in lonely places, derived from his name. Pan was the god of shepherds, and the symbolic role of the shepherd gathering his flock is far older than Christ. With his deep connection with animals and the landscape, Pan embodied both man’s fear of the natural world with its unconstrained sexuality and yet also the consolation found in that world. To the later Christian world who would inherit his memory, Pan’s contradictory nature was even more pronounced. His physical appearance recalled folk imagery of the devil, but his association

with shepherds and the pastoral gave him a Christ-like aura. To embody such conflicting states made Pan a figure of great uneasiness, and therefore great complexity.

Pan was a Greek native and his farmland utopia and goatish familiars were more familiar to the British reader than the alien cultures of Native America, India, or Africa. The anglicised Pan who appears in British fiction was the natural man brought closer to home, a man intent on reclaiming the over-farmed, over-industrialised British landscape for the forces of the wild. In claiming Pan, the British could cast *themselves* as the noble savage, eager to escape their own self-oppression and reclaim their unfallen state. And to the nature-romanticising Edwardians, Pan represented a more masculine, warlike force for the wild, nature armed and ready to fight back. Such an association compounded Pan's ambivalence. He was frightening, because he represented the guilty conscience of those who had destroyed the landscape with the "dark, satanic mills" William Blake spoke of, and yet he represented their hidden yearning to return to nature.

The joyous, liberating primitivism represented by Pan was the flipside to Conrad's dark, brooding novella "Heart of Darkness", with its extremely negative depiction of the primitive side of humanity. When the character Marlow looks over London and declares, "And this also ... has been one of the dark places of the Earth" (105), he refers to the city's former pagan, pre-Christian state as an era of darkness from which it has since travelled to the 'light' of civilisation. Conrad was inspired by William Booth, whose book *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, defied colonialist rhetoric by criticising British social systems in the same condescending tone his contemporaries used to demean the third world nations Britain colonised and justify their subjugation. But both Booth and Conrad associated the primitive only with the harmful, while the Pan cult found freedom in atavism.

Though Pan had a set of specific attributes, the Edwardian author felt free to disregard them if they became thematically inconvenient. There was a definite tendency to portray Pan as young and attractive, in direct contradiction to the bearded, mature Pan of myth. This inclination was so strong it caused Jackie Wullschläger to conflate the fictional Pan with the mythological figure and call the latter "the Greek god of nature who was half-boy, half-beast" (111).

Similarly, Pan's sinister attributes were sometimes exaggerated to the point of making him appear almost diabolical, as in Machen's horror story "The Great God Pan", or, as in *The Wind in the Willows*, his aspect as a kindly shepherd god was embellished to the point of making him nearly a pagan messiah. To take such liberties with a god would have been blasphemous in the time he was still seriously worshipped. By choosing a god from the museum, the archaeological dig and the classics textbook rather than one worshipped by an active cult in regularly attended temples, the Edwardian writer became free to change Pan's appearance and

nature to fit the plot without risking the deadly punishments accorded to a blasphemer. Thereby the Edwardian Pan was not only a primordial god but a futuristic one, a god capable of fluidity depending on the needs of his followers.

In E. Nesbit's novel *The Enchanted Castle*, three Edwardian children spend their summer holidays at a castle surrounded by magical statues which come to life in the moonlight. The statues include a monstrous lizard and, in 'The Temple of Flora', marble sculptures of the Greek deities. The gods and goddesses are stately and dignified, with "their white limbs gleam[ing] against a background of shadow". Among these grand figures, who include the kingly Zeus and Phoebus Apollo, is one who appears childlike himself: the statue of Pan, a "creature with horns and goat's legs and the head and arms of a boy" (63). Pan's anachronistically youthful appearance in *The Enchanted Castle*, something surprisingly common in Edwardian fiction, brings him closer to the level of the children, mere mortals as they are, than the other dignified deities.

Pan was an accessible god, not exactly cosy or safe in the way of A. A. Milne's stuffed animals, but closer to Earth than Heaven. His status as a half-man, half-animal made him unique in the classical pantheon. The Greeks had myths of fauns, aegipans and centaurs, but Pan, with his goat's legs and horns, was the only Greek god to have the features of an animal. The Greek gods were traditionally dignified, humanoid, a civilising force who inherited their world from the barbaric, elemental Titans. The pantheon of Ancient Egypt wore animal heads on human bodies, but Pan's human torso stood on the legs of a goat. His caprine features signified his grounding in the natural world and his animalistic sexuality. Pan's physique embodied the Hermetic slogan *as above, so below*, the connection between the divine and the debased, the animal and the spiritual. It was no coincidence that Pan was the son of Hermes. For a god to have the attributes of an animal raised the bestial to the level of the divine, and vice versa. For Pan to appear as a child in a novel for children raised children themselves to worthy communicants with the gods.

Pan was grounded in several senses of the word. In temperament he was cheerful, earthy, leering. In *The Enchanted Castle*, Pan's "pretty face seemed to turn a laughing look" (167). Pan's goatishness gave him the quality of levity rare in the Greek pantheon — it is difficult to imagine Artemis or Apollo laughing — though this quality did not diminish his strangeness or his ability to inspire fear. Pan was not to be trifled with, but he was always fundamentally on the side of humanity. Unlike Apollo, who skinned Marsyas alive for daring to beat him in a music contest, Pan only showed his dark side to deserving victims. As Merivale put it, "Pan is on 'our' side, and we are not expected to share the terror of those whom he is rightfully punishing" (4).

But why did the British choose Pan? Why such an obscure god from a distant country? The British lacked a true mythology of their own. Tolkien made the contested statement that

England “had no stories of its own, not of the quality that I sought, and found in other lands” (Bloom 151). There is no “English pantheon” to speak of, certainly no mythological heritage to match that of the Norse or the Greeks. The ancient Anglo-Saxons worshipped Norse Gods like Woden, Baldur and Eostre to some extent, and the Celts had their own deities. England had the ogres and giants of fairy tale, the folktales of Robin Hood and His Merry Men and the courtly romances of King Arthur, but whatever had been worshipped at Stonehenge has been lost to history. This was the situation that made E. M. Forster lament, in *Howards End*:

Why has England no great mythology? Our folklore has never advanced beyond daintiness, and the greater melodies of our countryside have all issued from the pipes of Greece the native imagination has stopped with witches and fairies. (265)

Forster’s omission of Norse mythology initially seems like an oversight, but as the British Public School attending classes were educated in Latin and Greek, classical myth was probably more familiar than the gods of the Vikings. In later years, Angela Carter would write that “the English wood is nothing like the dark, necromantic forest in which the Northern European imagination begins and ends” (*Burning your Boats* 275). The Edwardian British landscape was steeped in associations with the twee, safe and consolatory, and its most dangerous bogeymen were not the witches and werewolves of the Brothers Grimm, but the owls, rats and foxes who threatened small animals in Beatrix Potter’s stories.

In turning to the worship of Pan, the British were looking at their own land once more as something ancient, profound and even frightening. But there is a fundamental awkwardness in the placement of a Greek god in the landscape of the British Isles. Pan’s original home in the lonely wilderness of Arcadia was very different to the farms and forests of Britain, which were sometimes perceived as overly safe or cosy. Pan was from a land of cypress trees and sun, not dreary weather and oaks. The various authors studied in this thesis took different approaches to the anachronism of Pan in Britain. E. M. Forster, in his short story “The Story of a Panic”, took Pan out of the country entirely and wrote of a group of British tourists encountering him in Italy, not Pan’s native country but one geographically and perhaps culturally closer to his home. Saki took a more subtle approach. His 1912 short story “The Music on the Hill” writes the landscape of Yessney as something wild, hostile and fundamentally pagan, a place where a lonely altar to Pan can have plausibly stood for thousands of years. Kenneth Grahame placed Pan within an England populated by animals, on the banks of a river where apparently no human feet have ever trod. Algernon Blackwood apparently found the idea of Pan appearing in the British

landscape too anachronistic to contemplate. His 1917 story “A Touch of Pan” featured two young lovers encountering Pan, who has brought with him not only a court of nymphs and satyrs, but the entire landscape of Arcadia. Pan changes “those English pines — more [to] the shape of cypresses, one would have thought” (95). Pan appearing amongst trees as pedestrian and un-exotic as English pines was apparently more than Blackwood’s imagination could bear. Alternately, Blackwood might have wanted to lift his protagonists out of the dullness and commonness of their everyday lives, including the overly familiar landscape of their own country.

A more interesting approach was for the Edwardian characters to encounter Pan in a country that resembled, but wasn’t quite, Britain. In *The Enchanted Castle* by E. Nesbit, the child characters explore the grounds of what is an ordinary castle by day but turns by moonlight into a place of fantasy. Most significantly, Peter Pan rescues the Darling children from their dreary, urban surroundings in London to the child-friendly Neverland. The not-Britain glimpsed in the works of Nesbit and J. M. Barrie can be reasonably called *fairyland*. This was an alternate, eternal version of the British Isles, never invaded by Romans, Normans or Angles, free from the cultural colonialism of Christianity, a place Ted Hughes eulogised in his collection *The Remains of Elmet*, a place Pan was free to visit without any sense of anachronism or awkwardness. To the Greeks, Pan was an insignificant figure, a shepherd god and the butt of jokes. In Britain he became a captain to fairies, a champion of the wilderness, a figure more important and taken more seriously than he had ever been in his native land.

Jonathan Rose succinctly described the Pan cult as caused by “a combination of spiritual and sexual anxieties” which led “to a surrogate religion of sexuality. The principal deity of this religion was Pan” (89). Such emphasis on sexuality is reductive. Though Pan, with his horns and goat legs, was a clear masculine symbol, what he represented was more than that. In *The Crock of Gold*, a novel written in 1912 by James Stephens, Pan appears before the shepherdess Caitilin and seduces her with the following speech, which elegantly summarises the concerns of the Edwardian Pan canon:

You fear me because my legs are shaggy like the legs of a goat. Look at them well, O Maiden, and know that they are indeed the legs of a beast and then you will not be afraid any more. Do you not love beasts? Surely you should love them, for they yearn to you humbly or fiercely, craving your hand upon their heads as I do. If I were not fashioned thus I would not come to you because I would not need you. Man is a god and a brute. He aspires to the stars with his head, but his feet are contented with the grasses of the

field, and when he forsakes the brute upon which he stands then there will be no more men and women and the immortal gods will blow this world away like smoke. (39)

To disconnect from the primal, natural world was to lose touch with what it meant to be human. Pan, half-goat and half-man, represents the part of humanity that untameable and beyond civilisation, a way of life content with simple things, a connection that, when lost, would produce the dystopic nightmare seen in “The Machine Stops”.

The Crock of Gold is unique among the novels and stories written about in this thesis in that its setting is Ireland, and while visiting that country Pan interacts with the local gods and spirits. Lord Dunsany, whose novel *The Blessing of Pan* I will discuss later, was Irish like Stephens, but his novel was set in England and makes no reference to Celtic mythology. Writers drawn to Pan hailed surprisingly often from the Celtic fringe of the British Isles. J. M. Barrie was Scottish, as were Kenneth Grahame and Saki. Algernon Blackwood was Welsh. The typical view of the Celts as more passionate, poetic and in touch with the world of nature than the cold-blooded Anglo-Saxons suggests the Celt might have been more drawn to Pan with the wildness and atavism he represented than their English counterparts. However, E. M. Forster, E. Nesbit and G. K. Chesterton were English, and Frances Hodgson Burnett was Anglo-American.

The Crock of Gold, despite sharing many themes with British Pan fiction, is an essentially Irish work which highlights what a peculiarly British phenomenon the Pan boom was. Though a short novel, the book has a convoluted, bizarre plot involving policemen, gender politics, philosophers and Irish fairies of which Pan forms only a small part. Pan is a visitor to Ireland for never-explained reasons, and finds himself “very lonely in this strange country”, stranded far from his followers (38). Pan attempts to persuade a young shepherdess, Caitilin, to join him in a life of primitivism, exhorting her to “forget right and wrong ... be as happy as the beasts” (39). He is challenged for Caitilin’s hand by the native Irish god Angus Og, who calls Pan “Fever and Lust and Death” and whom Caitilin ultimately chooses over Pan (85). Merivale speculates that Caitilin’s choice was the correct one, and represents the rejection of sexuality without civilisation which is necessary to leave adolescence. *The Crock of Gold* is therefore a rare example of Pan’s loss in battle being portrayed in entirely positive terms. The British Pan, whether in his good or evil incarnation, is rarely defeated.

The Crock of Gold has many thematic concerns in common with the British Pan texts, including the condemnation of the shallowness and materialism of modern life, the search for transcendence in neo-paganism, and the celebration of a simple existence. In the final paragraphs

of the novel, a main character, identified only as ‘the Philosopher’ is rescued from his impending execution on false charges of murder by Angus Og and Caitilin, who take him into fairyland:

They swept through the goat tracks and the little boreens and the curving roads. Down to the city they went dancing and singing; among the streets and the shops telling their sunny tale; not heeding the malignant eyes and the cold brows as the sons of Balor looked sideways. And they took the Philosopher from his prison, even the Intellect of Man they took from the hands of the doctors and lawyers, from the sly priests, from the professors whose mouths are gorged with sawdust, and the merchants who sell blades of grass — the awful people of the Fomor ... and then they returned again, dancing and singing, to the country of the gods.... (190)

The Fomor are monsters from Irish mythology, as is the giant Balor. Stephens draws on the richness of Ireland’s native religion, and Pan is represented as an alien god who is ultimately driven away by the local deities. In stark contrast to the British Pan, appropriated into a native, Pan ultimately decides to leave Ireland, returning “to the quiet fields ... beyond the distances of space” (90). His decision reflects his lack of desire to be subservient to the already-present Irish pantheon. The British Pan rarely interacts with entities from British mythology or folklore. There are no stories of Pan meeting King Arthur or the Norse Gods — such a meeting of Nordic and Classical seems inherently distasteful. Pan was sometimes conflated with British entities such as Puck, Herne the Hunter or Cernunnos, but he never met them. He was sometimes depicted alongside fairies, and was generally more of a companion to the miniaturised fairies of the Victorians than their terrifying Celtic counterparts. Pan became a chief to nature spirits, “their overlord, Pan” (Silver 208), like Peter Pan ruling over the flower fairies in Kensington Gardens. Pan in Britain was no mere visitor. He had become assimilated, a native god retroactively conflated with the horned Celtic deities of old. In *The Crock of Gold* Pan feels ill at ease in a new country far from his old followers. Put in Britain, Pan brought the cypress trees of his former home with him and there found a new cult of followers.

The greatest difference between *The Crock of Gold* and the British Pan stories is the failure of Pan to effect any social change. He fails to convert Caitilin to the primitive way of life, gains no new followers in Ireland and cannot challenge the regime of the “sly priests” or “merchants who sell blades of grass”, representatives of the Christian and capitalist systems. Pan can only quietly tiptoe away, and Stephens’s characters, instead of starting a revolution, follow him out of reality.

The Edwardian Pan was not a distraction from reality but a symbol of the change that simmered under society. The goat-hoofed god became a figurehead for rapidly changing attitudes to sex, gender roles, religion, class, race and division of labour. In pledging their allegiance to an ambivalent god who could be benevolent one moment, nightmarish the next, the British were using a fantasy to cope with the possibility of a very different future, one which they hoped would be better and feared would be much worse. Pan's true significance lay in his ambiguity.

But the Pan era could not last long. The rapid boom of stories was quickly over. The Manichean narrative of nature as inherently good and civilisation as evil was becoming somewhat worn even before the Pan craze drew to an end. E. M. Forster was already tired of Pan by the time he wrote *Howards End* in 1910 — he expressed the hope that future writers would “seek inspiration from the town” as “the Earth as an artistic cult has had its day ... Of Pan and the elemental forces, the public has heard a little too much” (105). The cult of romanticising nature was already fading from the public consciousness before 1914, but the First World War truly brought the revival of Pan worship to an abrupt halt. With the war came a new kind of industrialised warfare, a machine of destruction which devoured a whole generation of young men. In this hell on Earth the British were forcibly reminded of the impossibility of Utopia and the true nature of the ‘natural man’. No more did atavism and the celebration of the bestial seem attractive.

But for a brief period Pan became a zeitgeist for Edwardian Britain, a spirit for the times. A stolen, subtly transformed Ancient Greek deity became the totemic spirit for a people who were failed by their civilisation. Pan became a mirror held up to Britain, a shifting, distorted fairground mirror reflecting the face of an age unsure of itself or its future, a mirror ambiguous and impossible to define, just like the face that was peering into it.

Chapter One

Pan as a Christ Figure, Christ as a Pan Figure

Pan's contradictory nature was innate to the Edwardian Pan cult: the goatish shepherd contained traditional imagery for both good and evil in one figure. Therefore the literary Pan was an inherently ambivalent creature, though authors sometimes portrayed him at either end of the moral spectrum, whether as the exclusively evil Pan mentioned in the previous chapter or, alternately, the purely good Pan found in *The Wind in the Willows*.

The latter novel devotes an entire chapter, "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn", to Ratty and Mole's encounter with Pan. It is a curious piece of writing, the style a characteristically Edwardian mixture of the sacred and the sentimental, which is often left out of modern editions of the novel, for, according to an article in the *Guardian*, "it jars, seems so strange compared to all the others and, to some is vaguely homoerotic". The tone of the chapter does indeed differ wildly from the comic-adventure quality of the rest of the novel. There is something numinous and solemn in the description of Mole and Ratty, having stayed in vigil all night searching for a lost baby otter, encountering the goat god on an island where, as in Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, "no birds sang". Pan's island is a "holy place", which, echoing Matthew 22:14, is reserved for "those who were called and chosen" (92). The animals' encounter is described in terms clearly meant to echo a religious experience:

"This is the place of my song-dream, the place the music played to me,' whispered the Rat, as if in a trance. 'Here, in this holy place, here if anywhere, surely we shall find Him!'"

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror — indeed he felt wonderfully at peace and happy — but it was an awe that smote and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near. With difficulty he turned to look for his friend, and saw him at his side cowed, stricken, and trembling violently. And still there was utter silence in the populous bird-haunted branches around them; and still the light grew and grew.

Perhaps he would never have dared to raise his eyes, but that, though the piping was now hushed, the call and the summons seemed still dominant and imperious. He might not refuse, were Death himself waiting to strike him instantly, once he had looked with mortal eye on things rightly kept hidden. Trembling, he obeyed, and raised his humble head; and then, in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature,

flushed with fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, he looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper; saw the backward sweep of the curved horns, gleaming in the growing daylight; saw the stern, hooked nose between the kindly eyes that were looking down on them humorously, while the bearded mouth broke into a half-smile at the corners; saw the rippling muscles on the arm that lay across the broad chest, the long supple hand still holding the pan-pipes only just fallen away from the parted lips; saw the splendid curves of the shaggy limbs disposed in majestic ease on the sward; saw, last of all, nestling between his very hooves, sleeping soundly in entire peace and contentment, the little, round, podgy, childish form of the baby otter. All this he saw, for one moment breathless and intense, vivid on the morning sky; and still, as he looked, he lived; and still, as he lived, he wondered.

“Rat!” he found breath to whisper, shaking. “Are you afraid?”

“Afraid?” murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. “Afraid! Of Him? O, never, never! And yet — and yet — O, Mole, I am afraid!”

Then the two animals, crouching to earth, bowed their heads and did worship.

(93)

Pan is never identified by name, but the references to horns and pipes make his identity clear. In his island haven, Pan is a Messiah for the animals, a Jesus of the riverbank. The pronoun *Him* with the hallowed capital letter gives Pan a status usually reserved for the Abrahamic god. Epithets like “some august Presence” and “the Friend and Helper”, with their significant capitalisation, suggest a figure to be treated with pious awe. In an echo of Matthew 19:14 verse “suffer the little children to come unto me”, Pan rescues the young otter, which seems calm in his presence, instinctively recognising Pan’s compassionate nature. Ratty and Mole’s reaction to Pan is explicitly called “worship”; the animals of the river revere Pan as their personal God.

However, Grahame does not make Pan a literal aspect of Christ, like Aslan in C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia* books. He is identified as merely a “kindly demigod” (Grahame 93). But the “Piper at the Gates of Dawn” is the only explicit reference to religion in *The Wind in the Willows*. Though the chapter could be removed without effect to the plot, it forms the spiritual centre of the novel. Pan’s island is “fringed with willows” (91) — it is the playing of his pipes that gives the book its title.

Merivale writes that only animal characters could have been shown worshipping Pan with such solemnity and complete lack of irony. To have “sophisticated men” in the place of Ratty and Mole would have been “mawkishly absurd” (142).

But Grahame himself was surely kneeling beside them in spirit. The author had something of a neo-pagan outlook, which Jackie Wullschläger sneeringly called his “weekend Pantheism” (152). His early work, now little reprinted, included *Pagan Papers*, a collection of sketches and essays first published in 1893. *Pagan Papers* contained stories like “The Rural Pan” and “The Lost Centaur”, where Grahame paid homage to the classical gods, and re-imagined them in his rural Edwardian home, placing Apollo in Piccadilly and Hermes in “shady Throgmorton Street and about the vale of Cheapside” (65). In a precursor to “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn”, Pan is a genius loci for rural England, hiding in the wilderness from “Commercialism, whose god is Jerry” (70). This is a reference to the 18th century term *jerry-built*, referring to construction with substandard materials. Grahame personifies the world of industrialism as sloppy and impersonal, a far more didactic statement of political belief than the subtler hints of classism which appear in *The Wind in the Willows*.

In a precursor to Dunsany’s novel *The Blessing of Pan*, “The Rural Pan” shows that the caprine god “and his following ... hide their heads ... until the growing tyranny has invaded... and driven the kindly god ... whither?” (71). Pan and Industrialism are natural enemies. Notably, in the earlier passage from “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn”, Nature is personified as female, and her reaction to Pan seems somewhat romantic in phrasing, as “flushed with fullness ... [she] seemed to hold her breath”. In the sexless, largely male world of Kenneth Grahame, such connotations are unusual. In the Edwardian Pan canon, portraying Mother Nature and Pan as dual facets of the natural world is a common motif. Such symbolism is an echo of the mythological Pan’s romantic association with nymphs, female avatars of the natural world.

Grahame’s Pan, easily the kindest to be found in all the stories discussed in this entire thesis, is as far removed from the mythical Pan as the monstrous Pan of Arthur Machen. In making Pan entirely benevolent, Grahame actively denies some of the key attributes of the goat god. Ratty’s reference to Pan as “some great animal” (Merivale 94) fails to acknowledge his fundamentally dualistic nature. Pan is no more entirely beast than he is entirely man. Grahame also specifically notes that the animals feel “no panic terror”, though they do experience religious awe. This is a very specific refutation of one of the mythological Pan’s most noted attributes. Pan in *The Wind in the Willows* is the most unthreatening, gentle Pan in the Edwardian Pan canon. He is even kind enough to remove Ratty and Mole’s memory of their encounter, so that they might not live the rest of their lives haunted by the memory of seeing Pan. The “gift of forgetfulness” is Pan’s final act of kindness.

It is significant that the kindest Pan is also the most utterly sexless. Grahame was a solitary man who claimed to prefer places to people and actually bragged that his work was

“clean of the clash of sex” to Theodore Roosevelt (Wullschläger 163). In *The Wind in the Willows* Grahame created a pastoral haven, free from the problems of society and the difficulties of gender relations. Pan in *The Wind in the Willows* is an icon of placid conservative stability, a symbol of the tamed rural countryside as a retreat from the ugliness of the urban world, not of nature in its wild and atavistic form, and certainly not of nature dangerous and predatory, an aspect which Grahame dismisses in the form of the weasels as proletarian caricatures. As Peter Green puts it, “though in the country, he is not of it” (96). Grahame’s Pan is diminished, because he only contains the benevolent aspects of the goat-god, and therefore only the benevolent aspects of nature. Without his essential duality, *Pan* cannot be *all*. And, because of the value systems of the time, the Edwardian writer was incapable of representing Pan’s essentially earthy and sexual nature in a purely positive way. Grahame’s Pan has been called “transformed . . . paternalised, desexualised” (Green 154) and his emasculated, tame version of nature was a reflection of the Edwardian unease with what true joyous primitivism could represent.

There are distinctly fewer entirely benevolent Pans in Edwardian fiction than sinister or ambivalent versions of the god. In fact, the Pan of *The Wind in the Willows* might be the only entirely good Pan, for the other two examples discussed in this chapter are Pan *figures* rather than strictly Pans: Dickon from *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett and Sunday from *The Man Who Was Thursday* by G. K. Chesterton.

One possible example of an unambiguously good Pan is found in a story written in 1896, somewhat before the strict beginning of the Edwardian era. This is Laurence Housman’s short story “When Pan was Dead”, which contains a deeply ambiguous appearance by a shepherd figure. The story involves a “woodling” (119), an anglicised version of the nymphs of ancient Greece, who comes into conflict with a group of nuns. The story uses the theme of the fading of the pagan deities and the growing dominance of Christianity. The woodling is lonely, being the last of her kind; she is essentially an innocent creature of nature. She does not understand the nuns and their lives of penance and hardship, and why they seem to “love pain” (127). On discovering a crucifix, which she thinks is a real man being tortured, the woodling attempts to pull out the nails in his hands before she finds “at last that what she handled was not truth but deceit” (126).

The woodling covertly gives the nuns mandrake, causing them to lose their senses, cast off their habits and dance nude under the moonlight, “beautiful maenad laughter” issuing from them (130). The maenads were the wild women from Greek myth who accompanied Dionysus, and were generally intoxicated and dangerous. At the breaking of dawn, the revel is interrupted by the appearance of a group of sheep driven by a shepherd. Facing him, the woodling simply

laughs, and “sprang like a squirrel” (132), but the nuns regain their senses and flee, horrified, back to their convent. The symbolism of the shepherd, whose appearance is tellingly not described, is profoundly ambivalent. He can be taken as Christ, calling the nuns away from the temptations of paganism, or Pan, trying to lead them towards a life of freedom they are too afraid to embrace. The story’s title, which echoes the myth of the Death of Pan, deepens its ambiguity, and can be taken as either an elegy to paganism, a celebration of the triumph of Christianity, or an ironic affirmation of Pan’s survival.

The Death of Pan was one of the most curious aspects of the original Pan myth. It was recorded in the *Moralia* of Plutarch, who claimed that during the reign of Tiberius, between 14 and 37 AD, the sailors on a ship sailing near the Echinades Islands heard a voice instruct them to “announce that Great Pan is dead” (Merivale 12). This story has many interpretations, the most common being the death of pagan worship with the birth of Christ, as it seems to have taken place roughly around the time of the crucifixion. One Edwardian author, G. K. Chesterton, took the opposite view. Pan and Jesus were not incompatible, he wrote in his biography of William Blake. It was only at the Incarnation, Chesterton said, that “Pan for the first time began to stir in his grave” (Merivale 116). Some scholars have suggested that Great Pan is dead was a reference to Christ’s death, and the resurrection immediately undid the proclamation, for Merivale put it, “Christianity could fuse Roman order with pre-Roman instincts for the supernatural” (116).

The Man Who Was Thursday, a theological novel by Chesterton published in 1908, contains complex imagery which merges the figures of Christ and Pan. The book starts as a straightforward thriller about the struggle between anarchists and policemen, but rapidly cycles through what Alison Milbank calls “the genres of comedy, thriller, mystery, farce and fairy-tale” (Milbank 31) before eventually being revealed as the dream, or nightmare, of the main character, Gabriel Syme.

Thursday’s theme is an attempt to grasp what C.S. Lewis would later call “the problem of pain”, the difficulty of reconciling the concept of a loving, omnipotent god with the horror of reality. The allegorical story imagines a council of anarchists, codenamed after days of the week, who are eventually all revealed to be undercover detectives tricked into scheming against each other by the puppet master, Sunday, a larger-than-life figure who may be God himself. *Thursday* contains only two overt references to Pan, both of which emphasise the goat god’s ambivalence and dual nature.

In the first instance, the characters discuss Sunday and use an extended metaphor to compare him to Pan. Syme, the man who was Thursday of the title, a policeman and poet whose first name, Gabriel, recalls the warrior angel, describes Sunday as appearing at first impression

“brutal, like some apish god ... not a man at all, but a beast dressed up in men’s clothes” (169). Syme’s description suggests a being at once animal, human and divine, like Pan himself, but these associations are presented in the most unpleasant light possible. Rather than *animal*, the more negative *beast* is used, and the adjective *apish* hints at atavism and the fear of evolution in reverse. Sunday is a creature only pretending to be wholly man, and this evokes great uneasiness.

But Syme further describes Sunday as “beautiful ... when I saw him from behind I was certain he was an animal, and when I saw him in front I knew he was a god” (169). Chesterton’s use of *and* rather than the more obvious *but* here is noteworthy; Sunday is an animal and a god; such states of being are not presented as exclusive. Sunday’s animalistic nature makes him more, not less, than human, it makes him supernatural. The Professor, also known as Friday, then invokes Pan by name, pointing out that the latter like Sunday was “a god and an animal”.

Chesterton uses Pan’s dualistic nature as a metaphor for the apparently dualistic nature of the earth, for as Syme muses “it is also the mystery of the world” (169). Pan is as nature itself, containing good and evil, yet greater than both. Syme then makes the following philosophical speech, which sums up the philosophy of the novel elegantly:

Shall I tell you the secret of the whole world? It is that we have only known the back of the world. We see everything from behind, and it looks brutal. That is not a tree, but the back of a tree. That is not a cloud, but the back of a cloud. Cannot you see that everything is stooping and hiding a face? (170)

The face, of course, being Pan’s. God is the world itself, the sum of all parts; such thought is the essence of Pantheism.

The second Pan reference occurs soon after, when the Professor jokes that Sunday might have “hoofs”, and once again invoking Pan by name. The Professor is chastised by another council member, who scornfully comments that “You seem to think Pan is everything” (170). The Professor repeats the common misconception that Pan, “in Greek... means everything” (170), further connecting Sunday with the pantheistic ideal of nature as divine. Another council member points out that Pan “also means Panic”, hinting that Sunday is a being who “means everything” (171) yet a deeply frightening one.

The book’s answer to the “problem of pain” is the same found in the Book of Job; God’s true nature surpasses human understanding, but suffering is eventually rewarded with spiritual reconciliation. Towards the end of the book, Sunday reveals himself as puppet master to the council of days, and one by one they demand to know why they were manipulated into

fighting each other. Chesterton does not take the position of the moral relativist and argue that all seeming evil is misunderstanding — among the faux anarchists is the true one, Lucian Gregory, analogous to Satan, who appears as “the Accuser” and the enemy of all living creatures.

After a theological debate between Sunday, the Council of Days and Gregory, Syme asks Sunday, “Have you ever suffered?”, to which the latter’s enigmatic answer is “Can ye drink of the cup I drink of?” (183), a Biblical reference emphasising the incomprehensible nature of God from Mark 10:38, where Jesus responds to his disciples James and John’s hubristic request that they be seated in glory beside him in Heaven. The implication is that Sunday has sacrificed himself for the good of humanity in some way, which would make him not just a God figure but a version of Christ. Sunday’s familiarity with suffering is beyond the grasp of the Council of Days, something echoed in Chesterton’s later lines of poetry:

There is one blasphemy — for death to pray,
For God alone knoweth the praise of death. (Hollis 290)

When challenged as to his true identity, Sunday replies:

You want to know what I am, do you? ... you will have found out the truth of the last tree and the topmost cloud before the truth about me. You will understand the sea, and I shall still be a riddle; you shall know what the stars are, and not know what I am. Since the beginning of the world all men have hunted me like a wolf. (155)

His answer is enigmatic but revealing. Like God in the Book of Job, who demands that his servants “behold the Behemoth” when they ask him why suffering exists, Sunday hints that he is the embodiment of realities beyond human conception. Syme later reflects, “Nature was always making quite mysterious jokes. He wondered whether even the archangels understood the hornbill” (160). ‘Nature’ here is divine and mysterious, but in a playful, comic fashion. Like the embodiment of the natural world appearing as a man with goat’s legs, Sunday is “like a father playing ... with his children” (170).

Chesterton does not portray Sunday as the literal incarnation. A character states “I should feel a bit afraid of asking Sunday who he really is ... for fear he might tell me” (152), and Chesterton apparently shared the same sentiment. When asked for his identity a second time, Sunday ambiguously replies, “I am the Sabbath ... I am the peace of God” (180). He is perhaps not *the* Saviour, but clearly *a* Saviour, and one who is like Pan in nature. He is a version of Jesus

frightening and fundamentally unknowable and one profoundly connected to the animal world. In contrast to Grahame's Christ-like Pan, Sunday is the Christian God de-familiarised by his parallelism with a pagan deity. Furthermore, the half-serious suggestion that Sunday might have hooves recalls not only Pan but mediaeval imagery of the devil as a goat-like creature with horns and hooves, whose animal nature was dangerous and fearsome.

Sunday, however, is not a composite being of God and Satan. Satan appears in the figure of Gregory, whose first name *Lucian* echoes Lucifer, the fallen angel of light and the morning star. Gregory's appearance is beautiful but threatening, and interestingly, Chesterton also emphasises his animalistic nature; both Sunday and Gregory are described as apelike (10), while Gabriel Syme, analogous to the Angel of the Lord, has eyes "like those of an angry lion" (14). Possibly Chesterton was interested in blurring the boundaries between physical and metaphysical and divine and animal.

The portrayal of divine beings as animalistic hints at older, pagan religions. Like Sunday, Gregory is a paganised Christian figure. In his rage against God, Gregory states "my red hair ... shall burn up the world ... I hated everything" (182), a possible allusion to the chaotic Norse God Loki, who was often depicted with flames for hair and whose senseless slaying of the sun god Baldur is destined to cause the apocalypse in Norse myth. Satan, the true embodiment of evil, as distinct from the ambivalence Sunday represents, desires the total rejection of reality and refuses to see any beauty in the world. The rejection of reality as analogous to evil makes Sunday as a Christ figure simultaneously ambivalent and purely good, for it is only in his refusal to reject any aspect of the world, no matter how frightening, that pure goodness is found. *Thursday's* final pages, set after the events of the story have been revealed as a possible dream, suggest the possibility of reconciliation between God and Satan; Syme and Gregory have apparently become friends, and romance is hinted between Syme and Gregory's sister. Chesterton's acknowledgement of the existence of evil does not negate the possibility of universal redemption.

Chesterton's portrayal of a Christ who is like Pan, rather than the Christ-like Pan, has few parallels in fiction. To paganise the Abrahamic deity was an act of daring which would have been deadly blasphemy for much of history, and even in the early twentieth century Chesterton seemed alarmed by the implications of what he had written. He subtitled the book 'A Nightmare' and years later, after his conversion to Catholicism, wrote an afterword dismissing the story as "a very melodramatic sort of moonshine" which was not "meant for a serious description of the Deity" (185). He asked readers to remember the subtitle, and implied that the philosophy expressed in the novel did not and never had echoed his own personal feelings about God. But Chesterton's biographers disagree. Lynette Hunter argued that the novel was "not a joke, nor a

disputation, but a clear expression of Chesterton's inspiration" (64). The imaginative power of Chesterton's allegory resonates as both an Edwardian Pan novel and as the kind of Christian allegorical fiction that would anticipate Lewis and Tolkien. The book is "a clear confession of faith" (Hollis 59) as another biographer put it, but perhaps not faith in a traditional Christian sense.

A further figure that blurs the distinction between what can be called a Pan figure or a Christ figure is Dickon, one of the characters from *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. *The Secret Garden* is notable for its vivid, psychologically complex characters. Mary and Colin are memorable because of their flawed nature; the story is not a morality play like *Strummelpeter* where the protagonists are punished into becoming bland, docile "good" children. Instead, their love for each other makes them gradually more agreeable and sociable while allowing them to retain their unique personalities. The book was considered revolutionary at its time; some critics reviled it as "dealing almost wholly with abnormal people" (Bixler 13).

The character of Dickon Sowerby, however, is not that of a "bad boy" who needs reformation, but a friendly spiritual guide who leads Mary and Colin closer to the natural world. Burnett "blurs the line between human and nonhuman creatures" (Bixler 7), and a robin is as vivid a character as any of the human members of the cast. Dickon has no character arc of his own; his role is to direct Mary and Colin to a deeper communion with nature and therefore find healing.

Dickon can be taken as either a Pan figure, or perhaps the only form Pan can take in a realist novel. In her study *The Secret Garden: Nature's Magic*, Phyllis Bixler claims Dickon symbolically represents "a union with nature often thought to be lost" (7), a common theme in the Edwardian Pan story, and that his "resemblance to Pan is obvious" (Bixler 42). Dickon is not a literal faun, "only a common moor boy, in patched clothes" (Burnett 78), which, as Bixler points out, is "consistent with the book's predominantly realist mode" (42) although there are many lines in *The Secret Garden* which allude to his more-than-human status. Dickon is a child of nature, entirely in tune with the mysterious ways of the animal kingdom. In his first appearance, he plays his pipe surrounded by a squirrel, a pheasant and two rabbits, who listen entranced: "it appeared as if they were all drawing near ... to listen to the strange low little call his pipe seemed to make" (77).

In keeping with the book's somewhat magic-realist tone, Dickon is repeatedly compared to a benevolent magical creature; Mary calls him "a wood fairy" (89) and "a Yorkshire angel" (98) in a syncretic melding of Celtic mythology and Christianity. Though he is only a "queer, common boy" (98), Mary, who has never had any friends, quickly befriends him and attributes him with

supernatural ability: “Secretly she believed that Dickon worked Magic” (173). Dickon is trusted and liked by nearly everyone who meets him, animal or human. He goes “wanderin’ about everywhere” (35), connecting with the earth and forming deep relationships with animals, a Pan figure as kind as the Piper in *The Wind in the Willows*, though one considerably more approachable.

The Secret Garden superficially acknowledges Christianity; at the time it would have been unusual for a novel aimed at children to openly affirm paganism. In the penultimate chapter, Dickon sings the Doxology while the other characters accompany him. Soon after Dickon’s mother Susan arrives and affirms she believes in Magic, with the solemn capital (Burnett 219), something she conflates with God. “[I]t’s th’ Good Thing ... makin’ worlds by th’ million — an’ call it what tha’ likes”. Burnett follows this bold affirmation of religious syncretism with Susan stating that the words of the Doxology are not truly important, for “what’s names to th’ Joy Maker” (219). Such a view of god is essentially pantheistic, and suggests that human religion represents an attempt to grasp the divine and that therefore it is sincere belief, not creed, which matters. Such theology is innate to pantheist and Universalist beliefs.

Dickon is not a figure to be worshipped, but a spiritual guide who directs people and animals to worship in awe of a non-denominational creator, that is to say the “same thing as set th’ seeds swellin’ an’ th’ sun shinin’ ... it’s th’ Good Thing” (219). As he kneels in prayer, the animals gather round and kneel with him (Burnett 191). Therefore, if Dickon represents Pan, he is Pan the demigod, subservient to the true almighty, the deist “Joy Maker”.

Burnett was formerly an Anglican, but became interested in Spiritualism and Christian Science after the death of her oldest son. Burnett’s background as a Christian Scientist (Bixler 45) gives a slightly uncomfortable added meaning to *The Secret Garden*’s overarching theme of finding healing in nature. Colin is cured by his own will-power after being failed by a deceitful conventional doctor who deliberately lets him remain ill. Colin’s illness is partly psychosomatic, however, so his healing is not entirely a miraculous demonstration of mind over matter. Mary also demonstrates some possible psychological problems which are largely healed by her friendships with Dickon and Colin and her hard work cultivating the garden.

As the characters are barely pubescent, Dickon is obviously not an overtly sexualised version of Pan. Yet he is not as sexless as the Pan of *The Wind in the Willows*, who appears in a nearly all-male world where all relationships are platonic. However, there are hints of romantic attraction in the relationship between Mary and Dickon. She finds him the first person she has ever met that she truly likes, and repeatedly states her admiration for him, calling him “too good to be true” (89). Bixler has also suggested the Freudian interpretation that the secret garden itself

represents Mary's latent sexuality, and her and Dickon working together to bring it to life can be read as symbolic of early romantic attraction and the beginning of puberty (Bixler 40).

"Wakenin' up a garden" (85), in Dickon's words, is the phrase that summarises the entire thematic arc of the book. In reviving the long-neglected secret garden, trimming the weeds and bringing through a new generation of flowers, the changes in Mary's and Colin's own lives are mirrored. Colin is drawn out of his lonely, closed-off sick-room, and in becoming closer to the seasons and the growing of plants, finds spiritual and emotional healing. The common Edwardian themes of anti-industrialism and reuniting with nature are present here, echoing the line "happy the man, happy the woman, who awakes the hills" (*Collected Stories* 131) from E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops".

Dickon's symbolic role as a Pan figure is clear, but he also has Christ-like attributes. Dickon's mother, with "her long blue cloak" (Burnett 217), recalls the Virgin Mary, something picked up by Bixler, who describes Susan as having "a loving omniscience" (73) as she watches over the children. Dickon, as the son of the metaphorical Mary, becomes a symbolic Jesus by default, and his innately good nature and ability to lead others into communion with the divine cement his messianic role. Dickon combines the positive attributes of a Christ and a Pan figure without his character leaving the confines of a realist novel. Because *The Secret Garden* is a children's book, the darker and earthier sides of Pan are not entirely present, but Dickon is a benevolent Pan without becoming one whose portrayal actively denies the goat-god's key attributes, like Grahame's Piper at the Gates of Dawn.

Pan's inherently equivocal nature made even the most benevolent Pan figure ambiguous and pluralistic. The blurring of boundaries between Jesus and Pan in fiction reveals an intense spiritual yearning at the core of Edwardian writing, what Peter Green called "the desperate underlying need for a charitable and nourishing faith" (94) in times of massive societal change.

Chapter Two

Uneasy Dreams: Pan as the Nightmare of the Edwardians

Patricia Merivale considered the contemporary author's most interesting engagement with Pan as a literary character was the portrayal of him as dangerous or outright monstrous; "the theme of the sinister ... Pan is the most satisfying one yet found for modern fiction" (154). Indeed, the evil or at least ambivalent versions of Pan in Edwardian fiction far outnumber the good Pans. What Pan represented was the natural world, and only the most optimistic writers viewed nature as entirely friendly to humankind. Civilisation was built as a barrier against the predators and dangers of the wilderness, and if Pan signified tearing that barrier away, it is not hard to see why he was often a figure of horror.

Arthur Machen's novella "The Great God Pan" contains what is probably the most unambiguously evil Pan found in the fiction of any era. In the novella, Pan takes the form of Helen, a young woman who can be interpreted as either Pan's daughter or his female incarnation. Helen's existence is the result of the experiments of the unscrupulous Dr. Raymond, who mingles science and black magic to create "transcendental medicine" (61) and perform brain surgery on his female ward Mary (Helen's mother), which he claims will enable her to see beyond the physical world into another dimension, one of spirits and gods. Raymond invokes a Pan more pantheistic than Hellenic, stating, "The ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan" (62). During the surgery Raymond's witness, Clarke, has a brief vision of an entity "neither man nor beast, neither the living or the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form" (66-7). This is an unusually and deliberately sinister invocation of the Pantheistic philosophy of *Pan as everything*. To Machen, Pan is loathsome because he is all things, and therefore something unnatural, something that should not exist, a creature neither living nor dead.

Seeing Pan robs Mary of her mental faculties and results in the birth of her daughter, Helen, who is possibly Pan in human form, a dark Incarnation. Helen, described as having "pale clear olive skin" (71), is associated with danger and decadence as she is ambiguously foreign and something of a femme fatale. Helen is implied to be complicit in acts of sexual violence from early childhood; she is seen in the company of "a strange, naked man" (72) and later a girl who walks in the forest with her returns "weeping ... half-undressed" (74). As an adult Helen lures several young men to suicide before her eventual downfall. As in the case of Lucy Westenra in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, a group of male characters cooperate to ensure her gruesome death. In dying, Helen's body loses its human shape, and begins to change "from sex to sex" and from

animal to human, before finally assuming a final form reminiscent of something “seen in ancient sculptures, and in paintings which survived beneath the lava” (111, presumably a reference to Pompeii), which he implies is the half-human form of Pan himself. Earlier, a book of drawings by Helen is discovered which describes as “evil ... monstrous evil ... fauns and satyrs and aegipans danced before his eyes” (93).

However, Arthur Machen was a horror writer and his stories, with a few exceptions, portrayed agents of the supernatural as negative or dangerous. In the opening paragraphs of his 1904 story “The White People” Machen uses the rhetorical device of two men discussing morality and magic to state his philosophy on the nature of evil. To Machen, the truly evil was the unnatural; as one of the men replies when asked for the definition of sin, “if your cat or dog began to talk to you ... You would be overwhelmed with horror ... if the roses in your garden sang a weird song, you would go mad” (119). Sin, by definition, is the defiance of the natural order. Machen had been brought up in an Anglican household and is believed to have created the story of the Angels at Mons. (Reynolds & Charlton 117) Therefore in his view, the only positive supernatural influence could come from the Christian god, and any pagan or fairy creatures were simply diabolical beings wearing a mask to fool the unwary.

Machen dismisses Pan’s apparently friendly appearance as “a symbol to the most of us appearing a quaint, poetic fantasy” which conceals a reality so vile it causes the narrator to wonder “how ... the very sunlight does not turn to blackness before this thing, the hard earth melt and boil beneath such a burden?” (107). Machen’s Pan is so demonic that he seems to have lost almost all resemblance to the Pan of myth, who was an incarnation of “the hard earth”, not its deadly enemy. Machen’s Pan seems merely a pseudonym for the devil. However, the novella echoes pantheistic philosophy. Dr. Raymond quotes the German alchemist Oswald Crollius, who said, “In every grain of wheat there lies the heart of a star” (65). In putting a pantheistic aphorism into the mouth of a clearly evil character, Machen dismisses pantheism as sinister quackery, and denies the most essential attribute of both the mythical and modern Pan, his role as the connector of the divine and the debased.

“The Great God Pan”, however, while an extreme example of the sinister Pan is not Edwardian, as it was first published in 1894. To the Victorians, the atavism and sexuality Pan represented was unambiguously evil, but Pan in Edwardian fiction is an equivocal figure. Even at his most dangerous, the Edwardian Pan had a glamorous side; the freedom he represented was both frightening and compelling. In Saki’s “The Music on the Hill” Pan may be murderous, but in the author’s view the woman he slays clearly earns her punishment. E. M. Forster’s fictional Pan in “The Story of a Panic” is terrifying but ultimately a liberator for those brave enough to

accept his gifts. In E. F. Benson's story "The Man Who Went Too Far", the communion with nature that Pan represents is as fascinating as it is fearsome.

A single example of an almost purely evil Edwardian Pan can be found in Somerset Maugham's 1908 novel *The Magician*, based on the life of Aleister Crowley. The novel uses the motif of pipes playing and the appearance of a statue of Pan, culminating in an hallucinatory scene where the heroine has a delirious vision of the god, who appears as:

a monstrous, goat-legged thing, more vast than the creatures of nightmare ... the horns and the long beard, the great hairy legs with their hoofs, and the man's rapacious hands. The face was horrible with lust and cruelty, and yet it was divine. It was Pan, playing on his pipes, and the lecherous eyes caressed her with a hideous tenderness. (92)

The vision of Pan immediately turns into a beautiful angel, "the outcast son of the morning" (92). The equation of Pan and Lucifer is common in fiction written after the appropriation of Pan as a Christian symbol, but Pan is usually likened to the bestial devil found in mediaeval lore, not Lucifer as fallen angel. *The Magician* appears to be written from a position of discomfort with any male sexual power. The masculinity represented by Pan and Aleister Crowley equivalent character Oliver Haddo is characterised by Maugham as almost entirely negative, as "rapacious" and "lecherous", predatory and violent. However, even Maugham's monstrous Pan, probably the wickedest of the Edwardian versions of the god, is ambiguous in his intentions, and the author reminds us that he is "divine".

The Magician's use of Pan symbolism represented Edwardian uneasiness with changing attitudes to sexuality, but the novel's un-innovative use of the Pan motif is unsurprising considering that the novel is one of Maugham's more minor works and large sections of the book are plagiarised word-for-word from sources as diverse as *The Island of Doctor Moreau* by H. G. Wells, occult manuals, and even Arthur Machen's "The Great God Pan". Crowley himself, not amused by the novel's portrayal of him and more familiar than most with the occult texts Maugham had plundered, wrote a review signed "Oliver Haddo" conclusively proving that large sections of the book "were little more than transcripts" of the work of other authors (Calder 99).

While the aforementioned Victorian or minor Edwardian works portray Pan as demonic, the three most interesting Edwardian Pan stories, "The Music on the Hill" by Saki, "The Story of a Panic" by E. M. Forster and "The Man Who Went Too Far" by E. F. Benson, reconnect with the factors that made the mythical Pan such a frightening figure. What makes Pan sinister here is not innovation, as Merivale suggests, but the revival of a classical Greek cautionary tale,

the gods' punishment of *hubris*. All three stories use Pan as a symbol to explore the theme of blasphemy and punishment.

The Arcadian Pan was not a devil, nor did he, like Shakespeare's Iago, suffer from "motiveless malignity", in Coleridge's phrase, visiting suffering and terror on mortals without cause. The Greek gods did not show their darker side to mortals without purpose. In Classical myth, gods appeared as terrifying to mortals for a specific reason, to punish a blasphemer. In Greek mythology, mortals from Arachne to Sisyphus were penalised for disrespect to the gods with devastating results. The satyr Marsyas boasted that he was a better musician than Apollo, and he was flayed alive for his claim, in spite of the fact it was true. Niobe insulted the titan Leto and watched her twelve children mercilessly slaughtered in front of her. To the Greek gods, the greatest crime was that of *hubris*. The mortals were to be mercilessly reminded of their place in the cosmic hierarchy. In the Edwardian Pan story, blasphemers are punished, but for different and somewhat more subtle reasons. Saki and Benson both wrote horror stories of a mortal being slain by an offended Pan, and both writers' works can be read as allegories for the problematic relationship between humanity and nature. Forster's story, which ends somewhat more happily, is not ultimately about the punishment of a blasphemer but the opposite, the reward of the faithful worshipper, with those who lack the courage to commune with the divine being the ones punished. In all three stories Pan is an elusive and frightening figure, glimpsed rarely.

Saki's "The Music on the Hill", written in 1911, is probably the most violent of the three stories and in its own perverse fashion the most didactic. The story concerns an unhappily married couple, Sylvia and Mortimer, who move from London to the countryside of Yessney at the wife's insistence. The couple's names are an anti-pun; Sylvia has never known anything "more sylvan than leafy Kensington" (178), and feels deeply uncomfortable with the country, while Mortimer, derided as "dead" (177) by his wife and pressured into moving against his will, finds himself coming to life for the first time amid the "sombre almost savage wildness" (180) of Yessney. Soon after their arrival, Mortimer casually admits that he believes Pan is real and roaming the local countryside, to the consternation of Sylvia, who is Christian, in a way Saki dismisses as "vaguely devotional" and as such uneasy at the idea of her faith as "mere aftergrowths" of an original pagan religion. Mortimer describes Pan thus:

The worship of Pan never has died out ... Other newer gods have drawn aside his votaries from time to time, but he is the Nature-God to whom all must come back at last. He has been called the Father of all the Gods, but most of his children have been stillborn. (180)

This extraordinary speech creates an almost pantheistic image of Pan as an all-father, a vision of the god vastly different from the mocked and marginalised Olympian goat god. Saki's Pan is an Anglicised god, a horned and hooved nature spirit, the patron deity of masculinity and the lonely wilderness. Mortimer's speech also hints at Pan as a death god, to whom all living things return to meet their maker.

Sylvia discovers a statue of Pan as a youth amid "huge yew trees" (182), ancient European conifers associated with death and immortality, and is offended to see that someone, presumably Mortimer, has left an offering of fresh grapes by the pedestal. In the spirit of feminine practicality, Sylvia removes the grapes, a rare luxury in Edwardian times. Her action invokes the wrath of a god. She is immediately overcome by a sense of being haunted, and glimpses "a boy's face ... brown and beautiful, with unutterably evil eyes" (182) watching her.

The short remainder of Sylvia's life is tormented by a sense of pursuit and fear. The countryside has turned against her. On the farm, Sylvia is overcome by a sense of "crushing stillness and desolation" in the traditionally bucolic and safe surroundings. The animals are hostile towards her, and even the dog, traditional friend to the British, watches her with "unfriendly eyes" (181). Fleeing from the sound of pipes into the hills, Sylvia stumbles across the practice of an ancient British custom, the hunting of "a fat September stag". The animal charges towards Sylvia and gores her to death. In Sylvia's last moments, the landscape itself seems to have become her enemy: "thick heather roots mocked her scrambling attempts at flight" (184). The traditionally safe and consoling has become the terrifying. In angering Pan, who is all, Sylvia is crushed by the wilderness itself for her blasphemy.

Sylvia's last moments are filled with "the horror of something ... other than her oncoming death" (185), and she is mocked by the laughter of a young boy, surely an incarnation of Pan. The nameless fear she feels is *panic*. Sylvia's desecration of Pan's altar is only an outward sign of her irreverence to Pan. It is her contemptuous attitude to the wild, untameable natural world that invokes Pan's hatred, and her disrespectful behaviour to the statue only seals her doom. Sylvia's devotion to the domestic, the safe, cosy, tame, feminine world of the urban dooms her to be an outsider in Pan's kingdom, and her failure to acknowledge the natural world as something ancient, dangerous and powerful brings nature itself to trample her to the ground.

"Wood gods are rather horrible to those who molest them," Mortimer warns Sylvia, before dispassionately telling her, "I don't think you will ever go back to Town" (183). He seems aware of his wife's impending fate, but unconcerned about her. Mortimer, who before marriage showed an "unaffected indifference to women" (179), seems to have been pressured into the

match, and willingly takes the side of Pan against his wife. Like other authors of Pan horror stories E. F. Benson and E. M. Forster, Saki was a homosexual, and his distaste for the woman who has pushed a 'confirmed bachelor' into marriage may have stemmed from watching his contemporaries' experiences. It is notable that the natural world, ruled by Pan, is coded as entirely male in "The Music on the Hill", contrary to other stories which portray Pan as the companion to nymphs and other female nature spirits. Saki's Yessney is a place hostile to the feminine and ruled by horned beasts and beautiful males.

E. F. Benson's 1904 story "The Man Who Went Too Far" also ends with a gruesome death, that of the poet Frank Halton who is trampled underfoot by Pan himself. Halton's crime is the opposite of Sylvia's: instead of showing contempt for Pan and the natural world, he makes the mistake of over-familiarity. Halton seeks a profound communion with Pan and the natural world he represents, but he makes the grave mistake of assuming Pan is an entirely benevolent god, that the wilderness he represents is entirely safe, and that communion with Pan will be a purely joyous experience. In his denial of Pan's dual nature, Halton commits the hubris of failing to show respect for the god's darker nature.

"The Man Who Went Too Far" is a typical Edwardian Pan story in many respects. The first sentence of the story alone is a treasure-box to be unpacked:

The little village of St. Faith's nestles in a hollow of the wooded hill up on the north bank of the river Fawn in the country of Hampshire, huddling close round its grey Norman church as if for spiritual protection against the fays and fairies, the trolls and "little people," who might be supposed still to linger in the vast empty spaces of the New Forest, and to come after dusk and do their doubtful businesses. (Benson 105)

This passage elegantly summarises the argument of Chapter One, with Pan as a fairy-captain, leading entities from Britain's pagan past in a war against the invading religion of Christianity. The names of the village and river are fairly transparent in their imagery. The village of St. Faith's village clinging to a Norman church against the onslaught of Celtic pagan deities free to roam after dark (that is to say when the illumination of the Enlightenment is withdrawn and superstition and pagan beliefs free to reign) is a clear indictment of Edwardian Christianity. It is also significant that the village, the populated area, has a name associated with Christianity, and the river, symbol of nature, one echoing Pan. The homonym of Fawn and Faun is no coincidence, and Pan is mentioned soon after, as "a monstrous goat" who "has been seen to skip with hellish glee about the woods" (Benson 106) and of whom the villagers are terrified. Though

Benson uses the adjective “hellish”, the Pan in “The Man Who Went Too Far” is not the demonic figure of Machen and Maugham, but nature itself, personified in a terrifying, pre-Christian form, the companion of the trolls and fairies which persecuted Irish peasants in Celtic lore.

Halton is a man who lives in communion with nature in a proto-hippie state. He seems decades younger than his true age, has stopped smoking and eating meat, and animals seem to instinctively trust him. He claims to have become “more human” (112) and now desires perfect oneness with nature; as he puts it “I am one with it ... the river and I, I and the river ... It is all one, all one, dear Fawn” (107). The homonym is once again apparent, and Pan is indeed *all one*, but Halton is not addressing the Pan of *The Wind in the Willows*, and therefore using a sentimental term of endearment to Pan is borderline hubris.

Halton, in his desire to create a neo-pagan religion, speaks contemptuously of Christianity, with its attendant “renunciation, asceticism for its own sake, mortification of the flesh with nothing to follow, no corresponding gain that is, and that awful and terrible disease which devastated England some centuries ago ... Puritanism” (111). Rejecting what he sees as the inherent joylessness of Puritanism and by extension, all Abrahamic religion, he seeks to become a disciple of Pan. Halton recounts to his friend Darcy how six months ago he was, like Sylvia in Saki’s story, haunted by the sound of phantom piping when walking alone: “It came from the reeds and from the sky and the trees. It was everywhere ... it was Pan” and despite his determination to see the goat god, he instinctively fled, “literally in a panic” (113), in his primal instinctive response that Pan was not safe. Halton admits to feeling shame at his immediate reaction, and states he has resolved never to run from Pan again, for he feels his fear is unnatural and does not fit in with his worldview of nature as inherently benevolent and good: “there is nothing in the world which so injures one’s body as fear ... nothing that so much shuts up the soul” (114). He tells Darcy he intends to encounter Pan and become the latter’s acolyte, preaching “a gospel of joy, showing myself as the living proof of the truth” (115).

Darcy, instinctively uneasy about his friend’s intentions, warns Halton that to the Ancient Greeks, to “see Pan meant death, did it not?” (116). But the latter dismisses his concerns, stating he is willing to sacrifice his life and he is sure Pan will grant him immortality. The two men encounter an old woman, who kisses Halton on the cheek, entranced by his beauty, and later a crying child, whom Halton runs from in horror, claiming that suffering has nothing to do with Pan and “pain, anger, anything unlovely ... retards the coming of the great hour” (117) when he will encounter his god. Darcy warns him a second time, pointing out the obvious truth that “Nature from highest to lowest is full, crammed full of suffering ... you run away from it,

you refuse to recognise it” (119), and that Pan, as a nature spirit and perhaps the incarnation of the natural world itself, contains the suffering Halton refuses to acknowledge in nature.

Halton, having been warned twice about the nature of his blasphemy, continues towards his doom and claims he hears pan-pipes inaudible to Darcy. In fervid excitement, Halton claims “I can’t go back now ... whatever the revelation is, it will be God” (120), stating his unambiguous worship of Pan. They return to Halton’s house, where Darcy sleeps in the guest room while outside a symbolic storm gathers. When Darcy wakes in the night, he hears Halton screaming for help, calling on the name of “My God, oh my God; oh, Christ!” (121). Running outside, Darcy and a servant find Halton feverish, dying with “terror incarnate and repulsion and deathly anguish” (122) visible on his features, and his formerly unnaturally youthful face now aging rapidly. He soon perishes, and his spirit is rumoured to haunt the wood by the villagers after, suggesting that Pan indeed granted Halton’s wish for immortality.

“The Man Who Went Too Far” can easily be interpreted as a pro-Christian fable, warning of the dangers of pagan worship. A superficial reading of Halton’s last, desperate call to the Abrahamic god for help suggests an admission that his Pan-worship was a terrible mistake. However, it is uncertain whether “my God” refers to Pan or the Christian God, and Halton’s last-moment return to Christian worship does not save him from Pan’s hooves. Halton cries out at the instant of his death to the Christian god he claims to have despised not because paganism has failed him but because he has tried to worship Pan without acknowledging the goat-god’s true nature, and without grasping that the wilderness Pan represents is not safe or entirely friendly. His refusal to acknowledge the suffering of the world and his insistence on worshipping a safe, “de-horned” Pan with little resemblance to the original Arcadian god lead to Halton’s death when he is confronted with the true goat-god. Halton’s attempt to crawl back into the Christianity he has formerly spurned is not Benson’s acknowledgement of Christianity as a greater belief system than paganism but his indictment of the sentimental young Edwardian man as utterly unfit to know Pan, the incarnation of nature and all it represents. Pan tramples Halton and leaves his chest marked with “pointed prints” (122), symbolising Pan’s contempt for one who has understood his nature in such a shallow way. One is reminded of the twee, miniaturised fairies of the Victorians, vastly different from the Celtic original. Halton’s blasphemy can be viewed as greater than Sylvia’s, for Halton attempted to diminish Pan in a far more serious way than Sylvia.

The mockery of Edwardian neo-pagan tendencies as overly sentimental can also be seen in E. M. Forster’s 1911 “The Story of a Panic”, the story of a group of Edwardian picnickers who encounter Pan in an Italian chestnut forest. Among their number is Leyland, a pretentious

poet who loudly mourns the passing of nature-worship with such grandiose statements as “Nereids have left the waters and the Oreads the mountains ... the woods no longer give shelter to Pan” (13). When the party encounter a nightmarish presence in the woods, Leyland is the first to flee. A glimpse of a true Pan-ruled cosmos leaves little room for the maudlin.

Though Benson and Saki set their stories in Britain, Forster’s Pan appears to a group of Edwardian tourists in Italy, and appears to be closer to the Greek Pan than the ancient, atavistic British Pan. It is notable that the happiest of the three horror stories discussed here involves British characters going to Pan rather than the other way round.

The appearance of Pan, who as in many Edwardian stories is never directly described by Forster, is a test for the group of picnickers, in an echo of the Biblical verse “many are called, few are chosen”. The party, walking through a clearing in the wood, are startled by an incomprehensible sense of fear which terrifies them so much they drop their belongings and flee, not realising they have left one of their number behind. The narrator describes his panic as “stopping up the ears ... filling the mouth with foul tastes” and afterwards filling him with shame and making him feel he has behaved “not as a man but as a beast” (15). The picnickers return in confusion about what has just happened to find the boy Eustace has remained alone in the clearing, which is now marked with hoof-prints. Eustace refuses to speak of what he has seen, but he wears a “disquieting smile” (17).

The picnickers flee from Pan because they are not worthy to receive his vision. Leyland is capable of viewing Greek myths only as shallow sentiment, and the narrator is too cynical and judgemental for numinous experience. An older man with the party begins to pray on seeing the hoof-prints, echoing a common mediaeval conflation of Pan and the devil. Only one young woman, Rose, later admits she almost remained, but upon seeing her mother fleeing followed her. Rose is innocent and uncorrupted enough to receive a true vision, but her ties to domesticity and family make her flee from religious transcendence. Only Eustace remains, and it is not entirely clear at first why he alone is worthy of seeing Pan. His fellow picnickers dislike him, and the narrator finds him “indescribably repellent” (17) before his vision, but changed afterwards.

Eustace descends into madness following his vision of Pan, but it is clear the nature of his insanity is different from that of Halton in “The Man Who Went Too Far”, with his sentimentalising of nature. Eustace has experienced such a profound communion with the embodiment of the natural world that to be confined within walls is now traumatic to him; he cries out “I can’t see anything — no flowers, no leaves, no sky: only a stone wall” (25). His relatives, not understanding the nature of his insanity, try to confine him, which seems to increase his panic. The Italian servant Gennaro sacrifices his life to allow Eustace to escape, and

the latter flees into the woods as the night echoes “the shouts and laughter of the escaping boy” (33).

Eustace is rewarded by Pan for his uncompromising pursuit of the vision, as he survives, regains his sanity, and the narrator notes he later gains some unspecified notoriety, as eight years later in England “photographs of him ... are beginning to get into the illustrated papers” (17). His communion with Pan has apparently given him a glamorous notoriety in the vein of Oscar Wilde. Unlike Sylvia or Halton, Eustace has seen and accepted Pan’s nature wholeheartedly, and his embracing of nature in its entirety has allowed him to gain true liberation. As Gennaro puts it in his last words, Eustace “has understood and he is saved ... Now instead of dying he will live!” (33). Forster’s Pan is the reverse of the punishing god of Saki and Benson; he is the benevolent Pan who rewards his faithful. The punishment of the blasphemer would have no meaning without the possibility of a god’s power being used for good.

In Forster’s worldview, to truly submit to the worship of Pan was to abandon civilisation and its morality and unequivocally embrace primitivism. Though Pan terrifies a group of British tourists, drives a young man to madness and seems partially responsible for Gennaro’s death, Pan is not the villain of “The Story of a Panic”. It is the hypocrites and cynics who are at fault, and the institutions of walls and the closed spaces. The danger comes, as Patricia Merivale points out in her commentary on the story, “not from a vision, but from ... a civilisation that denies the vision”, for the “civilised ... cannot bear ... escape” (181). It is a theme common to Forster’s short fiction; his stories such as “The Machine Stops” and “Other Kingdom” celebrate a return to primitivism and posit civilisation as a temporary state of trial to be endured by the faithful. “The Story of the Siren” celebrates another classical nature spirit, this time the female siren whose song ensnares men. The siren attempts to use two Italian peasants as pawns to ensure the birth of the antichrist, and is thwarted by a cruel priest. Here it is Christianity which is demonised and nature presented as a force for good. The siren’s failure is endured by her faithful acolyte, who promises that “Silence and loneliness cannot last forever. It may be a hundred or a thousand years, but the sea lasts longer, and she will come out of it and sing” (187).

Pan and the untamed world he represented terrified the Edwardian elite, but at the same time exerted a beckoning fascination. There are few truly malevolent Pans in Edwardian writing, as what Pan signified was often feared but never entirely scorned.

Chapter Three

Savage Wildness to Garden God: Pan as an Edwardian Homosexual Icon

The Edwardian Pan was an inconsistent creature, one who often seemed so different from the original Greek god as to be an entirely different figure. A striking trend in the fiction surveyed here was for Pan to become younger and more effeminate than the bearded classical original. Such a version of Pan appears in the surprisingly large amount of Edwardian Pan fiction written by homosexual men. Saki, Forster and Benson all wrote Pan stories with arguable homoerotic undertones, and Pan also plays a significant role in *The Garden God*, a 1906 short novel by Forrest Reid and one of the most openly homosexual published works of the Edwardian period.

Pan is a curious choice for the homosexual author, for though members of the classical pantheon such as Zeus and Apollo were recorded as having male lovers, there are no known myths associating Pan with homosexual acts, and in fact the most significant myth associated with Pan's sexuality is his unrequited love for the nymph Syrinx. The question of why, then Pan became such an iconic figure to the Edwardian homosexual is complicated. The most obvious answer is Pan's association with the outsider and the marginalised. Pan was a half-animal outcast from Olympus, a creature scorned and ridiculed. However, it is too simplistic to suggest that a socially marginalised group would cling to a god of outsiders because they identified with him. A more nuanced approach is to consider that the myth of Pan, combined with what the Edwardian Pan cult had turned him into, had a particular and specific appeal to the homosexual author. Pan, as a half-goat, half-human, was a symbol of untamed, naturalistic male sexuality. Interestingly, in Edwardian fiction, Pan's sexuality is overwhelmingly associated with his darker aspects. In Machen's "The Great God Pan", Pan is used as a symbol of decadence and sexual violence in a disturbing narrative of forced pregnancy, and the most unambiguously kind and good Pan, the Piper at the Gates of Dawn from Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, is an entirely sexless figure. In a heteronormative narrative, Pan's primitive, animalistic sexuality was inherently threatening, but to the homosexual author it was a symbol of liberation.

Jonathan Rose, author of *The Edwardian Temperament*, suggests that much early twentieth century fiction contained a symbolic conflict between civilisation, characterised as essentially feminine, and the wild, characterised as masculine, a conflict characteristic of American fiction such as the works of Mark Twain but also occurring in British fiction: "the male must fight free of the social controls imposed by women" (87), Rose states, referring to D.H. Lawrence's fiction. However, while in the primarily heterosexual Lawrence's fiction the central conflict is between men and women, in the work of the homosexual Edwardian writer the conflict is one between

the heteronormative establishment, as represented by civilisation, and “queerness”, as represented by nature and the wilderness.

The deliberate association of homosexuality and nature is a provocative one, as heterosexuality has been traditionally considered the natural state to which alternate sexualities are abnormal perversions. The Edwardian homosexual author was deliberately drawing attention to heteronormativity as an artificial construct and, in the use of a classical god as a symbol, harking back to the days of the ancient Greeks, when sexual fluidity had been more accepted. Pan’s physical attributes are notable in that he is a nature god who takes a form alien to nature — a chimera of man and goat. Pan is a creature both superficially unnatural and embodying nature, and thus an ideal totemic spirit for the marginalised who desired acceptance.

The use of Pan as a homoerotic figure has a remarkable intersection with his appearance in horror tales, and of the three short stories and one novella discussed in this chapter, only the novella, *The Garden God*, has not been previously discussed in Chapter Two. Saki, Benson and Forster all wrote stories that became part of the Pan boom, and all three stories, particularly those of Saki and Forster, use Pan as a symbol of defiance against the heteronormative establishment. The horrific Pan and the homoerotic Pan overlap so much because the latter was a nightmare of and a punisher of repressive civilisation.

E. F. Benson is believed to have been homosexual. He was known to be celibate, to have had close friendships with younger men and to have copied out the entirety of Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis* “in a notebook heavily inscribed PRIVATE” (Masters 177).

In Benson’s story “The Man Who Went Too Far” the handsome young poet Halton and his sadomasochistic death under the hooves of Pan can be taken as homoerotic. Notably, Halton is described as being “of great personal beauty, with something about him that made *men’s* faces to smile and brighten when they looked upon him” (106) [italics mine]. Halton is punished for his attempt to commune with the natural world without fully accepting its brutality and pain. The title is ironic, as his crime is not going too far, but not going far enough. However, the story’s final paragraphs leave some doubt over whether Halton is ultimately punished or rewarded, as Halton’s initial expression of horror on his vision of Pan is replaced by the expression of “a boy tired with play but still smiling in his sleep” (122), suggesting that in death Halton may have found a final spiritual peace. Halton has gone too far in the eyes of society, and received the ultimate punishment, but his death can be taken as martyrdom in exchange for ultimate communion with the divine.

Saki kept his sexual orientation a closely guarded secret throughout his life, but it is now known that he wore a heart-shaped locket engraved with the name “Cyril” (Langguth 188).

Certain tropes common to the homosexual author are found throughout his short stories, such as the Turkish bath as a setting and a preoccupation with blackmail. Saki's homosexuality left him marginalised in a society where a man's role was expected to be the patriarch of a family, and as such his fiction shows a distinctly anti-establishment streak.

Saki's utter contempt for heterosexual romance is shown in his story "The Secret Sin of Septimus Brope", in which the character Clovis Sangrail, who recurs throughout Saki's short stories and seems to have been a surrogate for Saki himself, helps a struggling writer of popular love-songs by suggesting that, as a novelty, he write a song about hating a woman. The song, containing the lines "you'll be very sorry, Florrie, / If I marry you" (239), becomes a hit, something amusing in itself but more disturbing when taken in the context of the undercurrent of misogyny and rejection of the female present in Saki's fiction. Saki was known for his particular hatred of the suffragettes, whose movement he lampooned in "Hermann the Irascible", and whilst his fiction contains many positive female characters, the plot of a young boy taking revenge on his older female relatives recurs many times over, for instance in "Sredni Vashtar" and "The Lumber-Room", as a catharsis for Saki's own unhappy upbringing by his maiden aunts.

Pan is almost always a symbol of the masculine in nature, but in the works of other authors he exists in dualism with the female nymphs and the construct of nature as the mother of humanity. Such a balance of the male and female aspects of nature does not exist in Saki's "The Music on the Hill", in which the feminine is an entirely unwanted intruder in the masculine countryside, which is populated by stags and other horned animals and the home of the traditional male pursuits of hunting and fishing.

Saki's women are domestic, practical and usually confined to the town. They represent the urban repressive world of order that the bold, pagan, knights who are Saki's young male heroes must confront and defeat. Echoing the "blonde beast" of Nietzsche, Saki's male characters are often associated with the animal; the eponymous villain of "Gabriel-Ernest" is literally a werewolf. The young man as a dangerous wild creature resisting the taming of society was evidently one attractive to Saki, whose 1912 collection *The Chronicles of Clovis* is dedicated to "the Lynx Kitten, with His Reluctantly Given Consent" (Langguth 109), an epigraph Saki's biographer Langguth is certain did not refer to an actual cat. Langguth also notes that Saki had a tendency to portray "young men as untamed creatures of nature" (188) which were probably both his ideal lovers and his ideal self. Comus Bassington, the main character of Saki's only novel, *The Unbearable Bassington*, published in 1912, entirely fits this archetype, and interestingly in the following excerpt he is compared to a faun:

In appearance he exactly fitted his fanciful Pagan name. His large green-grey eyes seemed for ever asparkle with goblin mischief and the joy of revelry, and the curved lips might have been those of some wickedly-laughing faun; one almost expected to see embryo horns fretting the smoothness of his sleek dark hair. (20)

To give an idea of what “goblin mischief” constitutes, Comus’ first action is to cane a younger schoolboy whose “fagging” is below par, after first coating the cane with chalk to ensure he can strike in the same spot every time. Saki deliberately draws attention to Comus’ non-Christian name and compares him to both a classical faun and a Celtic goblin, a word which derives from the Welsh *coblynau*. The hero’s “embryo horns” are inseparable from mediaeval imagery of the devil and demons, and his name Comus is derived from both the classical attendant of Dionysus and the cruel necromancer in Milton’s masque of the same name. Saki had very little respect for Christianity, as shown in his light fantasy “The Story of St. Vespallus”, which tells of the struggle between pagans and early Christian martyrs and shows Saki to be unambiguously on the side of the pagans.

Saki’s ideal of the young man as beautiful and rebellious is projected onto his version of Pan in “The Music on the Hill”, who is an attractive young man with an “equivocal” laugh and “unutterably evil eyes”. The seemingly contradictory description of Pan as both evil and equivocal reflects Saki’s cheerful disdain for the traditional moral structures of church and tradition. Saki’s fictional world is ruled by an almost Nietzschean morality; the title of his 1914 collection *Beasts and Super-Beasts* is a reference to George Bernard Shaw’s *Man and Superman*, which in turn is a reference to the *Übermensch* of Nietzsche. “The Music on the Hill” invokes one of the classical Pan’s most sinister attributes — his ability to control horned beasts and provoke them to attack — and uses it to punish a woman who has offended the wild, untameable masculinity Saki’s Pan represents. Superficially, her crime is blasphemy, but, on a symbolic level, Sylvia is punished by the author for pressuring a confirmed bachelor into a marriage he does not want, and for attempting to enforce the rules of civilisation on the wilderness.

Sylvia’s death scene is written with distinctly misogynist overtones, especially if the reader takes a Freudian interpretation of the horned stag goring her. It is important not to assume that such sexism was the direct result of male homosexuality, and was more likely the result of Saki’s unhappy childhood. Certain facts from Saki’s biography make Sylvia’s fate more disturbing. Saki was brought up by his emotionally abusive aunts as a result of the death of his mother, who was charged by a runaway cow while heavily pregnant. Saki’s biographer notes that if such a bizarre event had affected another family, it “might have made Saki smile” (7). Presumably

Langguth did not make the connection between “The Music on the Hill” and the events of the author’s early childhood. But once such an association is made, the disturbing implications are hard to unsee, especially if the figure of the youthful, mocking Pan is taken as a stand-in for the child Saki himself.

It is important not to think of Saki’s misogyny and his homosexuality as inevitably intertwined. E. F. Benson and Forrest Reid included no significant female presence in their respective Pan stories, but E. M. Forster, another Edwardian homosexual author, included the female nature spirits Saki ignored for instance, specifically mentioning Oreads and Nereids in “The Story of a Panic”, as well as the eponymous mermaid in “The Story of the Siren” and Miss Beaumont in “Other Kingdom”, a retelling of the myth of Apollo and Daphne in which a young woman literally transforms into a tree to escape her domineering husband.

However, Forster’s fiction preserved the thematic dichotomy between nature as masculine and civilisation as feminine: for instance, the novella “The Machine Stops” revolves around a conflict between mother and son Vashti and Kuno, the former supporting the cloistering dystopia of the machine, and the latter dreaming of a primitive but free world. Forster’s works were considerably less didactic than the dark morality fables of Saki. The struggle between luddism and progress is thematically crystallised in the quote “happy the man, happy the *woman*, who awakes the hills” (131) [emphasis mine], a phrasing unusual in Edwardian times, when man was more likely to be used as a synonym for humanity. Vashti and Kuno reconcile in death by the end of the story, neither being punished for their views.

Forster was homosexual and known to have had a lifelong unrequited love for an Indian man. His orientation was revealed only after his death, and informs the posthumously published *Maurice*. His biographer Claude L. Summers claims that though only one of Forster’s works was explicitly homosexual in subject, his homosexuality was “a crucial aspect of his personality and his art” (5) and thereby intrinsic to his work. “The Story of a Panic” certainly lends itself to a homosexual reading, with Pan becoming a symbol of what was acceptable in classical Greek times but shocking to a British Edwardian audience.

“The Story of a Panic” portrays the god Pan as a spirit of atavistic nature, a creature irreconcilable with the civilised world, and one associated with beautiful, doomed young men. Stripped of its supernatural content, the story is about two boys attempting to flee civilisation and its oppression, resulting in the death of one and the ultimate liberation of the other, who later develops notoriety as a decadent. Cambridge librarian Charles Sayle put it far more bluntly, shocking Forster by stating that the story was about “buggery” (Phillips 134). But, regardless of whether the reader interprets Eustace’s encounter with Pan as a literal sexual experience or a

more metaphorical scene of Eustace “knowing himself” in the Socratic sense, the Pan in “The Story of a Panic” is indisputably a homoerotic figure, far more so than in Saki’s story. Forster’s Pan is the terrifying encounter in lonely places, feared by the majority and mistaken for the embodiment of ultimate evil, but capable of giving liberation to those not afraid to face him. Pan never appears directly in the story, so one can only speculate whether Forster, like Saki, envisioned him as young and beautiful, but his worshippers seem largely young and male.

Forster’s Pan does not reject women, and Rose, the young woman in the story almost encounters Pan with Eustace but flees to be with her mother. As a young woman, she is tied to domesticity and family, and it is societal expectations which prevent her from seeing Pan, not her innate femininity. In Forster’s fiction, it is civilisation that binds women to their role, not the role of women to bind men to civilisation. Forster’s conception of Pan worship is therefore more complex and nuanced than Saki’s, and closer to the original Arcadian figure, who was a companion to nymphs and a bridge between the human and the divine.

The essential plot of a love between two young men, ending in the death of one is repeated in Forrest Reid’s 1906 novella *The Garden God*, whose subject matter was daring for its time, though mitigated somewhat by its unhappy ending, which can be interpreted as a punishment for homosexuality. Reid later seemed to wish he had not written the story, stating it belonged in “the darkest corner reserved for disowned juvenilia” (Taylor 46), but whether he regretted publishing fiction with such explicit homosexual themes or simply thought the work sentimental and badly written is unclear.

Reid, a friend of E. M. Forster, was a troubled man sometimes accused of pederasty due to his novels’ excessive focus on the lives of schoolboys. His biographer Brian Taylor speculated that the author was celibate: “he disapproved of fulfilled homosexuality and was disgusted by fulfilled heterosexuality” (175). Certainly the love between boys in *The Garden God* is an idealised romantic friendship rather than a sexual encounter.

Reid’s writing about Greek Gods is interesting in not being anglicised to the slightest degree; Pan is not a composite of Arcadian and Celtic traits or a substitute Jesus, but a classical being understood through the traditions of the ancient Greeks. Reid’s characters are aristocratic schoolboys educated in Greek and Latin, as familiar with ancient Greek religion as they are with Christian iconography. The narrator, an unworldly boy named Graham, is more familiar than most; his father “taught him to read Greek at an age when most boys are stumbling through the first page of grammar” (9) and his entire frame of reference is based on Greek Myth, not Christianity, as he refers to death as “the endless woods of Persephone” (6). Graham admits a longing to have lived in the time of Plato, a tacit reference to homosexuality which is later made

explicit when he considers the “tales of a pagan world, in which this wonderful passion of friendship, then so common, had played its part”, a reference to Greek love as proverbially homosexual (29).

Graham, a lonely young boy brought up by his widower father, has an imaginary friend throughout his childhood, the “garden god” of the title, described as physically resembling the famous statue of Spinario. The statue in question is not of Pan, but there is much textual evidence, which I will return to later, to indicate that Graham’s companion is indeed Pan. Graham calls the statue his friend and “the messenger of Eros”, hinting that the statue caused him to realise his attraction to men (13). On his arrival at school Graham meets Harold Brocklehurst, a boy who perfectly resembles the garden god. Graham soon discovers that “Brocklehurst’s reputation was not a good one” (39). Brocklehurst is outcast socially and has been previously suspended from school for reasons that none of the other boys will readily divulge. When Graham confronts Brocklehurst, the latter explains that he was expelled because he took long walks at night, claiming he only “wanted to run in the moonlight ... to be free” (49).

Brocklehurst was almost certainly suspended because of homosexual behaviour, but the use of moonlit walks as a coded reference to homosexuality is significant, once more reinforcing the connection between male homosexuality and nature, while portraying civilisation as stifling and imprisoning. However, the association of civilisation and femininity common to Saki and Forster is not found here. Set as it is in an all-male school, *The Garden God* contains no female characters. Reid, like Forster, specifically mentions the nymphs that were the traditional companions of Pan, referring to “the Hamadryads, who inhabit the forest trees ... and Oreads, and Naiads”. The mention of female nature spirits, along with Graham’s comfort in “the earth, his mother” (57), prove that while *The Garden God* lacked female characters, the worship of Pan as an eroticised masculine deity did not preclude the acknowledgement of female divinity in nature.

Graham and Brocklehurst quickly become close friends, and Reid makes the romantic nature of this friendship remarkably unambiguous, considering repressive Edwardian sexual conformity. Graham reads love poetry, “altering the gender of the personal pronouns, and thinking of Harold” (54) and mentions that he can only find a parallel to what he feels for his friend “in a few poems, and in one or two passages from Plato” (53). Graham is haunted by the foreboding that his happiness with Brocklehurst can only be brief, and rightly fears the future. At this point, Graham and Brocklehurst turn to Pan.

Brocklehurst, like Graham, is an outsider who feels more comfortable living through books than in reality. He hints that he believes he has lived before, in classical times, and

considers the modern world “a kind of dull dream, a kind of captivity” (49). Brocklehurst encourages Graham’s embryonic pagan beliefs, the two talking of “the flute of Pan” (50). Convinced to embrace pagan spirituality by his friend, Graham fervently prays to “Beloved Pan” to give him inner peace and make “the inner and the outward man be at one” (65).

Reid’s Pan is no mere literary device; he is not the incongruous altar in the English countryside or the mysterious encounter in a foreign country, but a real god, a refuge for those abandoned by Christianity and its attendant moral system. On holiday, Graham and Brocklehurst pray to the figure they know only as “the unknown god”. “Smiling, but more than half serious”, the two make an offering and ask the god to give each of them “the thing which may be best for him” (85). Mere hours later, Brocklehurst is killed as they walk home, struck by a temporarily maddened horse.

The manner of Brocklehurst’s death seems to confirm that the unknown god is indeed Pan, who traditionally had the power to drive animals, especially hoofed ones, insane. The horse drags a broken chariot behind it, representing civilisation temporarily rendered impotent by primal forces. Considering Graham’s familiarity with the works of Plato, the image of the horse dragging a chariot is almost certainly a reference to Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus*, where reason as a charioteer dragged behind the horses of sensuality and passion.

As in “The Music on the Hill” and “The Man Who Went Too Far”, Pan is implied to have killed, but what in Saki and Benson is a punishment becomes a grotesque reward in Reid — death as freedom. Even Pan is unable to give the homosexual young man happiness in 1906, and he can only free his worshippers from their temporal prison in a reward indistinguishable from punishment.

While it could be argued that Brocklehurst’s death is redemption for his earlier homosexual acts, Reid clearly intended Brocklehurst’s death as a release. Reid describes his corpse in terms of its physical beauty, noting how little damage had been done to it and Graham notes that Brocklehurst “had escaped wonderfully” (88) the possibility of a long and unhappy life, and is now free from aging and the responsibilities of adulthood. “Time would thread no silver in the dusk of his dark hair, nor dim his smile, nor make unshapely his shapely body” (8), Graham reflects. Such reverence for the death of a young man was a typical feature of Edwardian writing and reflected trends that went far beyond homosexuality. J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, the poetry of A. E. Housman and the later poetry of the First World War all echo the glorification of young men cut down in their prime, never to age, gaining martyrdom and immortality.

However, Reid undermines this theme somewhat in Graham's unfortunate state by the final pages of *The Garden God*. Thirty years after the events of the plot, Graham admits his life has been empty since Brocklehurst's death. Reid does not permit him to find love again, and Graham apparently spends the rest of his days in grief, obsessed by the portrait of Brocklehurst he worships like an idol. *The Garden God* ends on an entirely hopeless note: the "world seemed very old and cheerless" (103), Graham admits in the final pages. If Pan chose death as the best possible fate for Brocklehurst, it is difficult to see why Graham's fate was the best outcome for him. Reid goes further than glorifying death in that he denigrates life. As in one of the aphorisms of Sophocles, the best thing for a mortal is not to be born at all, and if he is born then to lead a short life. It is also possible to interpret Pan's intentions as being thwarted and that Graham was intended to die young instead of living a hopeless life and the more vital Brocklehurst was intended to go on living. Brocklehurst's final act was to push Graham out the way of the charging horse, an act of self-sacrifice that can also be interpreted as "stealing" the release of death.

But in his glorification of death, Reid admits his surrender of the possibility of happiness in life. *The Garden God* is ultimately the story of civilisation triumphing over wilderness and order winning over chaos. Reid can find no way to allow the primal to win over the conventional without resorting to thematic dishonesty. In a world where Oscar Wilde was tried and found guilty, Pan has no power to trample and defeat the forces of conformism that Reid found synonymous with heteronormative society. *The Garden God* is the most ultimately hopeless entry in the homoerotic Pan canon. While Forster's "The Story of a Panic" ends with the death of one half of a coded homosexual couple, there is a sense of joy and liberation in Eustace's madness. No such consolation is found in Reid. The "sombre almost savage wildness" (Saki 177) of Saki has been reduced to a garden, something domesticated and limited, with no ability to challenge the majority. *The Garden God* is a story of Pan's surrender, not his victory.

During the Edwardian period, society's attitudes to sexuality and gender were going through profound shifts, which were largely feared and resisted. Deep-seated anxiety about the changes in the public consciousness could be confronted in fiction by personifying it as the marginalised, faintly ludicrous figure of a half-human, half-goat minor god from an ancient religion. The atavistic nature god Edwardian authors chose as a literary device to project their fears about the future on to was consequently used as an avatar for homosexuality as monstrous and deadly. But the same literary vehicle that was used to express fear and resistance to change, for instance in Machen's "The Great God Pan", could be used to suggest deep-seated longing and unspoken rebellion, expressing truth under a mask of satire. To the writer doomed to be

disempowered and sidelined, Pan was not grotesque and fearful but beautiful. The homoerotic Edwardian Pan was therefore not incongruous but ultimately inevitable.

Chapter Four

Culminations: Peter Pan as the Ultimate Edwardian Pan

The eponymous main character of *Peter Pan*, which was published as a novel by J. M. Barrie in 1911, bears the names of two religious icons, the first Christian, the second pagan. His full name is uncomfortable both in its blasphemy and its profound ambiguity. Equivocality is essential to both the character and the novel, and it produces the deeply unsettling quality that has made the story linger in the public consciousness for many decades since its publication. *Peter Pan* has been psychoanalysed, denounced, celebrated and adapted, evolving from its origins in pantomime to become a cultural Rorschach test, on which the neuroses and fears of the critic may be freely projected.

What is rarer is scholarship analysing Peter as a Pan figure. Many critics seem to consider Peter's last name a mere coincidence, or as Patricia Merivale puts it, a case of Barrie trying "to gain some aura" of appropriated symbolism (152). Children's literature specialist Humphrey Carpenter opines that Peter "has almost nothing about him of the classical Pan" (181). Merivale also makes the curious assertion, which she does not justify, that Peter is "more of a faun than a Pan" (152). There is some academic work considering Barrie's work as a riff on Greek mythology. For instance in *Second Star to the Right*, Allison Kavey makes a long and tortured comparison between Peter and Maimie's relationship in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and the myth of Pan and Syrinx. What is so rare as to be nonexistent is investigation of *Peter Pan* in the context of the Edwardian Pan boom.

Besides his name, Peter's superficial similarities to Pan the god are few. One is the "heartless pipes" (96) Peter plays, symbolic of naïve art and a musical tradition closer to nature than the concert halls of civilisation. Another, only mentioned in the novella *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, is Peter's goat, given to him by Maimie, an earlier version of Wendy. To Maimie, the goat is an imaginary companion dreamed up to frighten her younger brother, but to Peter it becomes a real creature he can ride. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* includes an Arthur Rackham illustration of Peter Pan as a plump, nude baby astride the prancing goat, whose beard and impressive horns reveal it as distinctly male. It is a drawing which perfectly summarises the alchemy of Edwardian nursery cosiness and pagan atavism that Barrie has created in *Peter Pan* and one that can stand as an emblem for the Edwardian Pan phenomenon. Peter is actually the ultimate Edwardian Pan, a Pan reborn and transformed for a new age.

To truly consider Peter as a Pan figure requires an examination of the Edwardian Pan phenomenon, which was underway during the publication of the 1902 novel *The Little White Bird*,

which Peter features in, the 1904 stage-play, *Peter Pan*, and the novelisation *Peter and Wendy*, published in 1911. The Pans of Edwardian fiction share many traits alien to the original Greek god but common to each other. But before outlining these qualities, it is important to address those aspects of Peter Pan as a character which are so different from the original mythological figure that it could be argued that if it were not for Peter Pan's name he would have no place in a discussion of fictional Pans. Peter Pan himself explicitly rejects characteristics seemingly essential to a Pan figure. In a scene near the end of the novel, when Mrs Darling offers to adopt him, Peter behaves in a very un-Pan-like manner by rejecting the embraces of a woman and treating the beard of a mature man, ubiquitous to depictions of the Arcadian Pan, as something horrific:

“Would you send me to school?” he enquired craftily.

“Yes.”

“And then to an office?”

“I suppose so.”

“Soon I should be a man?”

“Very soon.”

“I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things,” he told her passionately.

“I don't want to be a man. O Wendy's mother, if I was to wake up and feel there was a beard!”

“Peter!” said Wendy the comforter, “I should love you in a beard”; and Mrs Darling stretched out her arms to him, and he repulsed her.

“Keep back, lady, no one is going to catch me and make me a man.” (142-143)

There are five attributes which make Peter so seemingly different from any other Pan; flight, fairies, childhood, Britishness and, most significantly, asexuality.

Merivale's comment that Peter Pan is more faun than Pan is questionable because Peter does not possess the goatish legs or horns common to fauns and in *Kensington Gardens* is described as half-bird, a “poor little half-and-half” (33). In Barrie's myth, all babies are the reincarnated spirits of birds, who slowly forget their former nature as they grow to adulthood. Therefore, Peter Pan can fly because he remembers being a bird. Flight is a denial of Pan's essentially bestial nature. Goats are traditionally masculine, earthy, sexual and even demonic. Birds have more or less the opposite symbolic associations. Peter Pan can literally soar above the responsibilities and pleasures of earthly life, which gives him a transcendent quality alien to the original myth. Significantly, Peter is the only flying Pan noted in this research. However, Peter is

still a half-human, echoing one of Pan's innate qualities. As a hybrid, he cannot fully participate in the world of humans or that of the birds, and, like his mythological counterpart, is an outsider and a marginalised hybrid.

One Greek god noted for the power of flight was Pan's father, Hermes, who was associated in syncretic theology with Odin, Thoth and Mercury as a messenger god and an archetypal mediator between the gods and humanity (Ebeling 3). Another intermediary between the divine and the human is Saint Peter, who according to popular tradition waits at the gates of heaven to judge the souls of the dead. It is easy to cast Peter Pan the character as a spiritual mediator between fantasy and reality, or between this world and the afterlife.

Peter Pan's inclusion of fairies is another unique factor. The fictional Pans discussed previously usually appear alone, but when they are in company, it is with figures from classical mythology such as nymphs and satyrs. The fact that Peter Pan lives alongside fairies and talking birds native to folktales has an interesting effect — it makes him by association more British. Fairies are native to Celtic and British myth, and there is nothing inherently anachronistic about their appearance in Kensington Gardens.

Fairy scholar Carole G. Silver expresses an intense dislike for Barrie's fairies. While she admits his mythology has "power and truth" she also finds it "mawkish" and takes particular offense to the fact Barrie "deliberately equates fairies and children" (Silver 188). She fails to notice that children themselves are portrayed as frighteningly morally ambivalent in *Peter Pan*. Barrie's fairies are indeed miniature like their Cottingley counterparts, and have quaint and sentimental attributes. According to Peter, the fairies of *Peter Pan* originated "when the first baby laughed for the first time" (27), a maudlin modern myth certainly very different in tone from the murderous fairies of the Celts, or even the scheming court of Oberon and Titania. But Barrie's fairies, like almost everything else he creates, are contradictory creatures. Barrie, writing what is ostensibly a children's novel, offhandedly mentions the fairies "on their way home from an orgy" (64). Tinker Bell, a tiny creature represented by a spot of light in the stage play, has a vicious nature that belies her name. Apparently amoral, she pinches the Lost Boys and, in the spirit of petty jealousy and spite, tries to trick them into killing Wendy.

Peter himself is the only creature in Neverland respected by the fairies and other female nature spirits such as mermaids: "Any of the other boys [the fairies] would have mischiefed, but they just tweaked Peter's nose" (64). The fairies instinctively recognise Peter's status as something more than human. Their deference is an echo of both Pan's relationship with the nymphs and dryads of myth and the Anglo-Greek ideal of Pan as an "overlord" to fairies, as Silver put it (208). Another novel to feature Pan alongside Celtic fairies is James Stephens's *The*

Crock of Gold, in which Pan visits Ireland and interacts with the native ‘shee’. But Stephens makes Pan a clear outsider visiting a pantheon alien to him. To the British, Pan was a foreigner of exotic appearance, whose dark skin and black eyes marked him as racially distinct from the Edwardian British majority. Saki’s entirely unwholesome Pan is described as “brown and beautiful” (Saki 182) and in “The Great God Pan” Helen has “pale, clear olive” skin (Machen 71).

In contrast, Peter Pan is a British boy, and this pedigree is one of the few things entirely unambiguous about the character. In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, Barrie calls him an “English mariner”, notably not using the term British despite the fact Barrie himself was Scottish. Peter Pan was born in London, brought up in Kensington Gardens and lives on an island outside of reality and largely based on the dreams of the British child. Peter possesses traits the British liked to believe typical of themselves: for instance, Peter is gallant and “always sympathetic to the weaker side” (83), and takes care to help the Never Bird. When Hook tells the Lost Boys he will spare them if they denounce the King of England, they refuse, and Curly responds with “Rule Britannia!” (119)

Peter’s Britishness and his companionship with fairies are interlinked. The connection to Celtic folklore made Peter by extension less foreign, and considering how benevolent the Edwardian fairy-story was, it also made him more child-friendly and appropriate for a nursery audience than the wild, sexual nymphs and satyrs of Greek myth would have been. This relates to the third quality that differentiates Peter from any version of Pan, his status as a child.

Peter Pan is ageless and immortal, but forever a child who has all his milk teeth. In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* he is an actual baby. In *Peter Pan* the novel he seems somewhat older, but is still prepubescent and most importantly — pre-sexual. While Dickon from *The Secret Garden* is young, he has passed the cusp of puberty, making Peter the youngest Pan in this study. Peter’s agelessness and his status as an extremely young boy are not as contradictory as they first appear; as Barrie’s biographer Lisa Chaney points out, “to deny a beginning Peter must deny sexuality ... with nature’s core implications of creation” (235). Peter’s immortal youth represents changeless and unnatural sterility, the opposite of what the mature, sexual Greek Pan represented. Peter’s status as a child means that the bacchanals and romps of the adult Pan are replaced with more age-appropriate play. His flight across the rooftops of London with the Darling children is a scene of transcendence and liberation which in a novel written for an adult audience might have been replaced with a more sexual scene. The reader must remember Freud’s theory that dreams about flying were a kind of mental sexual release.

Peter Pan's sexlessness is bound up with his childishness. Fictional Pans, even those created by the conservative Edwardians and Victorians, usually acknowledge the god's innately sexual nature. Whether this aspect of Pan is cast in a negative light, as in Arthur Machen's "The Great God Pan", with its hints of rape and abuse, or more positively, as in E. M. Forster's liberating Pan, it is almost always present. Only in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* does Pan appear sexless. Barrie goes further than Grahame in making Peter not so much sexless as rejecting and contemptuous of adult sexuality.

Like Pan with the nymphs, Peter is beloved by many women. He possesses "a voice that no woman [is] able to resist" (26). Tinker Bell, Wendy, Tiger Lily, the mermaids, Wendy's daughter Jane and even Mrs Darling are attracted to him, but all Peter seems to desire is a substitute for his lost mother. He finds sexuality a puzzle he cannot begin to solve, saying of Tiger Lily, "there is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother" (91). He cannot and will not understand adult relationships. A.S. Byatt calls Barrie's outlook on sexuality in *Peter Pan* "queerer and odder than simply pederasty" (*Guardian*), referring to the rumours of child abuse around Barrie that continue to be raised to the present day, for instance in Jackie Wullschläger's *Inventing Wonderland*. Rather than remaining childishly oblivious to sexuality, *Peter Pan* rejects it, thereby identifying as asexual.

Peter Pan's asexuality, kinship to fairies, youth and ability to fly take him so far from the original figure of Pan that some scholars would argue he is an entirely different entity who, if not for his name, would not be connected with Pan at all. This is probably why there is a scarcity of scholarship considering him as a Pan figure. But the Pans of Edwardian literature, when studied as a group, form a distinct entity in their own right, a creature with whom Peter shares many notable traits. Humphrey Carpenter speculates that the author as well as the character shared this orientation, and "actual sexuality of any kind played no part in Barrie's personality" (174).

Youth is a particular trait of the Edwardian Pan, whose classical counterpart was usually pictured as a mature, bearded man, but who in early-twentieth-century fiction often lost his beard and became a beautiful youth resembling the classical Dionysus more than Pan. In Saki's "The Music on the Hill" Pan has "a boy's laughter" (181). In *The Garden God*, Pan is young, beautiful and dangerous. While Barrie was the only author to make Pan a child, youthful Pans were so common as to be standard in Edwardian fiction.

Peter Pan's status as a child might seem at first to be the concept of a youthful Pan taken to its most extreme conclusion, but there is a vast symbolic difference between a post-pubescent youth and a pre-sexual child. Peter's youth reflected in part the Victorian obsession with childhood as an ultimate pre-fallen state. To such a mindset, in Wordsworth's words, the young

entered the world initially “trailing clouds of glory” before the inevitable “fall” into adulthood and sexual awareness. But Barrie’s use of Peter as a symbol for sexless, seeming innocence is deliberately undermined by the author himself. Peter as a character is filled with the moral ambiguity essential to the Edwardian Pan figure, being capable of extreme cruelty and apparently totally lacking in empathy. In liberating the Darling children from the expectations of their middle-class Edwardian life, he encourages them to forget their family and not to worry about their heart-broken mother. Barrie repeats the phrase “gay and innocent and heartless” (149) in relation to him and to children as a whole, suggesting innocence itself is inseparable from thoughtlessness and lack of empathy.

There is also something deeply morbid about Peter’s eternal youth. His is not the ambrosial immortality of an Olympian god but a kind of life-in-death. A.S. Byatt calls him, rather melodramatically, “a dead child, flying in the dark” (*Guardian*), and Barrie makes it explicit that even if Peter himself is not dead he is a psychopomp, a spirit-guide who accompanies the lost spirits of stillbirths on their route to the afterlife. In the early pages of *Peter Pan*, the narrator relates that “when children died he went part of the way with them, so they should not be frightened”. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* shows him digging graves for two children, and in the final lines of the so-far sentimental novella, the narrator hints in cavalier tones that Peter’s role might occasionally be something more sinister than a gentle spirit guide: “I do hope that Peter is not too ready with his spade. It is all rather sad” (125). *Peter Pan*’s morbid side held an immensely personal significance for its author. Barrie’s brother David died at thirteen, an event whose repercussions permanently marked the author’s life. Barrie’s mother slipped into a deep depression following the loss of the boy who by all accounts was her favourite son, and, in an attempt to help her recover, Barrie began to mimic his dead brother’s mannerisms, sparking a lifelong case of what psychologists now call “arrested development”. The scene of Peter returning to his mother’s house to see he has been replaced by another boy is almost certainly Barrie’s guilt at living while his brother remained frozen in youth and death. But *Peter Pan*’s enduring myth suggests that it is a work far more profound than mere self-psychoanalysis. As biographer Lisa Chaney puts it in *Hide-and-Seek with Angels*, “to argue that Peter Pan is Barrie’s personal artistic fantasy doesn’t go nearly far enough” (373). The story captured not only the tortured psyche of one man but the zeitgeist of the Edwardians.

There is a curious blurring of cause and effect in the relationship between *Peter Pan* and the unhealthy glorification of the death of young men. Laurence Binyon’s iconic poem *Ode to Remembrance*, which later became synonymous with World War One, contains the line “they shall not grow old, as we have grown old” (Walter 235), written after *Peter Pan*. Barrie himself was

fond of a similar line by A. E. Housman, who wrote of “lads that will die in their glory and never be old” (42) long before the First World War. Peter faces the possibility of his own death with the now-immortal “to die will be an awfully big adventure” (83), showing a stoicism that both echoed the values of his time and inspired imitation. Barrie’s friend Charles Frohman, the producer of the original *Peter Pan* play, was drowned on the *Lusitania*. His last words, “Why fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure life gives us” (Chaney 310) were a deliberate echo of *Peter Pan* and the cause of much guilt on Barrie’s part. It is notable that *Peter Pan* the play was a favourite of war poet and martyr Rupert Brooke, who saw it at least ten times, and that Barrie was a friend of Robert Falcon Scott, who named his only son Peter in honour of Barrie and whose death in Antarctica in 1912 was held up as an example of courage and self-sacrifice to the young men marching to France in the First World War.

Another Pan story that glorified the death of a young man to an unhealthy extent was *The Garden God* by Forrest Reid. Though Reid’s character Brocklehurst is not a soldier, his death is a self-sacrificing one, as he throws himself under a horse to save another boy. His death is the direct answer to a prayer directed to Pan. The concept of death as a gift to those beloved of the gods is a strongly pagan one, which finds a peculiar echo in *Peter Pan*. Peter’s status as a “dead child” liberates him from responsibility and makes him immortal. What makes Peter truly sinister is his determination to make other children join him in his state of living death. The Darling children’s journey to Neverland can be seen as a near-death experience, with Peter attempting and ultimately failing to lure them away from reality.

Peter’s relationship with death links him back to Pan, who was never depicted as a death god, but who was, in a part of his myth rarely addressed in fiction, dead. Pan as a god both dead and somehow still alive is a theme addressed in Dunsany’s stories, but Barrie was the only writer to take the idea to its ultimate conclusion. If Pan was dead because the modern, industrial world had rejected him, Peter Pan was his ghost, lurking on the edges of the concrete world of London and luring others to join him in glorious rejection of life.

This brings us to the luddism that was so often a thematic concern of the Edwardian Pan story. The fear of technology and attendant worship of nature were products of the rapid industrial change the early-twentieth-century British were undergoing, where whole lifestyles were disrupted or utterly destroyed by industrialism. The kind of sentimental, romantic obsession with nature as an unfallen paradise populated by friendly nymphs and cuddly satyrs that E. M. Forster skewers in “The Story of a Panic” was a very common mode of thought. The upper classes were familiar with the classical gods, and the personification of the natural world in the form of Naiads, Oreads, and, of course, Pan was entirely natural to them. Pan was

sometimes considered nature itself personified, and the belief in the essential divinity of the natural world being called Pantheism is related to the Greek word *Pan*, meaning *all*. Peter Pan himself possessed the connection with nature essential to the Edwardian Pan.

Peter appears “clad in skeleton leaves and the juices that ooze out of trees”, clothing that signifies both his rejection of societal convention and his primal connection with nature. He cannot write, “not the smallest little word”, and seems proud of his lack of education, feeling himself “above all that sort of thing” (68). His primordial connection with nature goes beyond rustic interconnectedness with flora and fauna. Before his kidnap (or rescue) of the Darling children, Barrie notes that “the smallest of all the stars in the Milky Way screamed out: “Now, Peter!”” (22). Peter Pan is a contemporary and an equal of the very stars; he is therefore a truly pantheistic Pan. In Neverland, his connection with the world around him is even more amplified. The country itself changes to reflect his moods and seems to exist to serve his whims. “Peter hated lethargy”, so the island is deliberately “seething with life” (45) to reflect his wishes.

The Darling parents represent the opposite of this engagement and interconnection with the natural world. Mr Darling, the father, stands for the modern world of business and respectability and the life the Lost Boys can aspire to if they leave Neverland. His first significant act in the story is to deliberately feed his medicine to the long-suffering dog Nana, which establishes him as both cruel and pathetic. He is arguably the true antagonist of *Peter Pan*. In the play, both he and Captain Hook were played by the same actor. Mrs Darling is antagonistic in a more subtle, dangerous way. She is kinder than her husband but still wretched and doomed, and she represents the woman Wendy is destined to become if she rejects Peter’s offer of immortality. Her children leave her, and by the end of the novel Barrie savagely mentions she is now “dead and forgotten” (145). Mrs Darling symbolises the conformity of civilisation which is so incompatible with the untamed, masculine natural world represented by Peter. When Wendy makes the inevitable transformation into a clone of her mother, Peter immediately loses interest in her in favour of her daughter Jane.

Yet in spite of its anti-industrial themes, the world of *Peter Pan* is curiously divorced from nature. The frightening, deadly wilderness that Saki describes in “The Music on the Hill” has no place in Barrie’s world. Peter Pan is set partly in smoky, grey early-twentieth-century London and partly in the gaudy fantasy world of Neverland. Neverland has become an iconic piece of popular culture, despite its garish, jumbled nature. A.S. Byatt asserts that Neverland is “one of the great ‘secondary worlds’ ... a world with its own laws” (*Guardian*), but as an invented country it seems far less organic and thoroughly thought out than the Middle-Earth of J.R.R. Tolkien or even the Narnia of C.S. Lewis or the Wonderland of Lewis Carroll. Peter Pan was not the kind

of book found with a map on the inside front cover, but a messy, ill-thought out place populated by characters cribbed from pulp fiction — pirates and mermaids from maritime tales, Indians from Cowboy novels, a miscellany of wild beasts from tales of colonial exploration and fairies from the Victorian nursery. *Peter Pan* exists on the borderlands between Homer and *The Coral Island*.

Neverland's very name suggests its disconnection from any reality; instead of an authentic alternate world it is the Edwardian child's imagination turned into a riotous nation. It is unreal, but capable of affecting reality, because, as Barrie reminds us, "in the two minutes before you go to sleep it becomes real. That is why there are nightlights" (10). As an invented country, Neverland both places *Peter Pan* within the tradition of the anti-industrial Pan story and separates it from true wildness. Peter takes the Darling children away from their dark world of smoke and stone and lets them live closer to nature, sleeping outside and wearing animal skins. But what he creates for them is a fantasy world for the urban child, a storybook wonderland for an audience unacquainted with any real countryside. Peter is by extension a curiously urban Pan by Edwardian standards, one entirely at home on the rooftops of London and in the tamed green of Kensington Gardens.

Probably the most notable and consistent factor linking the Edwardian Pans is ambivalence. Pan was a figure hated and desired for what he represented, a being at once diabolical and Christ-like: "Pan ... was responsible for shepherding lost things" (82), Allison Kavey points out, but it was rare to find an Edwardian Pan without some sinister qualities. And Peter Pan, who is described several times as "heartless", is not lacking in sinister qualities, as he is a kidnapper and a killer who cheerfully feeds Captain Hook to the crocodile. But he is also brave and self-sacrificing, a protector of the weak who saves the Never Bird's eggs without a second thought and who shepherds the souls of lost children. Peter Pan is perhaps the most equivocal Pan of them all, confusing the reader who expects a purely good hero and disturbing many critics to the point where they label him as entirely bad.

Two of Peter Pan's key traits are shared not only with every Edwardian Pan but with the mythological Pan. These are flatness of character and a tendency to inhabit the margins, those of society, respectability, and of the story itself. Fictional Pans are generally flat characters. In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster defines the flat character as one not "capable of surprising in a convincing way" (78). The essential concept of the mythological Pan, the lecherous, half-goat god of shepherds, is not something that lends itself to a deep, complex character with the potential to surprise the reader. The fictional Pan tends to occupy a small place in the story and be fairly one-dimensional. Pan appears as evil, benevolent, punishing, homoerotic, glamorous or

violent, but rarely multi-dimensional. Peter is no exception — he cannot truly change, because in doing so, he would risk growing up. The characters around him develop through the course of the story: Tinker Bell grows from a spiteful, jealous fairy to willingly drinking poison to save Peter’s life. Wendy and her brothers learn to respect and appreciate their parents. But Peter does not grow, develop or learn, and despite several near-death experiences, remains the same “cocky” boy. His character development is so determinedly static that by the epilogue Peter has forgotten the events of the entire novel. He is oblivious to change, and therefore the ultimate flat character.

Like the Greek gods in the epics of Homer, who intervene in the story as a catalyst for change in the lives of mortals, Peter himself does not change, but is a catalyst for change in the lives of others. By allowing Wendy to temporarily live out a fantasy of eternal childhood, Peter unintentionally forces her to realise that refusing the responsibilities of adulthood comes with the cost of damaging others, specifically her mother. It could therefore be argued that Wendy is the true main character of *Peter Pan*, and Peter the antagonist who catalyses her development into an adult. Flat characters like Peter rarely gain the status of the main character outside fairy tale and formula fiction, and the fact that Peter Pan is arguably not the main character in a story which bears his name is telling. He is an outsider even in his own story. As the Darling children are reunited with their parents in the climactic scene of the story, Peter must watch from outside like a hungry ghost:

“George, George,” she cried when she could speak; and Mr Darling woke to share her bliss, and Nana came rushing in. There could not have been a lovelier sight; but there was none to see it except a strange boy who was staring in at the window. He had ecstasies innumerable that other children can never know; but he was looking through the window at the one joy from which he must be for ever barred. (139)

Barrie’s use of the word “must” is notable. Peter and everything he represents must be barred from the world the Darlings inhabit for that world to survive. As an embodiment of chaos and liberation, Peter’s only place is on the margins. And it is this, the status of the outsider, the marginalised god, which is the one characteristic that links all Pans. Pan the goat-god of Arcadia was a god, but in spite of that remained a bizarre creature, a part-animal among a pantheon mostly humanoid in shape, a rustic god of shepherds who never truly fitted in with the dignified immortals of Mount Olympus.

In Edwardian Britain, where Pan was generally regarded as a literary character rather than a religious figure to be worshipped, such marginalisation was more pronounced. Pan was an

incarnation of the wilderness in an era where industrialism and urbanisation were taking over the British countryside. In fiction, Pan was a grotesque, morally ambivalent, often dangerous figure who would appear momentarily to a human character in the form of a religious trance or terrifying vision. Often he did not appear directly, but was seen off the page by a character who later cannot or will not describe him. Sometimes Pan's influence is only felt; sometimes he is a distant being who is prayed to. Of all the Pans studied in the course of this thesis, Peter is the only one even close to a central character.

And this is because Barrie has achieved something remarkable in *Peter Pan*. His Neverland is literally a land on the margins, the borderlands between sleep and waking, between life and death, between fiction and reality. Neverland is the scribbling and doodling of a bored child on the margins of a schoolbook, and Peter Pan invites the reader to journey to the margins with him, to leave the adult world of compromise and work behind for a journey to an anarchic, unnatural land populated by monsters and grotesques. Barrie takes every marginalised thing Pan represents through his appearances in Edwardian fiction and places it at the centre of the stage. As Humphrey Carpenter said, "Peter Pan is an alternate religion" (181). And that is why, out of all the Pan fiction of the Edwardian Era, *Peter Pan* is the story which has become the most enduring classic, and spawned an iconic character, perhaps even a god, of its own.

Chapter Five

The Prayer of the Flowers: Lord Dunsany's Retrospective on the Pan Phenomenon

The glories of martyrdom that Barrie extolled in *Peter Pan* soon became a gruesome reality, in which Pan struggled to find a place. The line “to die would be an awfully big adventure” was excised from the play during World War One, when soldiers on leave would crowd the theatres at Christmas. World War One marked the death knell of the Pan boom. Robert Graves’s wartime poem *To Robert Nichols* summarises the irrelevancy of Pan in the new realities of the world.

Here by a snowbound river
 In scrapen holds we shiver,
 And like old bitterns we
 Boom to you plaintively:
 Robert, how can I rhyme
 Verses for your desire —
 Sleek fauns and cherry-time,
 Vague music and green trees,
 Hot sun and gentle breeze,
 England in June attire,
 And life born young again,
 For your gay goatish brute
 Drunk with warm melody
 Singing on beds of thyme
 With red and rolling eye,
 Waking with wanton lute
 All the Devonian plain,
 Lips dark with juicy stain,
 Ears hung with bobbing fruit?
 Why should I keep him time?
 Why in this cold and rime,
 Where even to dream is pain?
 No, Robert, there’s no reason:
 Cherries are out of season,

Ice grips at branch and root,
And singing birds are mute. (62-3)

Pan was now “out of season”, a “gay goatish brute”, whose sensuality and joy are so irrelevant as to appear offensive. After the Somme, the dreamlike paganism of Grahame was now trivial and inappropriate. In a post-war world, it was the Edwardian Pan who has seemingly embarked on the awfully big adventure that was death.

With the war taken as the death-knell of the Pan boom, it would appear that J. M. Barrie’s vision of eternal, sterile youth is the final significant piece of Edwardian Pan writing. If Peter Pan is the last true Edwardian Pan, he leaves the literary phenomenon in a dead-end, the Edwardian Pan being a question asked in sincere longing and answered with impossibility, with Peter as a Pan living outside reality and its necessities of economy and mortality. It was at this time that the case of the Cottingley Fairies came to prominence, in which two young girls fooled thousands in post-war Britain by exploiting a desire to believe, a need for illusions, in a time of loss and hopelessness. The Cottingley hoax involved fairies, symbols of Celtic Paganism but also of the nursery and its attendant unquestioning faith. With Christianity having failed to provide consolation, the British turned to another source — the fairy kingdom.

But there was one author whose curtain call on the Edwardian Pan phenomenon reminds us that though while gods can die, they never truly go away; this was Lord Dunsany, whose 1927 novel *The Blessing of Pan*, while written significantly after the Edwardian Era, can be read as the closing note in the symphony that was the Edwardian Pan era. Writing in the 1920s gave Dunsany the perspective of an outsider to the Edwardians, and he was able to write about the Edwardians in a self-conscious manner. *The Blessing of Pan* was therefore written from a knowingly removed position. Lord Dunsany, the title and penname of Irish nobleman, soldier and politician Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron Dunsany, is known for his melancholy, elegiac fantasies such as *The King of Elfland’s Daughter* and *The Charwoman’s Shadow*, along with the more light-hearted “Jorkens” series of tall tales. Encyclopaedia Britannica describes Dunsany’s literary output as describing “a richly coloured prose mysterious kingdoms of fairies and gods” (279).

Like many fantasy authors, Dunsany wrote from personal alienation and disconnection from the outside world, and seems to have felt a particular sense of temporal dislocation. Dunsany’s works seem founded on the desire to exist outside his own time; his fiction idealises a mythical Arcadian past and the possibility of a Utopian future, but portrays the present as a state of compromise to be endured while waiting for a better world. Dunsany’s dislike of the present

makes him the ideal author to have the final word on the Edwardian Pan phenomenon. Post-war England was a world where what Pan represented could not exist save as a nostalgic memory or a faint hope for the future. *The Blessing of Pan* therefore possesses an artistic maturity by acknowledging the nihilism which can result from tragedy while expressing the possibility of eventually growing beyond such hopelessness.

The Blessing was not Dunsany's first work to feature Pan. The goat-footed god appears in Dunsany's collection *Fifty-One Tales*, a little-known selection of fragments first published in 1915 which now seems remarkably ahead of its time. Written in high-flown, deliberately archaic language reminiscent of the King James Bible, the stories prefigure much of the twentieth-century fantasy tradition. The stories are syncretic in that they involve deities from multiple pantheons appearing alongside traditional folk-tale characters such as the Tortoise and the Hare of Aesop, angels and Edwardian Londoners. Dunsany's juxtaposition of the fantastic and the ordinary predates the 'urban fantasy' of modern authors like Neil Gaiman by many decades. Dunsany's plots include decrepit versions of Norse gods Odin and Thor demanding worship in modern Britain, a sphinx in Thebes, Massachusetts, satirical re-workings of Aesop and appearances by the anthropomorphic personifications of Time, Nature, Fame and Death.

It is the last of these, Death, who appears most frequently in *Fifty-One Tales*, which for good reason was alternately titled *The Food of Death*. At its heart, the collection is thematically about the transience of life and the inevitability of mortality. All things created by the human race, Dunsany reminds the reader, are doomed to perish and be forgotten. "The Workman" uses the allegory of a construction worker who, in falling to his death, attempts to scrawl his name on the wall of a tall building condemned to be destroyed¹. The ghost of the ill-fated proletarian appears in person to spell out the metaphorical implications to the narrator, who accepts that all human endeavour is ultimately the dying attempting to make their mark on a condemned world. The story encapsulates the theme of the entire collection.

Dunsany goes beyond simply prophesying the end of civilisation to actively anticipating the end of the world. *Fifty-One Tales* was written in a spirit of anger towards the world of industrialism and commercialism Dunsany found himself in. In "The Reward", he portrays an angel throwing an advertiser into Hell. In "What We Have Come To", another man in advertising weeps at the sight of a beautiful cathedral, wishing that the space had gone instead to a commercial for Beef Stock. Dunsany's anger occasionally spills into pure misanthropy, as in "The Three Tall Sons", which features the heartbroken Nature, whose children War, Famine and Plague comfort her with the knowledge that humanity will not trouble her for much longer. With

¹ Dunsany asserts that "He had time to try and do this for he must have had nearly three hundred feet to fall."

apparent approval, Dunsany writes of them approaching “Man unawares in his city still poring over his Problems, obsessed with his civilisation, and never hearing their tread” (105) until too late.

Fifty-One Tales makes frequent nods to the Ancient Greeks and their mythology, particularly the writings of Homer, whom Dunsany reveres as a poet who has beaten the tyranny of time, death and forgetfulness and made a raft for Helen in his song (16). It is in the context of these classical references that Pan appears, and he is surrounded by the traditional associations of nymphs and temples. But Dunsany’s Pan is not quite the same figure the ancient Greeks worshipped. Like Saki, who called Pan the Father of All Gods, Dunsany gives his fictional Pan a gravitas the original mythological figure did not possess. Dunsany’s Pan is a powerful, primitive ally of the natural world, a scornful older brother of humanity. There is something very pantheistic about such a portrayal of Pan.

Three of the *Fifty-One Tales* directly involve Pan: “The Death of Pan”, “The Tomb of Pan” and “The Prayer of the Flowers”. The former two, with their near-identical titles, share the theme of Plutarch’s Death of Pan. Pan appears to have died in both stories: his corpse in the former and his tomb in the latter are displayed for the public. But Pan, like Nature itself, can be oppressed and marginalised but never entirely destroyed. In “The Death of Pan”, Londoners travel to Arcady to confirm rumours of Pan’s death, and are dismayed to be confronted by his monstrous dead body. Their mourning cannot bring him back, but when the young women of Arcadia simply laugh at Pan’s apparent corpse, their robust, earthy response achieves what tears cannot, making Pan rise from the dead and pursue them in mock or real anger. “The Tomb of Pan” uses a similar plot: “the people of the enlightened lands” (109) believe Pan dead and build a tomb to celebrate the end of the era of paganism and primitivism Pan represented. While most rejoice in Pan’s passing, a minority mourn. Unobserved by all, and indifferent to mourning and celebration, Pan himself quietly watches and laughs from the shelter of the trees. As with “The Death of Pan”, it is laughter which keeps the spirit of Pan alive.

“The Tomb of Pan” nods to a three-way struggle between Christianity, paganism, and rationality, a theme explored in more depth in *The Blessing*. The “enlightened” people keen to bury Pan in the past represent the new secular elite, trying to banish all religion to history. Pan’s empty tomb is a reference to the Resurrection, and can be taken either as blasphemous mockery or a syncretic attempt to blur the roles of Pan and Jesus. As Pan’s statue on his tomb has “the feet of angels pressed upon his neck” (109), the former seems more likely. The Christian church is capable of suppressing Pan’s image, but not the reality that image represents.

The third story in *Fifty-One Tales* to feature Pan, “The Prayer of the Flowers”, like “The Workman”, once again celebrates transience and the ultimate downfall of human civilisation. Flowers on “the edge of a Midlands city” grieve, overwhelmed by the noise and disturbance of a newly-built railway track. The flowers, like the nymphs in Greek myth whose spirits were believed to inhabit plants, pray to Pan for relief from humankind, whose “glaring factories” and “cancerous cities” (25) oppress the natural world. Pan’s voice returns from distant Arcadia, comforting the flowers with the prophetic insight that they must only “be patient, for these things are not for long” (26). Civilisation is destined to pass away, the plants will inherit the Earth, and humanity will only be given a place in the new world if it can give up industry forever. Dunsany’s Pan appears at first to be an enemy, or at least ambivalent, to modern man and his works. *Fifty-One Tales* is a collection whose thematic centre is war between the wilderness and the urban, flowers and railways. Pan, and by extension the author, clearly sides against humanity. Pan is destined to fight on the side of pagan nature against the artifice of culture. Dunsany is unabashed in his partisanship toward nature and his antipathy toward the human race. It is notable that *Fifty-One Tales* was published in 1915, a year after the beginning of the First World War. In his author photograph in the second edition, published in 1916, Dunsany wears the uniform of an army captain. There is perhaps a wartime mentality to *Fifty-One Tales*, a rage against not Germans but industrialised warfare itself and the civilisation seemingly so intent on destroying itself.

However, a closer examination of Dunsany’s author photograph reveals a slouching, distinctly non-martial posture and a facial expression more sorrowful than combative. He wears a gun-belt around his waist, but, significantly, it is empty. In “Furrow-Maker”, two birds, identified only as “the brown one” and “the black one”, argue over whether man, whom they call “the furrow-maker”, will soon die out. The theme of anti-industrialism is overwhelming, as the birds speculate that man “has played with smoke and is sick. His engines have wearied him and his cities are evil” (86). But while civilisation is portrayed as unambiguously negative, humankind is not, and Dunsany shows Man secretly yearning to escape engines, smoke and cities, and promising himself: “Just one invention more. There is something I want to do with petrol yet, and then I will give it all up and go back to the woods” (87). Dunsany’s archetypal man can be read as also a victim of industrialism as the natural world he despoils, with his innate goodness compelling him to reunite with nature, but also as a “man of promises” who yearns to return to a primitive state but never does.

The Blessing of Pan, published nearly a decade after the end of the war, further develops the theme of nature’s inherent goodness in opposition to the poison of industrialism, but the

novel is a far more complex and mature work than the Manichean *Fifty-One Tales*. *The Blessing* is a novel of many more conflicts than the struggle between civilisation and wilderness. The novel also encompasses the war between Christianity and paganism, between nihilism and idealism, and, most importantly, between the safety of conformity and the loneliness of martyrdom. The main character of *The Blessing of Pan* is Elderick Anwrel, an Anglican vicar in the quiet English village of Wolding, whose parishioners slowly begin to fall away from Christianity into Pan-worship. Anwrel's increasingly doomed attempts to fight back against the paganisation of his village form the story's central plot, and, as *The Blessing* nears its climax, Anwrel finds himself alone as Wolding's solitary Christian in his struggle against the cult of Pan.

While *Fifty-One Tales* was a book of supernatural fable in which flowers could speak and Pan answer, *The Blessing* is more similar to what would now be called "magic realism". It is the kind of fiction that critic Tzvetan Todorov defined as "the fantastic", in which it is left deliberately ambiguous whether the supernatural events are happening in reality or the imagination of the characters². As *The Blessing* is a deeply religious novel concerning spiritual warfare, it is appropriate that the reality of the gods is left at the reader's discretion. Pan never appears directly, though the influence of what Anwrel calls his "goat-shaped enemy" is inescapable. A set of Pan-pipes appears, created by supernatural influence or sheer coincidence. In a chapter entitled "Anwrel Looks at the Enemy", a gargoyle in his image is seen on a Cathedral roof. Arthur Davidson (whose name is an ironic reflection of a pair of Christian and Jewish icons), the vicar whom Anwrel has succeeded, is rumoured in the village to have had double-jointed legs and a habit of dancing at night, and may have been Pan himself.

Dunsany's Pan is far more than a faun: he is the embodiment of the repressed and despised wilderness, a "hidden piper, of no mortal fabric, but made out of hills and woods" (119). He is strongly associated with a stone circle outside Wolding, thought to be "Druidic, or earlier" (163), suggesting the forgotten horned gods of Britain's pagan past. The villagers expect to find someone "slightly foreign" (59) at the source of the Pan cult, but it becomes apparent the stolidly Anglo-Saxon village idiot Tommy Duffin is at its source, instructed by a mysterious "wise old woman" (40), presumably a witch in the Germanic mode. Dunsany's is an Anglicised Pan, but in the cosmos of *The Blessing*, distinctions between the classical pantheon and the traditions of pre-Christian Britain are unimportant; such entities form a unified force in opposition to the monotheism of Christianity.

The Christian Church finds its beleaguered champion in Elderick Anwrel, who seems at first like the kind of character suitable for martyrdom precisely because of his unsuitability, like

² See Todorov's essay "The Uncanny and the Marvellous", in *Literature of the Occult*, edited by Peter B. Messent for details.

the whiskey priest in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*. His quiet moral outrage in response to the first signs of Pan-worship seems to mark him out as capable of struggling against paganism alone to the last. But Anwrel ultimately lacks the strength of character for martyrdom; he is revealed as a feeble figure whose first recourse in difficulty is to write to his Bishop rather than seeking a seemingly more obvious spiritual intervention from God. When Anwrel finally does pray for help, it is not to God or Jesus Christ, the latter of whom is never mentioned in the book, but to the fictitious Saint Ethelbruda. It is she who becomes *The Blessing's* central Christian deity, and from her un-euphonic name to her ridiculously trivial power of miraculously curing warts (which Pan eventually strips from her) she is both comic and ineffective.

Dunsany clearly sides with paganism over Christianity. However, the novel's champion of Pan-worship, Tommy Duffin, hardly seems any less pathetic than Anwrel. Tommy's name has connotations of rural simplicity. He is described as "fat and vacant" (16) and driven to commit acts of blasphemy by forces beyond his understanding. While Anwrel is driven by conscious moral struggle, Tommy is little more than a cipher, moved by an instinctive sense of something greater than himself; "as the North draws swallows" (116), he is drawn to lure the villagers to Pan worship.

Standing apart from these unimpressive Templars of Christianity and paganism is a third figure, Perkin, who can be taken as a representative of the humanist or secular worldview. Anwrel disapprovingly calls him an "agnostic and a socialist" (172), charges Perkin does not deny. Perkin's presence changes what might have been a simple story of opposition between Christianity and paganism into something more ambiguous. Perkin refers to all religious belief as "illusions" (173), at first appearing to be an atheist. However, he is eventually revealed as the most spiritual character in the novel. Perkin does not suggest that God's existence is the illusion in question — he claims to have personally spoken with angels — but calls religion's power to provide consolation in tragedy the true false hope. This is a state of mind brought about by the death of Perkin's wife Mary, after which he has descended into a mental hell which he characterizes as "the woods of the night" (173) in which entities stalk him "from the far side of Neptune" (174).³ These menacing beings might be a reference to pagan cults more dangerous than that of Pan, such as Moloch and Baal with their demands for human sacrifice, but it is more likely they represent the dangers of nihilism and purposelessness in a secular existence. Perkin labels religion an illusion, but an illusion necessary to banish the existential despair provoked by the thought of "the futility of the planets going round and round ... uselessly ... through the empty bleakness of space" (173).

³ Note that as Pluto had not been discovered by the time *The Blessing of Pan* was written, this is a reference to entities outside the Solar System entirely.

Anwrel seeks guidance from Perkin after being failed by his superiors in the Church. Perkin's status as a mystic and an outsider is Anwrel's only hope after finding that "nothing but sanity, sanity, sanity" (173) is useless in the struggle against Pan. But Perkin's role in the novel is not to help Anwrel fight Pan but to guide the vicar into acceptance of the inevitable new pagan age beginning to replace Christianity. Perkin exhorts Anwrel not to give up religion entirely but neither to fear Pan, who "was always friendly to Man" (175) and represents a safer alternative to other substitutes for Christianity.

Wolding's spiritual warfare reaches its climatic clash in the chapter "The Battle is Lost and Won", in which Anwrel makes a final, desperate attempt to reconvert his congregation by preaching a sermon. He does not appeal to their sense of spirituality, but instead to their sense of conservatism and tradition, urging them to cling to Christianity because it is familiar and safe. His argument has a fatal flaw. Anwrel has failed to appreciate that in appealing to tradition he has unwittingly invoked the very ancient traditions of pre-Christian Britain. Tommy Duffin drives his misunderstanding home by playing the Pan-pipes outside the church door and luring the entire congregation away as Anwrel continues to preach in vain. As his wife leaves with the rest, Anwrel's will is finally broken, and he is left to despair at his fate as the last Christian.

What Anwrel never truly grasps is that the true battle has not taken place in Wolding's community, but, as the narrator puts it, in "the quiet of a clergyman's mind" (272). It was always the conversion of the vicar himself that Pan was fighting for. In the hands of a lesser author, *The Blessing of Pan* might have simply been the horror story of a community overcome by malevolent pagan forces: an Edwardian *Wicker Man*. But in Dunsany's novel, Anwrel's internal struggle is all-important, and Pan can only emerge truly victorious if Anwrel converts and becomes a pagan priest. And in a scene which marks Dunsany as morally on the side of the pagans, Anwrel gives up his struggle and joins the villagers in worshipping Pan, justifying his decision to himself with the excuse that "[o]nly the martyrs would have held out longer" (267). Dunsany implies that had Anwrel had the conviction to resist Pan any longer, martyrdom might have indeed become his fate. In a sly, easily missed line, the narrator comments that Pan's sacrificial altar "had blood again, if only the blood of a bull" (270). This unpleasant hint towards human sacrifice hints that Anwrel's conversion was well-timed.

Anwrel's conversion is highly ambivalent and written neither as a tragedy for Christianity nor a triumph for Pan. Anwrel is never convinced that Pan is real, or that Pan worship is inherently better than his own beliefs. He is motivated by loneliness and desire for conformity. There is something peevish and half-hearted about his decision which undermines Dunsany's pagan propaganda. To baptise a new pagan age, Anwrel must perform the ceremonial sacrifice of

a bull, and in a moment of bathos, he attempts to talk his way out of the situation by expressing sympathy with the animal, only to be reminded that it was overdue for slaughter anyway. The age of Pisces (Christianity) is replaced by that of Aquarius (Paganism), but it is a new age born in an atmosphere of reluctance and utilitarianism, with religion portrayed as an illusion necessary for societal cohesion.

Dunsany's humanistic approach to religion lies in direct contrast to almost every previous entry in the Edwardian Pan canon. Grahame, Saki, Forster all treated the worship of Pan and what he represented as something having value for its own sake, promoting the reverence and fear of Pan, while *The Blessing of Pan* treats religion as a means to an end. Christianity and paganism are not ultimately forces in opposition but twinned illusions like the serpents of good and evil on Hermes' staff, replacing each other in a never-ending cycle, "as butterfly and bird go down the same wind" (232). As the supreme pragmatist Perkin puts it, the spiritual warfare between Pan-worship and Christianity is a good thing in itself, as it has increased the amount of spiritual consolation in the world. "When you strengthened your [Christian] illusions he [Pan] had to strengthen his ... And so there are better illusions on Earth than there were. Very good" (239).

However, though the concluding scenes are cynical, Dunsany's writing is not without a certain strange religious transcendence. The closest thing in *The Blessing of Pan* to a personal appearance from the god whose name appears in the title occurs when the villagers of Wolding, about to sacrifice the bull themselves, see the newly-converted Anwrel appear from the trees and mistake him for Arthur Davidson, who was perhaps an incarnation of Pan himself. Anwrel becoming Pan, his enemy, or possibly even being temporarily possessed by Pan, is a powerful symbol for spiritual rebirth and the return of the atavistic. Throughout the novel, Anwrel is haunted by the flint axe he keeps in his study, which he will eventually use to slay a bull in the name of Pan. The more Pan's spell spreads throughout the village, the more Anwrel finds himself mesmerised by what was formerly a mere "ornament", but now seems "almost to leer at him with its wrinkles and hollows, as though the primitive were coming nearer and this old stone claimed some sort of equality with him now." (142)

The return of the primal, repressed, immemorial and pre-Christian is a common theme in the Edwardian British Pan story, seen in Saki and Reid, and it is a theme which Dunsany writes with great skill. Pan here is terrifying, the panic-inspirer of mythology. He is an embodiment of nature, a masculine counterpart to the traditional Gaia figure, or perhaps a champion of Mother Nature's army, as in "The Prayer of the Flowers". Pan is on the side of plants before human beings: his underling soldiers are the weeds and the "ivy [that] dreams sullenly and alone of

overthrowing the cities” (209). The repressed that returns in Dunsany’s story is not primitive humanity, but something far older.

Dunsany attaches great significance to one of the villagers, Bleggs, who has a habit of cutting a yew-tree into the shape of a peacock, but who is persuaded to stop as Pan overtakes the village. Pan is the antithesis of anything artificial, decorative or safe. When his pipes are heard from the hills, the villagers of Wolding look around their homes to find “their ornaments seemed tawdry” and “the lamplight garish” (57), for Pan is “older than lamplight” (45). As a personification of nature, Pan is warlike and manly, quite contrary to traditional portrayals of the natural world as a loving mother. In the following passage, Dunsany uses martial imagery to characterise plants:

All that week the little weeds came straggling back like the soldiers of a scattered army returning after a defeat, and rallying on the lost field once again, as indeed they were; for the war with the weeds is won whenever a village is made, though the beaten green army comes back at last in the end. (210)

Dunsany’s language is combative, propagandist even. The weeds are nature’s foot soldiers, often defeated in battle but never in war. Their triumph over the temporary aberration that is human civilisation is inevitable; they are the meek who are prophesied to inherit the Earth. And humanity must embrace luddism, cast aside the mistake of progress, and as in “Furrow-Maker”, “give it all up and go back to the woods” in order to survive, which is what the people of Wolding ultimately do. Their village becomes a self-sufficient commune, cut off from society and based on paganism, with Anwrel presiding as a priest who marries the young according to the rites of Pan. While the twentieth century occurs in the world outside, “in Wolding nothing urged onward” (282) and Pan determinedly protects his territory from progress and civilisation. When Anwrel is driven to despair and demands to know why Pan did not choose another parish to take over, the narrator reminds the reader:

[H]e gave no thought to a factory here, a factory there, and a whole new town in the next place; and villas going up on hill-side after hill-side, arising out of no feeling in any human mind and reflecting no feeling back, brief monuments to pretentiousness, that would be down in two hundred years; and everywhere machinery with teeth and claws of steel getting its grip on the earth, that had belonged but a while ago to Man and his poor

relations. There were not so many valleys, after all, that were unspoiled like this one.
(218-19)

Industrialism continues to rage outside the insular Arcadia Wolding becomes. In having the final word, Dunsany suggests that after the war, Pan could only exist as a nostalgic memory, a messianic hope, or a cult figure for the marginalised, but no more as part of the mainstream. James Stephens's Pan retreated to myth rather than calling for revolution, and while Dunsany's Pan does not leave reality behind altogether, he retreats to the margins and the counter-culture to endure the present in his wait for an eventual, inevitable victory. Dunsany's ultimate theme recalls another novel, published in 2004, nearly a century after the Edwardian age: *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* by Susanna Clarke. In Clarke's fantasy, the Puck-like figure of the Raven King lurks behind the scenes and informs the conflict, like Dunsany's Pan, and like Dunsany's Pan is rarely seen in person. Clarke reminds her audience to "not forget [what] waits for us at England's end and one day we will no more be able to escape the Raven King than, in this present age, we can bring him back" (211).

The Blessing of Pan is a far more mature and nuanced treatment of the themes of paganism, nature-worship, anti-industrialism, and humanity's eternal struggle to find cosmic meaning than any of the Edwardian Pan texts, but it is also a darker and sadder work, the product of a heartbroken generation. Dunsany's novel is an elegy for the Edwardian Pan boom, one which simultaneously lays Pan to rest in his tomb and reminds the reader that, like the weeds, Pan can be driven away but never truly destroyed.

Conclusion

A major defining factor of the Edwardian British Pan phenomenon was its narrowness; the literary movement was locked into a narrow temporal and geographical corridor, and though there were many fictional Pans before and since the Edwardian age, none save Dunsany's carried the same mythic resonance. Algernon Blackwood's story "A Touch of Pan", published in 1917 during World War One and merely a few years after such classics as "The Music on the Hill" by Saki and "The Story of a Panic" by Forster, uses many of the motifs of the Edwardian Pan story, but feels strangely hollow and toothless when compared to earlier works.

Heber, the main character of "A Touch of Pan", is faced with the choice between marrying his beautiful, wealthy but fickle cousin and a mentally impaired girl who seems to possess a connection with the natural world. The former choice will result in the approval of upper class society, the second in rejection and poverty. Naturally, the influence of Pan leads him to the rejection of artificiality and societal approval, personified by the guests at an upper class party whom Blackwood describes as follows:

Lolling ungracefully, with a kind of boldness that asserted independence, the women smoked their cigarettes with an air of invitation... Their backs were bare, for all the elaborate clothes they wore; they hung their breasts uncleanly ... beauty was degraded into calculated tricks. They were not natural. They knew not joy (99).

Heber follows his true love Elspeth, "the Cinderella of a parvenu family" into the forest outside the house, where they encounter nymphs, satyrs and finally, Pan, who display a sexuality Blackwood views as purer, less degraded and freer than that of the guests of the upper class party (87). Heber and Elspeth romp with them in scenes that mingle sentimentality and Grecian orgy:

A troop of nymphs rushed forth, escaping from clustering arms and lips they yet openly desired.... He caught three gleaming soft brown bodies, then fell beneath them, smothered, bubbling with joyous laughter – next freed himself and, while they sought to drag him captured again, escaped and raced with a leap upon a slimmer, sweeter outline that swung up – only just in time – upon a lower bough whence she leaned down above him with hanging net of hair and merry eyes. A few feet beyond his reach, she laughed and teased him – the one who had brought him in, the one he ever sought, and who for

ever sought him to...It became a riotous glory of wild children who romped and played with an impassioned glee beneath the moon. For the world was young and they, her happy offspring, glowed with the life she poured so freely into them. All intermingled, the laughing voices rose into a foam of song that broke against the stars (96).

Blackwood's opposition of the artificial as inherently bad simply because it is artificial and the natural world as pure and untainted is painfully simplistic. Pan makes a brief appearance before returning "to an unruined world", presumably not the swirling void of incest and torture the classical gods inhabited but rather a sickly, idealised Arcadia (99). "A Touch of Pan" closes with the vague hope that the goat-god will eventually return to take "the earth again with joy", a saccharine version of the misanthropic apocalypse of nature taking back the earth Dunsany wrote about in *Fifty-One Tales* (105).

Blackwood's Pan appears to have been significantly de-fanged when compared to that of Saki, Benson or Forster. His ability to inspire panic is now reduced to a scene where Heber and Elspeth, temporarily given Pan's power, invisibly watch Heber's adulterous fiancée during a moonlit tryst until she becomes nervous and is forced to retreat back inside the house. The terrifying god who trampled the blasphemer under his hooves has now been reduced to making his enemies mildly uncomfortable. Blackwood's story, a shadow of a literary phenomenon, makes it clear that the Edwardian Pan phenomenon was defined as much by its fleeting, transitory nature as any other factor.

What brought an abrupt end to the Edwardian Pan was doubtless the First World War. Blackwood's story is characterised by a tone of escapist fantasy far more lightweight than the earlier Pan stories, which are notable for their celebration of ambivalence. The unique mixture of atavistic primitivism and hope for the future that Pan represented had unintentionally become a twisted prophecy for the war itself: in the trenches, the Edwardians found atavism and regression to a more brutal existence as well as the horrors of a futuristic, industrialised war. As Robert Graves made clear in his poem, Pan the "gay goatish brute" had no place in the trenches, and as the promised "awfully big adventure" was revealed as masking a horrific lie, the Pan phenomenon abruptly ended.

In full flower, the Edwardian Pan stories were a chapter in the mythic history of Britain, and what they revealed about the British psyche is as important a moment of national definition and identity as the legends of King Arthur or the ancient memories of Celtic fair folk. Their power and truth continue to resonate, as history and myth. Paradoxically, the Edwardian Pan was a flickering, equivocal and ambiguous figure, yet his attributes such as his youth, beauty, and

his ambiguous nature itself were consistent and instantly recognisable as belonging to the peculiar and narrow moment in literary history which can be loosely grouped as the Edwardian Pan story. Pan's evasive and yet distinctive nature was reflected in the Edwardian years themselves, sandwiched as they were between the Victorian and the modern, when societal consciousness was undergoing massive rebirth. The Edwardians, uncertain of themselves and full of equal measures of fear and desire for the future, recorded their own spirit in the Pan stories, providing a more accurate memorial to their collective perception than any history book or sepia photograph could provide. Writers like Grahame, Saki, Forster and Barrie took an ancient symbol and used it to define, and perhaps partially create, the genius loci and genius temporis of Edwardian Britain.

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