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**The uses of the supernatural in the works of Lord Dunsany and
James Stephens**

Gallagher, Ronald Joseph, Ph.D.

University of Washington, 1990

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The Uses of the Supernatural in the Works
of Lord Dunsany and James Stephens
by

Ronald Gallagher

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Ronald Gallagher

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Abstract

The Uses of the Supernatural
in the Works of Lord Dunsany and James Stephens

by Ronald Gallagher

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:
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This study has its genesis in the letters written between Lord Dunsany and James Stephens between 1909 and 1912. The letters reveal interest in each other's work and contrasting ways in which each employed supernatural characters, events, and situations. Dunsany, in his *Nemesis* plays, portrays a legendary world in which mysterious gods return to cities to exact vengeance. Stephens, in The Crock of Gold and The Demi-Gods, represents a pastoral Ireland to which gods return to forge a new union with humans. Dunsany writes of a similar happy return of a gods in The Blessing of Pan. This study compares and contrasts various critical attitudes towards the marvelous in fictional representations, and in the different expressions of laughter in the works.

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Introduction

During the early 1900's the Irish Literary Revival's considerable momentum was due to the efforts of several Irish poets, dramatists and novelists. Among these William Butler Yeats and George Russell (AE) showed considerable leadership in both publishing dramatic and poetic works and in encouraging young writers. Yeats, for example, takes credit for encouraging John Millington Synge to devote his talent to writing about the people of the west of Ireland, which the latter did with extraordinary success. AE, for his part, kept on the lookout for young writers of promise and encouraged both Lord Dunsany and James Stephens in the initial stages of their literary careers. Due in some degree to both Yeats' and AE's interest, but mostly to their individual imaginative insight, both Dunsany and Stephens were by 1915 to become recognized and accomplished fantasy writers.

There seems at first glance little to connect Dunsany with Stephens. They came from different social classes. Lord Dunsany (John Edward Moreton Drax Plunkett), the 18th Baron of Dunsany, could trace his family's Irish roots back nearly 800 years. Biographers of James Stephens have trouble identifying his date of birth and parents, and Stephens himself settled on February 2, 1882, as a birthday, identical with that of James Joyce. Whereas Lord Dunsany attended Sandhurst Military School in England and served in

the British Army in the Boer wars and in World War I, Stephens attended a Protestant trade school in Dublin and became an ardent Irish nationalist, opposing British rule in Ireland. A tall man, over 6 feet 4 inches, Lord Dunsany enjoyed the lifestyle of the gentry and was an avid hunter and sportsman. Stephens, barely 5 feet tall, eked out a living as a clerk during the early 1900's, until his success as a novelist provided him with better job opportunities.

Lord Dunsany and James Stephens first met through their common acquaintance AE, who had shown interest in Dunsany's early fantasies and in Stephens' poetry and short essays. In My Ireland, Dunsany recounts an evening at AE's house on Rathgar Avenue in Dublin:

It was there that I first met James Stephens, a man soon to make a name as great as A.E.'s, but then excited by the approaching appearance of his first book, and telling us how he would stand still and gaze into the window of the bookshop when he saw his book there, and yet not believing that such an event would ever come to pass; thinking rather that Fate would let him live until a day or two before the book was to appear in that window and would then snatch everything away from him.

Events showed that he misjudged Fate, but I do think that all the rest that he said on that occasion showed a very proper spirit of a worker towards his work. And as Puck found a patron in Oberon, so with this very similar pair James Stephens found help and encouragement from A.E., until he no longer needed them. (My Ireland, 13)

The book Dunsany refers to in this account was Insurrections, published in 1909. Dunsany and Stephens began reading each other's work and corresponded regularly between 1910 and 1912. A number of Stephens' letters to Dunsany are contained in Richard Finneran's collection of Stephens' Letters (1974). A group of Dunsany's responses (in Dunsany's elaborate script) to these letters were made available to me by Mrs. Iris Wise, the daughter of James Stephens, and are included in the Appendix to this study.

The initial impetus for this study of Fantasy and the Supernatural in the writings of Lord Dunsany and James Stephens arises from statements made by Stephens to Dunsany about the common subject of "gods" in their works. Stephens had read Dunsany's tale "The Bride of the Man-Horse" and on 22 December, 1910, wrote Dunsany this response:

Thanks for lending me the story - I don't know whether it is the best you have done or not, but it certainly is unique - Its swiftness is amazing. It is as clean & swift & sharp as a spring morning - I hope when you are quite finished with the Edge of the World that you will have some adventures in the Morning of the World....Do you know that your prose work - that is the basic feeling in it & my later verse are curiously alike - we are seeking the same thing, great windy reaches, & wild flights among the stars & a very youthful laughter at the gods - We are both at that & in your proze [sic] you have undoubtedly found it. The art behind your stories does not appear conscious, there is no chiselling or polishing or gravers work in it that I can see & yet the art is extreme - that's what I call Spontaneity. For my part I am hammering out with great labour a prose

style.
(Letters, 17)

Stephens' rather effusive response to Dunsany's tales identifies several important areas of common interest and effort in their work. Both he and Dunsany were writing fantasy works about gods and both included laughter as an important thematic element in their writing.

The period of this letter, late 1910, is crucial in that each of these authors was beginning to write in a new genre. Stephens was "hammering out" prose, having for several years written lyric poetry and a few brief prose pieces. By 1914, he would publish three novels, The Charwoman's Daughter (1912), a story about a servant girl in Dublin, The Crock of Gold (1912), a pastoral fantasy whose hero is the Irish god Angus Og, and The Demi-Gods (1914), a fantasy about tinkers and angels who wander about rural Ireland.

Early in 1909, after the death of John Millington Synge, Dunsany had been encouraged by W.B. Yeats to write some plays for the Abbey Theatre. After his initial play, a short fantasy titled The Glittering Gate, was produced at the Abbey in 1909, Dunsany would in the next few years write a series of plays developing the theme of "Nemesis," the revenge of gods upon humans. These works, The Gods of the Mountain, The Laughter of the Gods, and A Night at an Inn,

all included the common theme of laughter which Stephens had mentioned.

A second element common to the writings of Dunsany and Stephens at this time is the theme of the return of gods. Dunsany's "Nemesis" plays and Stephens' two fantasy novels each develop an apocalyptically structured action in which gods return to the world of humans. The meaning of this apocalyptical return is radically different for the two authors, as is the nature of the laughter in their works.

The Nemesis plays of Dunsany are heavy with irony, as the plans and schemes of his human characters are overturned by vengeful gods. The human laughter which mocks divine beings and asserts the power of human ways is countered by the divine laughter, which destroys human plans and reestablishes the gulf between divine and human. Dunsany's apocalypses are not happy events; they are instead dark separations of human from divine endeavor and punishments of the hubris of human adventurers. Dunsany's gods have few human-like qualities, are rarely seen, and do not speak to the humans in Dunsany's world. They have been described by one critic as "super gods...even more terrible" than the super-man of Nietzsche. (Bierstadt, 137-138)

Stephens uses a wholly different kind of apocalypse, one in which gods join with humans in a search for a new unity of being. The action leads towards a marriage of the

human and the divine and the laughter is an expression of happiness and joy. The gods of Stephens' novels engage humans in frequent conversation, almost as equals embarked on a similar quest to discover truths about the existence of gods and humans. In sometimes humorous ways, Stephens brings gods and supernatural creatures down to a very human level by showing that they share the same needs and desires. The Crock of Gold and The Demi-Gods stand in marked contrast to Dunsany's Nemesis plays, in which gods remain remote and inaccessible, expressing themselves only in acts of vengeance.

In order to discuss both the similarities and the differences in these particular fantasies, it is helpful to examine some modern theorists. The first chapter of this dissertation will examine two issues in the theory of fantasy relative to the works of Dunsany and Stephens. The first of these is the question of the importance of the supernatural in defining the rather broad genre of fantasy literature. Both Dunsany and Stephens' works introduce gods as characters, but use these gods to achieve remarkably different effects. An examination of the theories of fantasy of Tzvetan Todorov, Eric Rabkin and W.S. Irwin will aid in clarifying appropriate categories for the use of the supernatural in the fantasies of these two authors. The second related topic is the relationship of literary

apocalypse to fantasy literature. All of the fantasies examined in this study are connected by the apocalyptic theme of the return of gods. An examination of Frank Kermode's theories of literary apocalypse provides valuable tools to discuss the different kinds of apocalypse in the Dunsany and Stephens texts.

The main body of this study is taken up with an examination of several texts of Dunsany and Stephens. I have arranged them chronologically, beginning with two of Dunsany's Nemesis plays, The Gods of the Mountain, and The Laughter of the Gods. In these works, Dunsany gives the reader dark apocalypses; the laughter of the gods expresses itself in the destruction of a group of beggars in the former play and the destruction of a city in the latter. Dunsany presents a distinctly ironic view of human endeavor in these plays.

The third and fourth chapters discuss two novels by James Stephens, The Crock of Gold and The Demi-Gods. The study of these novels shows Stephens' development of a comic fantasy with a rejuvenating laughter very different from the dark laughter of Dunsany's work. In both works, Stephens presents a comic apocalypse in which the human and the divine are joined in a happy marriage. Whereas Dunsany presents gods who are unseen, mysterious, and frightful,

Stephens presents gods who walk with, talk to, and befriend the humans in the story.

The fifth and final chapter returns to a discussion of Dunsany's work with an examination of The Blessing of Pan (1936), a novel about the return of the god Pan to a small English village. Though written much later than the other works of this study, this novel invites comparison with Stephens', both for its use of Pan as a character and for its representation of a kinder apocalypse, which signals a reconciliation of man with his natural surroundings. This novel much more closely resembles those of Stephens in its laughter, its themes, and its modern setting.

Chapter One

Fantasy and the Supernatural

The task of stating the importance of the relation of the supernatural to fantasy literature is both a simple and a confusing project. On one hand, hardly a critic would dispute the assertion that a work of literature which contains supernatural characters belongs in the category of fantasy literature. However, attempts to discover common meanings for the terms supernatural and fantasy as they apply to either characters or events in a work, or to the idea of genre, encounter a wide array of definitions, critical points of view, and theories of literature. There seems to be no accepted literary term for fantasy; critics and theorists have variously called it a "mode", a "genre", and a "structure" (Hunter 1-38). Likewise, discussion of the supernatural ranges from ideas about gods to formulations of impossible and unreal worlds. Before discussing the uses of the supernatural in the fantasies of Lord Dunsany and James Stephens, I will attempt to examine and clarify some modern definitions and theoretical formulations of the terms fantasy and supernatural.

The renewal of interest in fantasy literature in the twentieth century is partially due to a "split in attitudes to reality," and a recognition by many modern thinkers "that the brute ontological fact is inaccessible," according to Christine Brooke-Rose (A Rhetoric of the Unreal, 2). She argues that interest in fantasy and the fantastic arises

from the questioning of empirical realities and our ways of knowing or "imposing significance" on empirical realities. The representation of the supernatural and the impossible in literature is linked to the new exploration of the "unreal":

Certainly what used to be called empirical reality, or the world, seems to have become more and more unreal, and what has long been regarded as unreal is more and more turned to or studied as the only "true" or "another and equally valid" reality. (4)

A trend in modern criticism (since 1930 or so) is to define fantasy literature through the way in which the supernatural is used to represent the "impossible" or "unreal".

C.N. Manlove, in Modern Fantasy, prefaces his study with a general definition of fantasy. He states clearly and directly that the presence of the supernatural is an element necessary to fantasy, which he defines as

A fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms. (1)

He equates the supernatural with the impossible:

supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects...is meant to cover whatever is treated as being beyond any remotely conceivable extension of our plane of reality or thought....There are fantasies which are set in the empirically known world, but the

world is either juxtaposed with or transfigured by the presence of the supernatural. (3)

For Manlove, the essential characteristic of the supernatural is its opposition to the "empirically known world." He adds the word "irreducible" to his definition to underline the aspects of otherness and substantiality of the supernatural: "It must not be possible wholly to explain the supernatural or impossible away, by seeing it simply as a disguised projection or something within our 'nature'" (5). Manlove's broad definition includes many possible ways to represent the supernatural-- in "worlds, beings or objects."

A slightly different approach is taken by Erik Rabkin in The Fantastic in Literature. He agrees with Manlove that the impossible and the supernatural are crucial elements; however, he formulates his theory not by using the opposition of the supernatural to the natural, but rather by stressing the concept of a change in the "ground rules" of a narrative world. He first singles out the importance of the "fantastic" as a means to identify the presence of fantasy:

The fantastic is a quality of astonishment that we feel when the ground rules of a narrative world are suddenly made to turn about 180 degrees. We recognize this reversal in the reaction of the characters, the statements of narrators, and the implications of structure, all playing on and against our whole experience as readers. (The Fantastic in Literature, 41)

Rabkin also categorizes "Fantasy" as a genre which occupies a particular place among many types of narrative which use the fantastic:

In more or less degree, a whole range of narratives uses the fantastic. And at the far end of this range, we find Fantasy, the genre whose center and concern, whose primary enterprise, is to present and consider the fantastic.
(Rabkin, 41)

Rabkin's approach differs from Manlove's in that it defines Fantasy not according to what it is, but according to what it does , i.e. "present and consider the fantastic".

In defining fantasy by means of its use of the fantastic, Rabkin agrees with Tzvetan Todorov, who in his work, The Fantastic, defines the genre of the fantastic as existing in the duration of the reader's hesitation between two possible explanations of events occurring in the work:

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (25)

Todorov severely limits the works he admits to the genre of the fantastic to those in which he finds a "hesitation." Any work, for example, in which there is open acknowledgement of the presence and causality of the

supernatural, he consigns to the genre of the marvelous: "It is not an attitude towards the events described which characterizes the marvelous, but the nature of these events" (54). He is also primarily interested in discussing the fantastic as an historical genre and limits his consideration to works written in the nineteenth century.

Todorov's study of the marvelous as a literary genre, or group of genres, is quite brief and limited to a general categorization of types of narrative in which the supernatural is found. He singles out first the "hyperbolic marvelous," which includes works with phenomena superior in dimension to those of the known world. Next comes the "exotic" marvelous, in which the supernatural events are "reported without being presented as such." His third type, the "instrumental marvelous," includes "gadgets, technological developments unrealized in the period described." The fourth type is works of "science fiction," in which the supernatural is explained in a rational manner, but according to laws which contemporary science does not acknowledge (The Fantastic, pps.54-57). Todorov sums up these types with the comment that they are varieties of the marvelous as "'excused', justified and imperfect" and that they "stand in opposition to the marvelous in its pure - unexplained- state" (57). The basis of Todorov's schema is an opposition between realistic literature, that which is

totally explainable in terms of natural causes, and "pure" marvelous literature, which has elements of the supernatural as unexplainable. He situates the supernatural, then, directly opposite to the natural and the real in literature. He says little about works in which supernatural beings are an integral part.

The concept of the problematic relation of the reader to the supernatural, and by extension, to fantasy itself, is also addressed by W.R. Irwin. He too stresses the importance of the impossible as central to defining fantasy:

A fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into "fact" itself.
(The Game of the Impossible, 4)

For Irwin, the relation of the reader to the fantasy text follows formal patterns, which he calls "narrative sophistry", employed by the author in order "to make nonfact appear as fact" (The Game of the Impossible, 8). This theory moves beyond Todorov's "hesitation", which leaves the reader in an ambiguous state, at least for the duration of the "hesitation". Irwin stresses the importance of cooperation between the reader and writer: "In this effort, writer and reader knowingly enter upon a conspiracy of intellectual subversiveness, that is , upon a game" (The Game of the Impossible,8). In the complicated game played

by the reader and writer in Irwin's scheme, the reader must assent to the construct posed by the writer in order for the game to work, without the abandoning of the convention it may very well oppose (Irwin, 69). One value of this theory is that the world represented in or by the fantasy may be used to critique the real world it opposes.

Irwin's concept of fantasy as a game can be very useful in understanding Dunsany's approach to fantasy in the works to be examined in this study. At the heart of Dunsany's action in both the Nemesis plays and in The Blessing of Pan, is the questioning of the presence of the supernatural. The action takes the form of a game, as characters attempt to explain away the supernatural. Eventually discovering that they can't, either they are overcome by the gods (Nemesis) or they come to terms with the supernatural presence (The Blessing of Pan).

The theory that fantasy requires assent to a fictional world which contains elements of the supernatural or impossible is addressed in a slightly different fashion by Frank Kermode in The Sense of an Ending. He describes "apocalyptic fictions" as works which are fictions of the end and which fulfill our need to see coherence in events (Kermode, 17). He singles out apocalyptic works because they specifically attempt to represent the "fullness of time" that, he contends, we search for: "For concord or

consonance really is the root of the matter, even in a world which thinks it can only be a fiction" (Kermode, 58). The works of Dunsany and Stephens to be examined here illustrate, through the return of the gods, the use of the supernatural in an apocalyptic manner to establish or reestablish a new order. But, as I shall show, the two authors represent strikingly different kinds of apocalypses.

The ideas of "hesitation" and "astonishment" crucial to the critical theories of Todorov, Rabkin, and Brooke-Rose are based on a reaction expressing the reader's or character's uncertainty about the nature of events. The object of this reaction can go by several names, including the "unreal," the "supernatural," and the "impossible." The center of concern of this modern approach to fantasy and the fantastic in particular can be termed an interrogation of the real. The primary action of both the implied reader and the characters is to question the reality of events and even the reality of the text. Though a text begins with understood "ground rules," the whole purpose of fantasy, in Rabkin's view, is to overturn them. The function of the supernatural, then, would be in its power to contradict the normal and accepted rules.

The identification of the supernatural in a work begins at the level of the reaction of a character to a strange experience. What Rabkin calls "astonishment" as a reaction

to the change in "ground rules" is one of several possible reactions to events in a fantasy. For example, there is the response of fear at encountering the unknown, which H.P. Lovecraft says is central to weird literature:

The one test of the really weird is simply this -whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim. (Supernatural Horror in Literature, 16)

Lovecraft includes Dunsany among the writers who signal the presence of the supernatural through the reactions of dread and fear. (Others include the gothic novelists, Edgar Allen Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann.) Lovecraft notes especially Dunsany's "occasional touches of cosmic fright" (99). In the *Nemesis* plays, fear and dread are consistently used to indicate the presence of the supernatural as a weird, frightening and strange presence.

A modern fantasy writer, J.R.R. Tolkien, expresses the emotion associated with the encounter with another world or reality as "arresting strangeness," derived in part from a quality of "wonder" in the expression. The challenge of presenting in a credible way (with the "inner consistency of reality") images of things or beings not found in the "primary world" makes "Fantasy" a higher "Art":

That the images are of things not in the primary world (if that indeed is possible) is a virtue, not a vice. Fantasy (in this sense) is, I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent. ("Fantasy",79).

James Stephens offers his own commentary on the concept of "astonishment" in The Demi-Gods. He sees it as a momentary event, an experience which is quickly resolved:

The remarkable thing about astonishment is that it can only last for an instant. No person can be surprised for more than that time. You will come to terms with a ghost within two minutes of its appearance, and it had scarcely taken that time for MacCann and his daughter to become one with the visitors. (DG, 25)

For Stephens, astonishment at the supernatural is linked not to the emotion of fear, but to the feeling of wonder. The tendency towards rational explanation of or opposition to the supernatural is overcome by a quality of willing belief in Stephens' characters:

The MacCanns, so far as they professed a religion, were Catholics. Deeper than that they were Irish folk. From their cradles, if ever they had cradles other than a mother's breast and shoulder, they had supped on wonder. They believed as easily as an animal does, for most creatures are forced to credit everything long before they are able to prove anything. (DG, 25)

In Stephens' works the characters readily accept the marvelous and treat it as ordinary. There is little

questioning of the "ground rules"; the action is more concerned with a search for wisdom and truth.

Rabkin also contends that fantasies involve a search for truth, but this is secondary to the manner in which one goes about the search:

That truth resides in Fantasies also, of course, but Fantasies may be generically distinguished from other narratives by this: the very nature of ground rules, how we know things, on what bases we make assumptions, in short, the problem of human knowing infects Fantasies at all levels, in their settings, in their methods, in their characters, in their plots. (Rabkin, 37)

As an example of a "true Fantasy," Rabkin cites Julio Cortazar's "The Continuity of Parks." This work, he contends, continually undercuts all "stable perspectives," rendering the reader unsure if the story is told by a "real" man or a "fictional" one. He also places in this category Jorge Luis Borges' story "The Garden of Forking Paths," a detective story which is an

impossible detective fiction that stands as a direct assault on the assumptions that make detective fiction possible. The very form assaulting itself is the final self-reflexive reversal in Borges' Fantasy. (Rabkin, 173)

Ultimately, Rabkin's definition of "true fantasy" resides in texts which are much more modernist in technique than those of Stephens and Dunsany. The lack of "stable

perspectives" and the rendering of a text whose "ground rules" the reader or characters are unable to understand, make the representation of a coherent fictional world very difficult.

Returning to the relation of the supernatural to fantasy, one can ask exactly where does one place the fantasies of Stephens and Dunsany. Their works, if we use the scale provided by Todorov, belong clearly in the genre of the Marvelous, the category of works in which the supernatural is present and not questioned, and thus, there is little ambiguity.

Another approach to the discussion of the marvelous can be seen in the theories of Northop Frye. He begins his analysis of the supernatural from a different starting point than the inquiry into the nature of the real. He classifies stories which contain gods or supernatural creatures as myth:

By a myth...I mean primarily a certain type of story --It is a story in which some of the chief characters are gods or other beings larger in power than humanity. (Fables of Identity, 30)

Frye arranges his categories of fiction according to the "hero's power of action", which can be a way of measuring the degree or extent of supernatural event in a work. He places the category of romance below that of myth

because the hero is a human being, not a god. This category does not exclude the potential or possibility of supernatural actions in the story:

If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. Here we have moved from myth, properly so called, into legend, folk tale, marchen, and their literary affiliates and derivatives.

Frye's general distinction between myth and romance applies conveniently to Stephens' Crock of Gold and many of Dunsany's plays and tales. In his novel, Stephens' hero is a god, Angus Og, who is superior in kind to the humans in the story. Insofar as there are other supernatural beings in addition to Angus Og who become involved with men, one can say there is a mixture of myth and romance in the novel. In The Crock of Gold, Stephens also draws consistently and regularly from folkloric and mythological stories to construct an ideal pastoral world in which is home to both gods and men.

The world in Dunsany's plays and tales is removed from our ordinary world in time and place. His heroes are primarily men who go off in quest of some treasure or who seek some extraordinary experience or way of life different from the ordinary. When gods do act, usually at the apocalyptic end of the story or play, they are either unseen, or appear in the form of some animated idol. For Dunsany, the gods don't play the role of heroes; rather they act out the part of Nemesis and impose a divine judgement on the hero. In his Autobiography he says this embodiment of Nemesis is central to his conception of supernatural in three of his plays, The Laughter of the Gods, The Gods of the Mountain, and A Night at an Inn (Patches of Sunlight, 175). In The Blessing of Pan, the god Pan is also kept invisible, but his powerful influence brings about the return of an Arcadia which is a "fullness of time" for the inhabitants of Wolding.

Both mythic stories and romance stories, inasmuch as they contain elements of supernatural beings or actions, may be categorized as fantasy literature. On this point Frye's theories are in essential agreement with those of Todorov, Manlove and Rabkin, all of whom he preceded. A second common point is that of the opposition of realistic and marvelous as extremes of literary modes. In Frye's terminology, there is a progression from the mythic mode

through four lower categories. Romance, the second mode, contains marvelous events and actions, and is often situated in a world other than the ordinary. Next comes the "high mimetic" mode, whose characteristic examples are epic and tragedy, and whose actions are subject of ordinary laws of society and nature. Below this mode is the "low mimetic," containing realistic fiction and comedy. The final mode is the "ironic" in which "we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity," and where myth begins to reappear (Anatomy of Criticism, 34).

Though situated in a position opposite to the ordinary and the natural, myth contains the potential for the dialectic common to the discourse on the fantastic. Frye contends that myth can use the supernatural, in its other-worldliness, to reflect a variety of views of human experience:

...the dialectic in myth that projects a paradise or heaven above our world and a hell or place of shade below it reappears in literature as the idealized world of pastoral and romance and the absurd, suffering, or frustrated world of irony and satire. (Fables of Identity, 34)

Another critic of the fantastic and supernatural, Irene Bessiere agrees that this mode of literature has the potential for a dialectic. In accentuating the differences between the marvelous and the fantastic, she notes that the

former operates in a world separated from the real or natural, but which can reflect on the real:

The [marvelous] story rejects present reality for the exoticism of the marvelous in order to better judge it. It supposes a rigor which does not undergo the ambiguity of the fantastic, and, by its play upon appearances, makes the written word the location of the true and the real the location of the lie. (Le recit fantastique, 17) [My translation]

One can find both these worlds, to different degrees in the fantasies of both Stephens and Dunsany. In examining their use of the supernatural, one discovers that Stephens' gods help establish a pastoral, ideal world, whose final state is a new unity of being, a joining of the human and the supernatural. Dunsany's use of gods in the Nemesis Plays produces an ironic vision, in which the division between divine and human, between natural and supernatural is reinforced by the apocalyptic events of the story. Only in his The Blessing of Pan, do we see a more favorable vision of the supernatural, in which the gods don't play a cosmic joke on humans, but rather Pan smiles over his Arcadia.

Chapter Two

The Nemesis Plays

From the very beginning of his career, Dunsany wrote about gods. His first work, The Gods of Pegana, in 1905, contains his own invented creation stories, containing gods never heard of before. Curiously, he began to write tales about human characters only several years later. He recalls in Patches of Sunlight, that after he wrote a tale called "The Whirlpool," which was somewhat otherworldly, he "suddenly wrote a story in which all the characters were human. This was not only a surprise to me, but a great delight, for I had come to think that I was not destined ever to write a tale out of any material used by other people" (136-137). Most of Dunsany's early fantasy writing brings his readers into an imaginative world different in time and experience from the early 20th century in which he lived.

In the Spring of 1909, shortly after the death of Irish dramatist Synge, Yeats approached Lord Dunsany and asked him to consider writing plays for the Abbey Theatre (Amory, 61). Up to this time, Dunsany had published just three brief books of fantasy tales, The Gods of Pegana in 1905, Time and the Gods in 1906, and The Sword of Welleran in 1908.¹ Yeats saw attractive qualities in Dunsany's work, especially its inventive appeal to the imagination. He wrote to his brother Jack in April of 1909 that he liked Dunsany's "very fine style, which he shows in wild little

fantastic tales" and added that he wanted to get Dunsany into "the movement" (Letters, 529). Though he had never before written a play, Dunsany complied with Yeats's request and in an afternoon penned his first play, The Glittering Gate (Amory, 61).

By 1912, Dunsany had published four plays, King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior and The Gods of the Mountain in 1911, and The Golden Doom in 1912. The Glittering Gate and King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior both played at the Abbey in Dublin, and The Gods of the Mountain and The Golden Doom played at the Haymarket Theatre in London. Although The Gods of the Mountain was published twice in Ireland, in a Selection of Dunsany's works edited by Yeats in 1912, and in The Irish Review in January 1912, edited by James Stephens, the play has never been performed at the Abbey. In addition to the plays listed above, only two other of Dunsany's plays have been performed there -- A Night at an Inn (2 September 1919) and The Tents of the Arabs (24 March 1920). According to Hugh Hunt, most of Dunsany's plays "based on a fictitious world of vaguely oriented mysticism proved more popular in American little theatres than in Ireland" (The Abbey, 109-110).

As in his earliest prose stories, Dunsany makes gods important figures in his early plays. The Nemesis plays, among the earliest of his dramas, contain discussions about

the existence of gods and utilize gods in the closure of the action. The relation of gods to men in these plays is consistently portrayed as punitive and retributive.

The question of the identity of Dunsany's gods is best seen in the context of the distinction between romance and myth. As Northrop Frye uses the term, romance denotes literature which operates on the periphery of stories important to a culture. He distinguishes stories with a mythic tradition, containing material closely allied to central beliefs of a culture, from romance stories, containing material of a "popular" nature, and thought of as "entertainment" (The Secular Scripture 16). Though there are gods portrayed throughout Dunsany's early works, one can hardly say that they form a mythology. They are invented out of his own "fancy," with names and habitations conjured up in his own imagination. Dunsany was not so much interested in the metaphysical nature of their being as he was in their exotic appeal. He relates in Patches of Sunlight his memories that in his father's study there were

things that loomed large in the foreground and that probably had their part in opening doorways through which my fancy roamed later in an eastern direction, in search of lands fantastic enough to become the homes of gods and sages and demons whose carved shapes my father had bought. (16)

E.A. Boyd argues to the contrary, referring to Dunsany's tales and plays as forming a mythology unique

among Irish writers: "where his contemporaries [including James Stephens] are content to revive the imaginative world of Irish legend, Lord Dunsany has created a mythology of his own" (Appreciations and Depreciations 72). Boyd here cites the imaginative logic of The Gods of Pegana, noting that these tales "preserve a relation to natural phenomena sufficient to make them credible interpretations of natural mysteries" (75). However, in his plays and stories Dunsany is less interested in imparting knowledge and truth about divinities than he is in producing works which add something beautiful or wondrous to human experience. In his memoirs, Dunsany argues the value of the "fancies" which he wrote: "if one caravan were stopped of all that men have brought who have ever trafficked in dreams, the world would be poorer, for these are the one thing that we can add to it" (Patches of Sunlight 95).

A more astute critique of the identity of Dunsany's gods was offered by his friend AE. This Irish poet, who was working as a writer for an agricultural paper owned by Horace Plunkett, Dunsany's uncle, had from the start offered Dunsany encouragement and direction in his writing. After reading The Gods of Pegana, AE tried to steer Dunsany in the direction of more systematic thought:

I think all these stories would however gain greatly in their power if you mastered one system of philosophic thought....Your city of

the gods would correspond to Swargam in the Brahmin system, to Tir-nan-oge in the old Irish, to the Heart of the Heavens in the Aztec system and has its correspondences in almost every system devised by the human mind....When a man reads a fanciful tale in which he recognizes a subtle undercurrent of reference to world old ideas, he if he is an intellectual man settles himself down to enjoy it and respects the writer as being more than fanciful. (Letters from AE 58)

As an example of this kind of writing, AE gave Dunsany a copy of his Mask of Apollo (1905), a brief collection of tales about Greek and Celtic gods, written in what AE said was a "mystical mood." Dunsany largely ignored the advice of his friend, though, and continued to write brief adventure tales. He preferred writing tales about gods, places and people of his own invention, rather than events and characters derived from the ordinary, mundane life around him, or from any collection of traditional beliefs or myths. Moreover, he had a strong dislike for the commercial and political aspects of modern life, as he frankly declared to James Stephens in 1910: "I don't like politics and I detest trade" (Unpublished Letters to James Stephens #1). However, Dunsany did not forget his friend AE entirely; the character of the poetic, mythologizing beggar Agmar in The Gods of the Mountain seems to be modeled after AE.

Dunsany found a setting for his work not in the modern cities of his own day but in the "East" in legendary times. Here he could create fabulous cities and tell of wondrous events and horrible dooms. The action of his tales is often

a simple adventure of a thief, wanderer or beggar who goes off in search of a legendary place or an object of great beauty or value. Dunsany's tales and plays fit the pattern of formulaic event common to the folk tale, as noted by Northrop Frye:

Gone is all sense of acquiring incidental experience, of explaining all facets of a character, of learning something about a specific society. A hazardous enterprise is announced at the beginning and everything is rigorously subordinated to that. (Fables of Identity, 28)

In The Gods of the Mountain, a short 3 act play, the setting is the "East", in ancient times. Dunsany uses this setting to identify an exotic world in which fantastic events are possible. There is little evidence in the play suggesting Dunsany's concern to evoke any particular ethnic nationality, religious belief or historical period. If anything, Dunsany's setting seems to be akin to what Edward Said describes as a disappearing European invention of imagination: "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Orientalism, 1). The diction has a biblical ring to it, closely resembling the prose of the King James Bible. Dunsany's choice of names and the shape of the events might well evoke an Old Testament world.

The adventurers in this play are a group of beggars, led by the very old, crafty and imaginative Agmar. He radically opposes the life of trade and the market place and prefers the free life of the open road. When he impersonates a god, Agmar appeals to a sense of wonder and hidden fear in his fellow beggars and the citizens of the city of Kongros. In doing this, Agmar becomes more than an adventurous beggar; he acts as a poetic mythologizer, attempting to revive the qualities which are "divine" in man. Thus arises the great theme of this play, the revival of the imagination of a city. Padraic Colum noted the importance of this theme in his Introduction to Dunsany's A Dreamer's Tales in 1917:

One can hardly detect a social idea in his work. There is one there, however. It is one of unrelenting hostility to everything that impoverishes man's imagination - to mean cities, to commercial interests, to a culture that arises out of material organization.
(xviii)

The Gods of the Mountain climaxes with the appearance on stage of gods, green stony figures who silently exact retribution on the group of clever beggars who had impersonated them. The confrontation of supernatural figures, usually silent and dispassionate gods, with human characters is a major component in many of Dunsany's early fantasies. The surprise appearance of the gods expresses the ironic humor characteristic of Dunsany's tales and plays. In The Gods of the Mountain, the "drowsy" gods awake

and return to the city to take vengeance on the false gods, destroying the clever scheme of the human adventurers.

In his autobiography Patches of Sunlight, Dunsany recalled some of the sources and circumstances relevant to his writing of The Gods of the Mountain. He wrote the play in the late summer of 1910, completing it in just four days, and remarked later that beginning the play was a "memorable day for me" (Patches of Sunlight, 162). He said that his imagination "had been stimulated by hearing the Blue Hungarian Band at Osterley, playing the Rakoczy March" and that "a glance at a piece of green jade was another ingredient of that fancy, and I think that a beggar who used to haunt Sloane Street, whom a lady once described to me as the King of the dog-stealers, may have been another ingredient too" (Patches of Sunlight, 162). He especially liked parts of the dialogue when Agmar spoke haughtily like a god. With the benefit of more than twenty years' hindsight, he considered this play his "chief effort" (162).

Other critics have agreed with Dunsany on this point.

H.P. Lovecraft, for one, greatly admired this play:

But mere plot is the very least merit of this marvellously effective play. The incidents and developments are those of a supreme master, so that the whole forms one of the most important contributions not only to drama, but to literature in general.
(Supernatural Horror in Literature, 99-100)

After the opening at the Haymarket Theatre in London, the critic Frank Harris said, "It was one of the nights of my life; the only play, I said to myself, which meant anything to me in twenty years." (Vale, "Lord Dunsany's Gods" 783). Dunsany also proudly recalls that it was placed as a curtain raiser for a longer play, but "then the long play was put first and my play was given the place that the long play had had and, when this play was taken off, The Gods of the Mountain was still running" (Patches of Sunlight, 180). Perhaps Yeats had followed good instinct in urging Dunsany to pursue play-writing.

Though Dunsany gives some insight about the origins of the imagery and the dialogue of The Gods of the Mountain in Patches of Sunlight, he fails to mention a tale written earlier than the play which contains the basic story line and some important parts of the dialogue. In June of 1909, Dunsany published "The Beggars" in The Saturday Review.² This brief tale recounts a "vision" which comes to a dreamy narrator while he walks the streets of London. Dunsany employs a basic opposition of the realistic and the imaginative in the structure of the tale, the former seen in the black, ugly, dull appearance of the city and its citizens, and the latter in the colorful beggars and their prophetic sayings. The theme, in effect, emphasizes a

strong appeal for a revival or liberation of an interior life based on imagination and wonder.

The tale opens with the narrator "walking down Picadilly, not long ago, thinking of nursery rhymes and regretting old romance" (78). The oppressive, ugly modern city confronts the narrator-dreamer: "The streets were all so unromantic, dreary. Nothing could be done for them, I thought- nothing" (78). The sound of barking dogs makes the narrator turn eastward, and he then has "this vision, in Picadilly, on the opposite side to the houses just after you pass the cabrank" (78). He sees a group of beggars dressed in colorful attire:

Some of them wore purple cloaks with wide green borders, and the border of green was a narrow strip with some, and some wore cloaks of old and faded red, and some wore violet cloaks, and none wore black. And they begged gracefully, as gods might beg for souls. (78-79)

But the begging turns to mysterious talk, as the beggars speak to lampposts, houses, streets, and finally to the inhabitants, proclaiming apocalyptic events and giving mysterious replies to the queries of the people:

And the one murmured to the street: "Art thou weary, street? Yet a little longer they shall go up and down and keep thee clad with tar and wooden bricks. Be patient, street. In a while the earthquake cometh. "Who are you?" people said, "And where do you come from?"

"Who may tell what we are," they answered,
"or whence we come?" (79)

The beggars' visit introduces to the inhabitants a more exotic view of life. The color of their cloaks contrasts with the dreary black of London, and the wondrous nature of their speech, both in diction and content, evidences their more exotic consciousness. The beggars make a strong appeal to the sense of wonder hidden in the inhabitants themselves, an appeal to the secret life of the imagination:

Thou hast wild fancies that they must needs
be tamed with black, and terrible imaginings
that they must be hidden thus. Has thy soul
dreams of the angels, and of the walls of
faery that thou has guarded it so utterly,
lest it dazzle astonished eyes: Even so God
hid the diamond deep down in miles of clay.

The wonder of thee is not marred by
mirth.

Behold thou are very secret.

Be wonderful. Be full of mystery. (80)

The metaphor of the diamond underscores Dunsany's theme of the importance of imagination and fancy, and, one might add, the importance of fantasy literature.

The manner of closure of the tale simply and cleverly continues the motif of the opposition of the realistic and the imaginative. After the beggars' speech to the dark-clad citizens, the vision disappears when the dreamer is distracted by a "motor omnibus sounding its horn noisily" (81). The narrator had foreshadowed the closure with an earlier comment on the word "taxicab": "O marvellous ill-made word, surely the pass-word somewhere of some evil

order" (78). Demonstrating its "evil" power, the motor omnibus intrudes into the narrator's vision and destroys the romantic reverie of the dreamy stroller. Dunsany's imaginative dreamer is opposed by the modern machine, an omnibus carrying people. The use of the omnibus to close the tale provides a humorous and light effect rather than an evil and dreadful one.

There is only a hint of the supernatural in this tale, embodied in the mysterious and wonderful appearance and actions of the beggars. The narration excludes the possibility of the truly supernatural by framing the events in one man's consciousness. When "motor omnibus" distracts the narrator, it has the effect of popping the bubble of his dream. As Rabkin would put it, the "ground rules of the narrative world" are never violated to the astonishment of any characters" (The Fantastic in Literature, 41). Even though the action doesn't involve the supernatural, the theme of the awakening of wonder, which is the central action of the beggars, is an important act of a fantasist. Next to "rousing his conscience," fantasist George McDonald says it is the best thing an author can do for a person ("The Fantastic Imagination" 19).

Dunsany makes this important theme of "rousing" the hidden life of wonder and imagination central to the action of The Gods of the Mountain. In addition, the structure of

the plot and bits of the dialogue of "The Beggars" are used in the play. A group of colorfully attired and mysteriously speaking beggars, outsiders to the world of the city, are the protagonists in the drama. But Dunsany adds two key elements in the transformation of the tale to a play. He includes laughter, when the beggars impersonate gods, and when the gods, in turn, mock the beggars. And he introduces the Nemesis theme when the beggars are roused not by an "omnibus," but by supernatural creatures intent on divine retribution.

In The Gods of the Mountain, the supernatural is a part of the world of the drama. Though the gods themselves do not appear until the end of the play, the whole action revolves around the question of their existence. The humor arises from the beggars' clever impersonation of gods and the sometimes sceptical and sometimes fearful attitude of the citizens. From the start, though, Dunsany sows the possibility of the existence of the true gods, through the fears of the beggar Ulf, and through the reports of stony creatures travelling across the desert in Act III. The beggars, as false gods, compose their own mythology and set of beliefs, and later make a horrifying discovery that the gods they have imitated do exist. Their false prophecy comes to pass, and the true gods return to mock them in the way they themselves mocked the citizens of Kongros. All that

Agmar does and says comes back to visit him in the ironic finish of the play; he becomes an effigy of the god he tried to impersonate, a monument to his own imagination and his pride.

The rest of my discussion of the text of The Gods of the Mountain will consider three matters. The first is the kind of world which Dunsany creates for the drama, specifically, the fantasy setting and its romance characteristics. The second is the character of the beggar Agmar. He is a combination of clever beggar, romantic adventurer and poetic mythologizer. His quest as a thief has a high goal: he attempts to steal the very identity of the gods. As the imaginative center of the play, Agmar invents and acts out the false prophecy, and becomes a fantasist. The third is the role of the supernatural in The Gods of the Mountain: who are its gods, and what kind of "divine" way do they represent?

The initial lines of the play introduce a crisis in the city of Kongros, and the implication is that the causes are of a cosmic origin. As the play opens, three beggars, Oogno, Thahn, and Ulf sit outside the city wall lamenting the bad times, which for them mean that the rich citizens have "sour and miserly" hearts. Ulf, sensitive to the

supernatural dimension of events, sees cosmic reasons for their situation:

There has been a comet come near to the earth of late and the earth has been parched and sultry so that the gods are drowsy and all those things that are divine in man, such as benevolence, drunkenness, extravagance, and song, have faded and died and have not been replenished by the gods. (Act I, 3-4)

The problem for the beggars is the restoration of the "divine" qualities in man, since these qualities are essential to the beggars' way of life. The theme of regeneration of life, or defeat of the powers of death, is fundamental to "romance" myths, according to Northrop Frye (Fables of Identity, 16). Dunsany introduces this theme in Act I.

The dimensions of the world of this play extend from cosmic and supernatural forces to the level of beggars. The speech of Ulf implies, moreover, that these levels of existence are interconnected, that the drowsiness of gods has an effect on the lives of men, and that celestial events play a part in determining events on earth. Ulf also implies that in times past, relations between gods and men were better, that "divine" qualities in humans were more evident. There is a sense of nostalgia for a kind of golden age of harmony and happy times, not unlike the "once upon a time" of fairy tales.

The fantasy world invented by Dunsany in The Gods of the Mountain, what Tolkien calls the "secondary world," displays qualities common to much of Dunsany's early work. First, there is only a minimal connection to any known world. The city of Kongros lies next to a desert in the "East," across which are found the mountains of "Marma." A reference to cunning travelers from "Aetheopia" is the single link to a real geographical place. Dunsany expresses this otherness of his fantasy environments in several phrases used in his tales. One of these, the expression "Beyond the fields we know," captured for him something of the world he liked for a setting, which "almost" made a country real. (Patches of Sunlight, 147). Stephens expressed his liking for Dunsany's settings and adventures at "the Edge of the World", and Stephens would soon set his two fantasy novels, The Crock of Gold and The Demi-Gods, in a youthful, pastoral Ireland which he called the "Morning of the World" (Stephens, Letters 17). But the Ireland of Stephens' two novels is a modern place and modern issues impinge on the rural pastoral life.

The exotic names of the characters in The Gods of the Mountain also contribute to the otherness of the setting. Names like Agmar, Illanaun, Oogno and Thahn seem to be an odd mixture of Latin, Greek and Arabic, and hardly strike a familiar note. Dunsany was particularly noted for the

creativity of his names, both of characters and cities.³

Among those who found his settings alluring was Yeats, who praised the exotic aspects of Dunsany's tales and plays in an introduction to a Selection of Dunsany's work in 1912:

Had I read "The Fall of Babbulkund" or "Idle Days on the Yann" when a boy I had perhaps been changed for better or worse, and looked to that first reading as the creation of my world; for when we are young the less circumstantial, the further from common life a book is, the more does it touch our hearts and make us dream. We are idle, unhappy and exorbitant, and like the young Blake admit no city beautiful that is not paved with gold and silver. (vii)

Yeats's appreciation of the "less circumstantial" aspects of Dunsany's fantasy can accept both the lack of historical detail as well as the lack of psychological depth or complexity in his characters.

In Act I Dunsany swiftly moves from the announcement of the crisis to the introduction of his protagonist, Agmar the beggar. This clever and resourceful character, accompanied by a servant companion, Slag, is a leader among beggars. Upon hearing that some beggars are threatening to leave their "calling" because of the difficult times, Agmar rebukes them. He articulates a poetic vision of their way of life, not unlike that of the wandering tinkers of Synge's plays or James Stephens' fantasies. Agmar appeals to the imagination:

Let none who has known the mystery of the roads or who has felt the wind arising new in

the morning, or who has called forth out of
 the souls of men divine benevolence, ever
 speak any more of any trade or of the
 miserable gains of shops and the trading men.
 (Act I, 6)

At the heart of Agmar's argument is a sensitivity to mystery and a need for freedom which alienates him from what Yeats called the "common life."

Agmar also exhibits pride in his own abilities and in his calling when he proposes to solve the problem himself: "I will put right the times" (Act I, 6). Like protagonists of Greek Drama, he is a victim of his own hubris. His scheme, as it unfolds in Act I is to have the beggars enter the city disguised as the gods of Marma, the idols he has recently seen in his travels.

In addition to being poetic and proud, Agmar is also very clever. Dunsany establishes his character from the start as extraordinary, having important qualities of guile and deceit. Northrop Frye identifies these qualities as "froda", a fault cited in Dante's Inferno as worse than "forza" or violence. Frye adds that "froda" was essential to Romance heroes like Ulysses (The Secular Scripture, 65-68). Dunsany uses Slag, Agmar's servant, to praise the exploits of his "master" to the other beggars:

My master was three times knocked down and
 injured by carriages there, (Ackara), once he
 was killed and seven times beaten and robbed,
 and every time he was generously compensated.
 He had nine diseases, many of them mortal...
 (Act I).

Also characteristic of romance heroes, Agmar always succeeds in his challenges against other men, at least according to Slag. Dunsany does not allow his hero to succeed against the gods of the mountain, however; they see through his scheme and silently point their stony fingers at Agmar the culprit in the final scene.

As a clever and cunning hero, Agmar is one of a type often used by Dunsany in his early works. Tales such as "The Hoard of the Gibbelins" and "The Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweler" (The Book of Wonder, 1912) recount adventures of thieves who are singular in their craft, but meet horrific ends because they are no match for the supernatural monsters who protect treasures. In the play, A Night at an Inn, the "Toff" masterminds the theft of a ruby from the eye of an idol. He is proud of his cleverness, boasting that he "never lost a game of cards" in his life, but in the end he laments that he "did not foresee" the revenge of the idol. Dunsany adds the quality of imagination to the type of the clever hero, in Agmar, the king of the beggars.

As part of his scheme Agmar invents prophecy and articulates a certain mythology for the inhabitants of Kongros. Sceptical citizens challenge him to act and speak in "divine" fashion. What Agmar does resembles the action in "The Beggars" in that he appeals to a sense of wonder

latent in the citizens, and attempts to rekindle "divine" qualities. Such an act of expanding the human consciousness and achieving a sense of identity with god and human nature is a characteristic of certain 19th-century romantic heroes, according to Frye (English Romanticism 37). Agmar acts the part of a poet, exhibiting the power of the written and spoken word, when he sends Slag to proclaim their arrival in the city. He creates his own literary tradition:

Agmar - Go you into the city before us and let there be a prophecy there which saith that the gods who are carved from green rock in the mountains shall one day arise in Marma and come here in the guise of men.

Slag - Yes master, shall I make the prophecy myself? Or shall it be found in some old document?

Agmar - Let someone have seen it once in some rare document. Let it be spoken of in the market place. (Act 1, 10)

The appeal here is to authority invested in the written word and in antiquity. The humor arises in the parodic element. Dunsany's beggars are clever frauds, and both the suspense and humor in the play come from seeing if, and how well, their scheme succeeds.

The prophecy of the return of gods to the city is also an example of Frank Kermode's concept of a "useful fiction." The type which Dunsany uses here is a fiction of "concord", a prediction of the return of a fullness of time, in which "divine" ways return to the city (The Sense of An Ending, 58). Agmar's role in the play is not just to be clever, but

to be a convincing fantasist. In order to succeed, he must sustain his fiction about the existence of gods.

Agmar's attempt to arouse the curiosity and wonder of the citizens can also be seen in his use of the green garment which he directs the beggars to wear under their rags. He suggests another identity hidden beneath the surface- that of the green jade of the idols of Marma.

Act I moves simply and swiftly, as the beggars act to save their threatened way of life. There is little character development in any realistic fashion, nor is there historical or psychological causality introduced. The scheme outlined by Agmar depends for its success on its very strangeness, the proposition that gods disguised as beggars might visit cities of men. In Act 2, Agmar and his troupe enter the city of Kongros in their disguise.

The success of the venture of the false gods hangs solely on the wit and daring of Agmar. As the oldest and wisest of the beggars, he speaks for his fellows and keeps at bay the doubts of the citizens. His task is twofold: he must address himself to their vulnerable curiosity and capacity for wonder, and he must cover-up for the embarrassingly human actions of the beggars.

The dialogue of the opening lines of Act II, when the beggars enter the city attired in a hint of green, expands

the dialogue from Dunsany's tale "The Beggars." Agmar suggests that he and his group are more than mere men:

Oorander - Who are you and whence come you?
Agmar - Who may say what we are and whence we come?
Oorander - What are these beggars and why do they come here?
Agmar - Who said to you that we were beggars?
Oorander - Why do these men come here?
Agmar - Who said to you that we were men?
Illanaun - Now, by the moon!
Agmar - My sister....
Slag - Our little sister the moon. She comes to us at evenings away in the mountains of Marma. (Act 2, 13).

In making his claim of identity with deified forces of nature, Agmar poetically expresses a sort of natural theology. This quasi-pantheistic rendering of gods is of the kind that Dunsany also used in The Gods of Pegana. In that work, Dunsany represented a creator-god, MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI, "the maker of all small gods," who became drowsy after his act of creation and who slept while the small gods amused themselves (The Gods of Pegana, 1). The numerous small gods of Pegana include such as "Kib, the god of beasts," "Slid, the god of foaming and gliding waters" and "Limpang-Tung, the god of mirth and of melodious minstrels" (7,14,22). There is also a motif of fear and the suggestion of doom, that one day MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI will awake and that the play of the gods will cease:

...they will play until MANA arise to rebuke them saying: 'what do ye playing with Worlds and Suns and Men and Life and Death?' And

they shall be ashamed of Their playing in the
hour of the laughter of MANA-YOOD-SUSHAI.
(The Gods of Pegana, 8)

Both the playing with life and death and the threat of the
awakening of the drowsy god to act in retribution are
essential motifs of The Gods of the Mountain.

The tone of the dialogue alternates between humorous
and serious throughout Act II, as the citizens question the
identity and actions of the beggars. Agmar becomes
imperious in his speech, and his veiled threats of doom and
destruction succeed in partially convincing the citizens to
bring sacrifice and tribute to his group. When one of the
citizens, Illanaun, doubts the divinity of Agmar, he
responds:

Let the pestilence not fall at once upon this
city, as it had indeed been designed to; let
not the earthquake swallow it all immediately
up amid the howls of thunder; let not
infuriated armies overwhelm those that escape
- if we be gods. (Act II, 16)

Such talk convinces the citizens that they should bring
sacrifices to their new gods. When they return with a lamb
sacrifice, the beggar Thahn offers suggestions about cooking
it ("that leg is not being cooked at all"), and they devour
the meal hungrily. Agmar, however, refuses to eat, and
humorously accounts for the all-to-human actions of his
group by declaring that they are young and ill-trained gods:

I have not eaten since the world was very new
and the flesh of men was tenderer than now.

These younger gods have learned the habit of eating from the lions...The sun and the moon and the nimble lightning and I - we may kill and madden, but we do not eat. (Act II, 18)

When some still-doubting citizens try a second ploy to test the identity of the beggars, and bring some "Woldery wine"(a favorite of beggars), for them to drink, Agmar refuses again to partake. Rather, he accepts the cup of wine and pours it on the ground as an offering, declaring "Our anger is somewhat appeased" (Act II, 20). Only after Agmar sends the citizens away, saying that the gods must talk among themselves, does he remove his mask of stoic and disinterested divinity and begin to eat with the rest of the beggars. His apparent success has restored the divine qualities of "benevolence" and "extravagence" to the city, and the "useful fiction" has satisfied their appetites.

Agmar plays out the fiction even further, though, when he is forced to articulate a theology of death. Before he can enjoy his new "divine" status, another citizen arrives and Agmar's chilling response to his request astonishes even his beggar troupe. A man whose child is dying asks for help:

One - Master, my child was bitten in the throat by a death-adder at noon. Spare him, master; he still breathes, but slowly.

Agmar - Is he indeed your child?

One - He is surely my child, master.

Agmar - Was it your wont to thwart him in his play, while he was strong and well?

One - I never thwarted him, master.

Agmar - Whose child is Death?

One - Death is the child of the gods.
Agmar - Do you that never thwarted your child
in his play ask this of the gods?
One - (with some horror, perceiving Agmar's
meaning) Master !
Agmar - Weep not. For all the houses that
men have builded are the playfields of this
child of the gods. (Act 2,22-23)

In this encounter, Agmar acts the part of a dispassionate rather than a merciful god. He is a divinity who brings a message of resignation to death rather than a promise or gift of life. The dialogue also ironically foreshadows the end of the play, as a similar treatment is in store for Agmar and his group when the true gods act in a stony and merciless way at the end of Act 3.

Dunsany considered this bit of dialogue some of his best, remarking, for example, that a "death-adder" is an animal not to be found in any zoo, and that Agmar's response to the man's request contained any "beauty" that there was in the play (Patches of Sunlight, 162).

Dunsany ends his second act rather humorously, by bringing Agmar back down to the level of the other beggars. When one beggar, after hearing the "death-adder" speech, wonders aloud if Agmar is "indeed a man?", the "Master" responds "A man, a man, and until just now a hungry one" (Act 2, 23)

Act 3 occurs a "few days" later, and opens with the beggars enjoying their exalted new divine status. Agmar

injects a serious note in their conversation and chides his fellows for making fun of their worshippers:

...now that we are gods, let us be
as gods, and not mock our
worshippers....The gods have never
mocked us. We are above all
pinnacles that we have ever gazed at
in dreams. (Act 3, 25)

Ulf has a feeling of the imminent danger in their mockery of the divinities, and mutters a warning: "I think that when a man is high then most of all are the gods wont to mock him" (Act 2, 25). From this point, the fortunes of the beggars begin to fall.

Word comes to them that suspicious citizens have sent men to Marma to see if the idols are still on the mountain, and this causes consternation among the beggars. When certain ones speak of this journey, Agmar attacks their lack of faith sarcastically: "They left us here and went to find the gods? A fish once took a journey into a far country to find the sea" (Act 3, 28). Upon the return of the men sent to Marma, Agmar tries to have them sent away as doubters. But the men stay and give the surprising news that the gods were not seated at Marma. The citizens and beggars both wonder at this, but for different reasons. The remorseful citizens go off to prepare a great sacrifice and celebration to atone for their doubting. As for the beggars, the mystery of this strange news is quickly overshadowed by

their anticipation of even better treatment by the city of Kongros. They feel they have truly restored the "divine" qualities, "benevolence, drunkenness, extravagance and song" to man.

Their reign as living gods is to come to a quick end. A frightened man enters to implore mercy from Agmar. He has seen death-dealing gods in the desert:

You were terrible in the gloaming. When your hands were stretched out and groping. You were feeling for the city....You were all green, master...all of rock again as you used to be in the mountains. Master, we can bear to see you in flesh like men, but when we see rock walking it is terrible, it is terrible.... When children see it they do not understand. Rock should not walk in the evening. (Act 3, 33-34).

This recitation of the frightful experience of one man injects a sense of weird horror into the play and adds to the building sense of approaching doom already hinted at in the fears of Ulf. The strange horror Dunsany uses here is the very kind of weirdness which is unique to fantastic literature. H.P. Lovecraft singles out Dunsany as a "master of triumphant unreality," whose writings have "occasional touches of cosmic fright" unique to fantasy literature (Supernatural Horror, 99).

Dunsany explained in Patches of Sunlight that this dialogue with the frightened man was based on an experience he once had while hiking in the Alps:

I think I saw rather suddenly over a ridge that the sun had set long since and night was approaching....I turned for home, and as I did so two rocks that stood up black out of the wastes of snow seemed to move too; so enormously motionless was that entire landscape, that any movement at all seemed thus to disturb its stillness. That eerie suggestion of animate rocks in the gloaming had no share, so far as I know in the idea that made my play, The Gods of the Mountain, but they were the direct origin of the words of the terrified man when he appeals to the false gods, "Rock should not walk in the evening." When people are terrified they are likely to say simple things, and often silly things, and I thought that that line was a rather pathetic blend of the two. (77)

This passage in part exemplifies Dunsany's theory that all poetry and imaginative writing have their origins in some memory of personal experience and in "Mother Earth".

In making the idols into animate rocks, Dunsany departs from what to this point had been a consistent set of biblical motifs in the play. The metaphor of a rock or a mountain as a "rock of salvation" is a common Old Testament motif. Psalm 95 contains this and several other motifs which are also central to the action of the play. The opening verses call upon the Lord as the "Rock of Salvation" and praise him as the creator of all: "The sea is his, and he made it,/ And his hands formed the dry land./ ... Let us kneel before the Lord our maker." One of the beggars says about Agmar in Act 2 "He has made us," imparting an ironic role of creator to their leader. The Psalm also expresses the motif of a people in the desert who have hard hearts and

who doubt the voice of the Lord: "Today if you hear his voice,/ Harden not your hearts as in the provocation,/ as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Dunsany's city of Kongros on the edge of the desert, with its doubting people who have "sour and miserly" hearts, echos this motif. And finally, the Psalm ends with a promise of retribution: "It is a people that do err in their heart,/ And they have not known my ways,/ Unto whom I said in my wrath/ That they should not enter into my rest" (Psalm 95). Imitating the psalm, Agmar the false god both attempts to teach new ways to the people of Kongros and threatens retribution, but he and his group ironically become victims of doom, brought on them by the very gods they have impersonated. The motif of the hardening of hearts is acted out wondrously in the final scene when the gods of Marma harden the hearts of the beggars by turning them into stone.

The final irony of the play occurs when the very gods described by the frightened man arrive on stage. At this point the beggars expect a happy fulfillment of their false prophecy. They anticipate the coming of dancing girls, pleasurable music and a great feast, but they notice that there is no sound of flutes and that the footsteps sound too heavy for the light feet of dancing girls. Ulf gives vent to his building fear of approaching doom:

I have a fear, an old fear and a boding. We
have done ill in the sight of the seven gods.

Beggars we were and beggars we should have remained. We have given up our calling and come in sight of our doom. I will no longer let my fear be silent; it shall run about and cry; it shall go from me crying, like a dog from out of a doomed city; for my fear has seen calamity and has known an evil thing.
(Act 3, 36)

His fear turns to horror when the green gods clomp onto the stage.

Ulf, in the above passage articulates the idea of Nemesis as the act of retribution of the gods. Dunsany provided insight into his character in a letter to Stuart Walker in 1916. (Walker was staging The Gods of the Mountain in his American tour with the Portmanteau Theater in the Fall of 1916). About Ulf and the concept of Nemesis, Dunsany wrote:

Do what you like with Ulf. To me he appeared a man who in the course of his years had learned something of what is due to the gods: it is he, and he alone, that hints at Nemesis, and at last he openly proclaims it—"my fear) shall go from me crying like a dog from out of a doomed city." A play writes itself out of one's experience of life, going back even further than one can remember, and even, I think, into inherited memories. Our slow perceptions and toilsome reasoning can never keep pace with any work of art, and if I could tell you for certain the exact source and message of the Gods of the Mountain, I could tell you also from what storms and out of what countries come every drop of the spring that is laughing out of the hill. Therefore I only suggest that Ulf plays as it were the part of a train bearer to the shadow of some messenger from the gods. (Amory, 187)

Dunsany's climax cleverly reverses the fortune of his beggars. The joyful dance they anticipated becomes a "danse macabre." According to the stage directions, the gods accomplish their retribution silently. They are to be entirely green and to imitate creatures of stone in their walk and gesture:

...they walk with knees extremely wide apart, as having sat cross-legged for centuries; their right arms and right forefingers point upward, right elbows resting on left hands; they stoop grotesquely. Halfway to the footlights they left wheel. They pass in front of the seven beggars, now in terrified attitudes. (Act 3, 37)

The form Dunsany gives to these gods is a common representation of the seated Buddha in both China and Japan (Munsterberg, Sullivan). The artefacts he saw in the study of his father, who had done foreign service in India, perhaps gave Dunsany the idea for this form of statue (Patches of Sunlight, 16).

The gods act in silence, making simple gestures mimicking the beggars:

When the six are seated the leader points one by one at each of the seven beggars, shooting out his forefinger at them. As he does this each beggar in his turn gathers himself back onto his throne and crosses his legs, his right arm goes stiffly upward with forefinger erect and a staring look of horror comes into his eyes...The gods go out. (Act 3, 37).

The accusatory gesture of the mute gods mirrors the actions of the beggars and turns their prophecy into horrific reality. In Dunsany's fictional world of Kongros, the marvelous does happen and prophecy does come true. But Dunsany does not present gods who bring "benevolence, drunkenness, extravagance and song" to the beggars. The actual gods put an abrupt end to the celebration and represent a horrific, not a happy, apocalypse for the impersonators. Even though the gods never speak, their silent gesture seems to validate the theology invented by Agmar in Act II, that death is a "child of god" at play. They are the very sort of dispassionate, pitiless gods that Agmar imagined.

The horror in their faces silently articulates the beggars' feeling, as they each become the very stone idol they impersonated. The irony is amplified when the citizens return and find the beggars have become statues. They take this event as a retribution for their having doubted the beggars:

One - We have doubted them. We have doubted them. They have turned to stone because we have doubted them.

Another - They were the true gods.

All - They were the true gods. (Act 3, 37-38)

In an unexpected way, the beggars' ploy succeeds, as they do become gods in the imagination of the citizens, and

have made the gods return to the city. The action as a whole is marked by an ironic consistency. All that Agmar prophesied came to pass: "doom" arrived in the evening and the gods returned to the city.

That all prophecy is true is a law of the romance world invented by Dunsany, as is the inevitable triumph of the supernatural over the human. The encounter between the two, however, is characterized by the emotions of fear and horror rather than joy. Dunsany's supernatural laughter is a mocking kind of laughter, evidenced in the quickly changed fate of the beggars and the mistaken final response of the citizens. The laughter of the supernatural creatures at the efforts of humans is a motif of closure common to Dunsany's early plays. In both The Laughter of the Gods and The Glittering Gate, the gods thwart the efforts of humans at the very end of the play and reveal their presence in offstage laughter.

Throughout The Gods of the Mountain, Agmar articulates a philosophy of the ways of the gods, but he fails to see how his teachings applied to himself. He is as blind as Oedipus, because he cannot see the fate which is coming to him. Dunsany shows this failing in Agmar's final comment, when the gods have turned to face the beggars: "Be still! they are dazzled by the light. They may not see us!" (37). Ironically, it is Agmar who fails to see what has happened.

His comment is the futile gesture of an adventurous thief, seeking a way to cope with the immediate danger of the situation. He doesn't see the larger picture.

By turning his beggars into statues, Dunsany makes them ironic monuments. Though they failed to achieve their own aims in the fashion they intended, they did succeed in reviving the old ways in Kongros. Their statues represent the triumph of imagination over the market place.

It is the poetic imagination of the beggars, and especially Agmar, which Dunsany monumentalizes in this play. The gods who finally appear act in a manner consonant with the vision given by Agmar. But their return means a bitter punishment for Agmar and his troupe. Their monumentalization in stone carries a double meaning. From the point of view of the citizens, the beggars are honored as gods, but from the point of view of the gods, the beggars are punished for playing gods.

It is likely that Dunsany had poets in mind, too, when he wrote the play. Several of Dunsany's letters, written during the Spring of 1909, the time he wrote "The Beggars" and a year before writing GM, mention his friendship with AE and Yeats. After writing The Glittering Gate in March of 1909, at the request of Yeats, Dunsany mentioned to his wife that he had "been among great men." In another letter

shortly after this, he gives this curiously dramatic and imaginative bit of praise for Yeats and AE:

I admire Yeats more and more. A.E.(sic) should stand in huge metropolitan ways and prophesy downfalls and the ruin of Kings till the dusty grey winds wept; and Yeats should sing into being fantastic towns with Apollonian song.

I can see them both doing it, A.E. chanting with the wind in the ends of his beard and Yeats waving his right hand and singing more softly, his jet hair drooped to his left eyebrow. (Amory, 64)

Dunsany is wonderfully prophetic here, as Yeats is later to sing his own fantastic city of Byzantium into being. But this mental image of poets striding through cities later takes form in "The Beggars" and further in Agmar the beggar. As leaders of the Irish Literary Revival, both Yeats and AE proclaimed the return of Celtic gods in the literature of 20th century Ireland. Though there is no Ireland in the fantasy world of The Gods of the Mountain, the green-clad poetic beggars who become monuments perform, albeit ironically, the same function as the two Irish poets.

The Laughter of the Gods, the second of the Nemesis plays, develops a dialectic about the nature of fantasy. Though he again sets the play in a romance land far away and long ago, Dunsany creates a dramatic tension with a modern feel to it. In this play, an imperious king openly challenges and questions the existence of gods. The dialogue articulates a somewhat modern sceptical position about the uselessness of the gods. At conflict are modern sceptics, who explain away the need for gods, and traditional believers, who voice fears about divine retribution. This play can be read as Dunsany's artistic statement in the modern fantasy-reality dialectic.

Dunsany arranges the characters in this play on both sides of the central issue of belief in the supernatural. The king and his courtiers take the position of sceptics who find gods useful only as politically expedient in their modern world. In contrast to these stand the queen and the prophet, who are sensitive to the ways of the gods and fear their actions. Although the king does not side with his courtiers on some political and social issues, he does join them in mocking laughter at the spiritual beliefs of his queen and prophet. In doing so, he also laughs at the gods. This human laughter is similar to that of the beggars in The Gods of the Mountain, an expression of modern disdain for the power of the gods.

Underlying this mocking laughter is a quasi-literary enterprise. In order to achieve their ends, the courtiers invent a useful fiction, in the form of a false apocalypse. They coerce the prophet into making a false prophecy about the imminent destruction of the city of Thek. It is apparent from the dialogue that the courtiers and the king (who sees through their scheme) recognize the falsity of the prophecy, but the king is willing to wait out the prediction of destruction rather than quit the city. The tension in the play arises as events point to the possible truth of the prophecy. The king's point of view becomes like that of a modern critic, who, in Frank Kermode's terms, questions the very terms of the "apocalyptic paradigm" of the end of things; he attempts to prove the prophecy false. The king is willing to play the game, but he demands a more subtle set of fictions.

In addition to questioning the fictional apocalypse predicted by the prophet, the king attempts to promote a kind of apocalypse of his own. He desires to stay in the city and to experience its beauty as a sort of earthly paradise. This desire for the experience of eternal beauty represents another kind of fictional apocalypse, one which Kermode calls a "consonance" or a "concord" fiction, which concerns the achievement of the "fullness of time" in an ideal aesthetic experience (The Sense of an Ending, 58).

Dunsany provides this experience at the end of the play, when the king declares the moment of sunset to be immortal. In The Laughter of the Gods, then, there are three apocalypses, that falsely prophesied by the courtiers, that prophesied by the king, and that of the gods who come to destroy the city, the divine apocalypse.

The play contains two kinds of laughter, one human and the other divine. In disbelieving the power of prophecy, the humans laugh at the gods, considering them out of date and lacking influence in the modern era. Both the King and the courtiers mock the prophet and the divine ways he represents, declaring that the gods have no role in modern life and affairs. This human laughter is countered by that of the gods, a "demoniac" laughter heard after the city is destroyed and the prophecy fulfilled. The demonic apocalypse ironically reasserts the power of the gods and reestablishes the gulf between divine and human in a swift, vengeful act.

Though the setting of the play is that of romance, far away and long ago, there is a surprising touch of modernity to it, evidenced in the attitude towards the gods. Both King Karnos and his courtiers attempt to explain away the need for gods, consigning them to an age far back in the past, while preferring to rely on their own intellectual and rational powers to make sense of the world. The attitude of

the King and the courtiers reflects a 20th-century discussion of the issues of the fantasy-reality dialectic. To a modernist such as King Karnos, there is no longer any need for gods:

When the gods prophesy rain in the season of rain, or the death of an old man, we believe them. But when the gods prophesy something incredible and ridiculous, such as happens not nowadays, and hath not been heard of since the fall of Bleth, then our credulity is overtaxed. It is possible that a man should lie; it is not possible that the gods should destroy a city nowadays. (Act II, 91)

The king's insistence on the impossibility of divine intervention signals his belief that gods are dead and that belief in them is "incredible" or "ridiculous". The real world for the king seems to imply only that world governed by reason and human experience; he doesn't admit the possibility of supernatural happenings, and hence of the divine. In Tzvetan Todorov's scale, the king would be placed among the realists, those who believe only in logical and rational explanations of events.

Though he might be considered a modernist in his ideas about the uselessness of gods, King Karnos shows a romantic side to his character in his rejection of the up-to-date political and commercial world of Barbul-El-Sharnak. His desires are those of a poet and he is on a quest for an ideal existence. This sort of character is a common to both Dunsany's short fiction and his plays of this period. Many

of the adventurers in the short tales of The Book of Wonder and A Dreamer's Tales leave the modern city in search of adventures, legendary places, or experiences of wonder or beauty.⁴

Dunsany composed the play in late January and early February of 1911, within six months of finishing The Gods of the Mountain. Other than telling Stephens in a letter dated January 30, 1911, that he had "turned aside to write a 3 act tragedy and did two acts of it" the previous day, Dunsany provides very little information about his sources and inspiration for the work. (Appendix, Letter #5) He completed the third act February 2 and 3.

The design of the action resembles that of The Gods of the Mountain. A king seeks an ideal life in an exotic city. He meets opposition from courtiers and their wives, who pressure him to return to the political and social activities of Barbul-El-Sharnak. The king's love of the beautiful city of Thek compels him to stay in the city. In rejecting the wishes of the courtiers and of the queen, he laughs at the false prophecy and the belief in gods. At a moment of exceptional beauty, when the king has seemingly fulfilled his desires, the gods return and destroy the king and all of the city. The gods are less visible than those in his previous play, and, though they act in an even more

destructive manner, represent a similar kind of implacable and dispassionate force, opposed to the human will of the king.

Many years after he composed the play Dunsany described the plot as one of his most simple and boasted of its logical precision:

This is the mathematically simple plot of the play: they have two axioms in the City of Barbul-el-Sharnak and in the jungle cities beyond it: (1) The gods cannot lie. (2) The gods speak by their prophets. Some courtiers, whose wives desire to leave a small city in the unfashionable jungle and return to Barbul-el-Sharnak, persuade the court-prophet to prophesy falsely to the King that, unless the city in which he now is be deserted, the gods will destroy it within three days. The King, seeing through the conspiracy, says: "Very well, we will stay and see what happens." What does happen is probably a surprise, but it should not be, for the two axioms working together make it mathematically inevitable. The gods speak by their prophets: the gods cannot lie. So the city is destroyed. And the prophet, though dying, rejoices; for he has not betrayed his office. From his last words the play is named. A dying man asks "What is that dreadful sound?" And the prophet answers: "It is the laughter of the gods, that cannot lie, going back to their hills." (Patches of Sunlight, 175-176)

The axioms constitute the stumbling block for the king in the play. In disbelieving them, he tries to shape the world according to his own will, a course of action which leads to his fall. Acting as a kind of hinge between the natural and supernatural world, the axioms are the key dramatic element

in the play. They represent a divine rule which cannot be transgressed without dire consequences. The breaking of the rule brings about an inevitable retribution by the gods.

Dunsany's axioms are an example of what G.K. Chesterton calls the heart of the morality of a fantasy world. He sees the idea of a transgression of a simple rule as the key to action in the story:

This great idea, then, is the backbone of all folklore -the idea that all happiness hangs on one thin veto; all positive joy depends on one negative. Now, it is obvious that there are many philosophical and religious ideas akin to or symbolized by this; but it is not with them I wish to deal here. It is surely obvious that all ethics ought to be taught to this fairy-tale tune; that, if one does the thing forbidden, one imperils all the things provided.
("Fairy Tales" 29)

In the world of Dunsany's Nemesis plays, when men step into the realm of the divine and appropriate divine things or divine ways, punishment by gods usually results. What Chesterton suggests about transgression in fairy tales and folklore applies equally to the fantasy of Dunsany. The one law seems to be that humans should not attempt to participate in divine ways. Interestingly, Dunsany uses his gods only to punish the transgression, not to redeem or raise up the fallen. There is no unity between divine and human; the gods remain unapproachable. In The Laughter of

the Gods, Dunsany re-enacts the fall of the king in a setting much like a garden.

In many of his early tales and plays, Dunsany created a setting far removed in time and place from modern life. Often, the settings were ideal cities in remote areas of deserts or mountains. The environment of the city of Thek reinforces Dunsany's concept of an ideal, romance world; it is a place of legendary beauty located in the "East" apart from well traveled and busy thoroughfares. Built of marble and surrounded by a jungle full of exotic purple orchids, Thek is far away from Barbul-el-Sharnak, the busy commercial and political center of the world. The exotic, physical beauty of the city attracts the king and seduces him into deciding to forsake his modern city for the paradise of Thek.

Both the historical time and place of the action are also typical of Dunsany fantasy: at the "Edge of the Known World".⁵ In this case, the "known" world is the legendary world of the Homeric epic. One character, Tharmia, makes a single reference to Helen of Troy and provides the only link to any known world, comparing the situation in Thek to that in Troy:

Arolind. We have done too much and we have angered a king, and (who knows?) we may have angered even the gods.

Tharmia. Even the gods! We are become like Helen. When my mother was a child she saw her once. (Act III, 106)

Interestingly, the gods of Dunsany's play, though they come from a mountain, are not named as the Olympian gods of the Iliad. Dunsany provides a name for only one of the gods in this play, Gog-Owza, the mysterious, unseen lutanist. The other gods remain nameless and are only perceived through their destructive action and laughter.

The King comes to the city because of its beauty, and resists the efforts of members of his court to return to Barbul-el-Sharnak. His attraction to its beauty leads to his downfall, though, because the gods act according to the prophecy, which the king ignores, and destroy the city. One can also see an ironic parallel to Homer's Iliad here: the Homeric conflict comes about over a beautiful woman whereas the Dunsany conflict arises because of a beautiful city. However, King Darnak the esthete bears little resemblance to the warlike Agamemnon or Achilles.

Dunsany uses the setting of the play to pose another opposition. A conflict in the play arises from the tension between the king and his court about the opposition of the commercial and political life to the esthetic life. The king's attraction to the beauty of Thek, a city on the edge of the jungle far away from the political and commercial center of his realm, sets him apart from his courtiers; his pursuit of beauty takes precedence over affairs of state and commerce. King Karnos exemplifies Dunsany's criticism of

the emptiness of modern culture and the need for an experience of beauty not afforded in the political or commercial spheres. Like Agmar, Darnak functions as a spokesman for a way of life which appeals to the powers of the imagination. An esthete who has lost interest in the affairs of state and business, he seeks to escape the commonplace by remaining in Thek and contemplating its varied beauties. He fulfills the desire for escape of Oscar Wilde's modern seekers of beauty who spend their days "in the sordid streets and hideous suburbs of our vile cities when we should be out on the hillside with Apollo" (The Artist as Critic 300).

In The Laughter of the Gods, Dunsany combines beauty and terror, presenting a beautiful and exotic city which is destroyed with all its inhabitants by aloof and vengeful gods. As in The Gods of the Mountain, the gods are seen by the human characters as a forgotten race who have no interest in the affairs of the modern world of men. But the humans in the play unwittingly set in motion the means of their own downfall by forcing a prophet to prophesy falsely the destruction of the city. Dunsany uses an ironic ending similar to The Gods of the Mountain, as the false prophecy comes true and the city is destroyed. The final effect is "demoniac" offstage laughter by the sinister gods as they return to the hills.

If one looks beyond Dunsany for a source of a character like King Karnos, the symbolist theatre of the turn of the century provides rich parallels. The dissatisfaction of the King is another form of the "ennui" of characters like Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's Axel, or those in Maeterlinck's Pelleas and Melisande. King Karnos preference for meditation rather than action, his desire to experience the life of the imagination rather than that of political action, could well qualify him as a post-symbolist hero. Like Axel, he wants to withdraw from the mundane concerns of the everyday world. The final lines of the play testify to his attempt to create an ideal existence, a permanent life in contemplation of the beautiful. It is at a moment of peak experience, when the king declares his beautiful city immortal, when Dunsany effects the King's fall, though the action of the gods.

The human laughter in this play belittles the gods by consigning them to an existence in the legendary past. But Dunsany provides a surprise at the end, when the gods laugh at the humans and perform the impossible by destroying the city. This apocalyptic moment of destruction, when the vengeance of the gods arrives at the moment of a beautiful sunset, is also the point at which Dunsany joins his two themes in the play. On the human level, the King has

achieved his human aspiration, the goal of his search for the beautiful. And on the supernatural level, the gods have demonstrated that they do indeed play an active role in the human world. The ending of this play, like that of The Gods of the Mountain, gives Dunsany's version of the fall, the tragic fate of men who usurp divine ways. And like in that play, there is no redemption for the human characters of Thek; their fate is final and irrevocable.

The range of characters in The Laughter of the Gods is wider than in The Gods of the Mountain. Two characters, the Queen and the Voice of the Gods, represent a substantial spiritualist opposition to the rational opinions of the King. King Karnos is the central authoritative figure in the play, a man not quite as clever as Agmar, but certainly more imperious. He imposes his will on the courtiers and their wives, but he meets more substantial opposition to his views in the fear of Queen and the prophesy of Voice-of-the-Gods. The major strength of the King is his earthly authority and his rational power. This is opposed by the less rational but equally powerful feelings of the Queen and the Voice-of-the-Gods, who fear death through supernatural intervention.

The conflict developed in the first act arises from a struggle between two differing desires. First, Dunsany lays out the motif of the beautiful and exotic city, which has

attracted King Karnos and his court. The city of Thek can be seen as an earthly paradise, a place of beauty and recreation. But the city is not attractive to all, and the opposing motif develops the desire of the courtiers and their wives to return to the political and social life of Barbul-El-Sharnak. Those opposed to the king's desire to stay and contemplate the beauties of Thek plot to invent a false prophecy, a useful apocalyptic fiction which predicts the destruction of the city of Thek. Dunsany limits the action of play to the duration of the prophecy, three days.

The opening conversation of Act I immediately makes a contrast between the busy commercial and political life of Barbul-el-Sharnak, a city "mountainous with houses", and the beauty of Thek, a city full of purple orchids and "wild, sweet air." Two of the king's courtiers observe the beautiful jungle at the edge of Thek and sense a quality of danger in the beauty. Ludibras feels an unknown danger in the orchids of the jungle:

They are like no tangible thing in all the world. They are like faint, beautiful songs of an unseen singer; they are like temptation to some unknown sin. They make me think of the tigers that slip through the gloom below them. (Act I, 60)

In this passage Dunsany stresses the mysterious quality of the beautiful, with reference to both an "unseen" singer and "unknown" sin. These references also foreshadow major

events to come -the song of the unseen lutanist and the transgression of the prophet. The tiger slipping "through the gloom" serves as an ominous foreshadowing of the fate of the king and his court at the end of Act III. Dunsany's jungle also echoes the forest of William Blake's "Tyger", and its association with danger and beauty: "Tyger, Tyger, burning bright/ In the forests of the night."

From the start, Dunsany stresses the exotic surroundings of the city of Thek, partly in an attempt to distinguish it from the more commercial Barbul-El-Sharnak and, one might assume, partly to amplify the wondrous nature of the setting. In the jungle, according to Harpagas, a courtier, "they say there are kroot and abbax" to hunt (Act I, 61). And another, Ictharion, praises the jungle for its beauty:

The jungle is like a sea lying there below us. The orchids that blaze on it are like Tyrian ships, all rich with purple of that wonderful fish; they have even dyed their sails with it. (Act 1, 59)

Thek and its jungle belong not to any known world, but rather to what Bierstadt calls Dunsany's "own" country: "a mythical land of which he is the discoverer" (135).

The attraction to the exotic beauty of Thek is not a sustaining emotion for most of the characters. The courtiers' wives are the first to express a desire to return

to the great city Barbul-el-Sharnak, because Thek is too primitive and out of the way:

Tharmia. There are no shops.
Arolind. We cannot buy new hair.
Tharmia. We cannot buy (sobs) gold-dust to put upon our hair.
Arolind. There are no (sobs) neighbouring princes...
Carolynx. The king must go at once.
 (Act I, 65)

It is typical of Dunsany's ironic humor that the initial reason for the conflict in the play is somewhat trivial, the lack of "gold dust" for women's hair.

When questioned by Lady Jersey about the shallowness and lack of differentiation among these female characters Dunsany said he made an attempt to differentiate them, but found that "there was an essential reason why I could not, for they were all the lowest common denominator of triviality, and fashion swayed them all three alike and all together" (Patches of Sunlight, 176). Ironically, it is the triviality of the wives which "set the whole thing in motion", according to Dunsany (Patches of Sunlight, 176). Since they themselves have no influence with the queen, whom they consider "mad", the wives ask their husbands to convince the king to leave Thek.

It is at a point midway in Act I that the plotting to leave Thek begins. The courtiers first appeal to the king's vanity: "Your Majesty, there is a legend in the World, that

he who is greatest in the city of Barbul-el-Sharnak is the greatest in the world" (Act 1, 71). They discover that the king has more appreciation for the beauties of Thek than for affairs of state:

"Are not the jungle orchids a wonder and a glory?...But when the sun comes over them in the morning, when the dew is on them still; are they not glorious then? Indeed, they are very glorious....I will not go again to Barbul-el-Sharnak." (Act I, 72-74).

Dunsany sets his king apart from the other characters as an esthete, a man who seeks the contemplation of beauty.

The next appeal the courtiers make is to the prophet; they convince him to make a false prophecy. Dunsany presents the courtiers as comparatively modern atheists, who believe that gods have no place in their civilization:

Ludibras. The gods? There are no gods now. We have been civilised over three thousand years. The gods that nursed our infancy are dead, or gone to nurse younger nations.
Ichtharion. I refuse to listen to-- O, the sentries are gone. No, the gods are no use to us; they were driven away by the decadence. (Act I, 78-79)

Dunsany here seems to refer to a mythical age of gods who were present for the "infancy" of the civilization in this play. The use of this paradigm recalls Northrop Frye's distinction between heroic and mythical ages, the former being an age of human heroes and the latter an age when gods walked the earth (Anatomy of Criticism, 134). The courtiers

have relegated their mythical past and its gods to the active imaginations of the "younger nations," the realm of the superstitious. They also believe that the king disbelieves in the gods, as Harpagas says: "the King is more highly civilised even than we are. He will not care for the gods" (Act I, 80). The logic of their position is paradoxical, however, as it depends on the King's acceptance of prophecy (in Kermode's terms, a "useful fiction") at least as a political expedient:

Ictharion. He cannot ignore them; the gods crowned his forefather and if there are no gods who made him King?

Ludibras. Why, that is true. He must obey a prophecy.

Ictharion. If the King disobeys the gods the people will tear him asunder, whether the gods created the people or the people created the gods. (Act I, 80)

Ictharion's perceives that both the fiction of the gods and the prophecy are useful in stabilizing the political order in society. He proposes that the King accept the myth of the gods, even though neither he nor the King believes it. Kermode asserts that the difference between myth and fiction lies in the very dilemma in which Ictharion thinks he has caught the King:

Fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive...Myth operates within the diagrams of ritual, which presupposes total and adequate explanations of things as they are and were; it is a sequence of radically unchangeable gestures. Fictions are for

finding things out, and they change as the needs of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change.

(The Sense of an Ending, 39)

Ictharion's strategy seeks to trap the king into accepting the prophecy as an expression of authority, as an "unchangeable gesture." The courtier thus uses myth as a useful fiction, to effect the change he desires, namely a return to Barbul-El-Sharnak.

The prophet initially refuses to prophesy as the courtiers want him to. He asserts the sanctity of his vocation and his belief in the truth of prophecy, as he states the axiom central to the play: "The gods speak through my mouth; my breath is my own breath, I am human and mortal, but my voice is from the gods and the gods cannot lie" (Act I, 83). Only after they threaten to expose him as a violator of prophetic custom, for having three rather than two wives, does Voice-of-the-Gods agree to their demands. But though he collaborates with the skeptical courtiers, the prophet still believes in the gods. Having put the scheme in motion, Dunsany foreshadows the doom to come in Act III, when the prophet ominously declares, in the last line of Act I, that retribution will come from the gods: "The gods will punish us." His fear of losing his position in society lives alongside a fear of supernatural retribution.

In the second act, Dunsany highlights the role of the king as a kind of rational demythologizer. He first

confronts the prophet and expresses his incredulity about prophecies, especially those which predict impossible events. He next argues with the queen, whose belief in prophecy is hard to undermine. In addition, the king must explain away the music of the unseen lutanist, whom the Queen believes is the god Gog-Owza. Dunsany here introduces a problem of the "supernatural" in the fantasy dialectic. The king must search for realistic and natural solutions to account for the marvelous music.

The second act commences with the delivery of the prophecy. Dunsany adds a certain ritual authenticity to the declaring of the prophecy through a verbal formula which states one of the laws of Thek. The king ironically insists that the prophet use the formula:

Voice-of-the-Gods. Your Majesty, the gods in three days' time...
King Karnos. Stop. Is it not usual to begin with certain words? [A Pause]
Voice-of-the-Gods. It is written and hath been said...It is written and hath been said...that the gods cannot lie....In three days time the gods will destroy this city for vengeance upon some man, unless all men desert it. (Act III, 88)

After some thought, somewhat surprised at the prophecy, the King calls the prophet back and expresses his incredulity about the prophecy. He finds it preposterous and questions the veracity of the prophet:

But when the gods prophesy something incredible and ridiculous, such as happens

not nowadays, and hath not been heard of since the fall of Bleth, then our credulity is overtaxed. It is possible that a man should lie; it is not possible that the gods should destroy a city nowadays. (Act II, 91)

Here the king thinks as a strict realist, disbelieving the possibility of the marvelous. He also exhibits a certain kind of hubris, a reliance on his own earthly power, sarcastically threatening the prophet with death: "If the gods have misled you, let the gods protect you from my executioner." What eventually happens is the opposite of what the king envisions. Men mislead the prophet, and he becomes the executioner for the king and his court.

The courtiers, who hope the king takes the prophecy seriously so that they can return to Barbul-el-Sharnak, talk among themselves. But the king silences them with his imperious will:

King Karnos. Why do you whisper?
Tharmia. Your Majesty, we fear that the gods will destroy us all and...
King Karnos. You do not fear it.
 [Dead Silence] (Act II, 93)

Dunsany's stage direction allows for two possible interpretations of the statement by the King. His line could mean that he really disbelieves the prophecy, and that he also has seen through the scheme of the courtiers, and thus wishes to silence their machinations.

In the second part of Act II, the king faces the fears of the queen, which are harder to dispell. She is the first

to hear the music of the mysterious lutanist. Dunsany uses the music to add a touch of the marvelous to the action. The queen fears that the music is supernatural and means death: "I have heard Gog-Owza, the lutanist, playing his lute" (Act II, 94). The king attempts to find a natural explanation for the music, in order to quiet the fear of his Queen: "Hark. Why, I hear it too. That is not Gog-Owza, it is only a man with a lute; I hear it too" (Act II, 94). He sends guards to find the musician, but the effort is futile and the lutanist remains unseen. The guards do find, however, the only man who does not hear the musician. In an ironic scene, the king questions the man, and though the man hears and speaks, the King declares him deaf and a fool. The man says he is leaving the city, and as events turn out, this "fool" is the only one to avoid the doom.

The king's attempts to shield the queen from hearing about the prophecy result in the opposite effect; she openly speaks about her fear of the gods. Her declaration, which culminates the act, reiterates the fear of doom evoked by the mysterious lutanist:

Men laugh at the gods; they often laugh at the gods. I am more sure that the gods laugh too. It is dreadful to think of the laughter of the gods. O the lute! the lute! How clearly I hear the lute....I wish I could see him. Then I should know that he was only a man and not Gog-Owza, most terrible of the

gods. I should be able to sleep then.
(ActII, 104)

Her fear forecasts the laughter of the gods at the end of the play. Her conviction that "Gog-Owza" is present despite the inability of anyone to "see" him strikingly contrasts with the attitude of both the king and his courtiers, who rely on their reason and their physical sense of sight to explain away the gods.

Dunsany's choice of the name "Gog-Owza" for his "most terrible of the gods" faintly echoes Stephens' use of Angus Og in the Crock of Gold. The Irish god's presence is also represented by a musical signature in the happy singing of birds. But the god used by Stephens is a god of love, whereas Dunsany's "Gog-Owza" is a god of destruction.

A more fruitful source for "Gog-Owza" might be the Bible. There is a curious biblical reference in the name "Gog," which appears in an apocalyptic context in the Book of Ezechiel. "Gog", which in Hebrew means "high or mountain", is identified as a prince of Rosh, Mishek, Tubal and Tiras in ancient Syria, but is most likely a composite "type of victorious barbarian" (Jerusalem Bible, 1409). He is used as an instrument of destruction in a passage which is strikingly similar in effect to the destruction in the final scene of The Laughter of the Gods. The Ezekiel reference portrays a tumultuous and terrifying physical destruction:

On the day Gog attacks the land of Israel -it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks- I shall grow angry. In my anger, my jealousy and the heat of my fury I say it: I swear that on that day there will be a fearful quaking in the land of Israel. At my presence the fish in the sea and the birds of heaven, the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl along the ground, and all men on earth, will quake. Mountains will fall, cliffs crumble, walls collapse, and I will confront him with every sort of terror -it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks. (Ezechiel, 38: 18-21)

Just as the biblical apocalypse in this passage is meant to confirm the presence and power of the "Lord Yahweh", so the destruction implied by the music of Gog-Owza confirms the presence of the gods to King Karnos and the city of Thek. The very terror of the Ezechiel passage, the crumbling destruction of the land of Israel, is enacted in the apocalyptic destruction of Thek at the end of Act III.

In Act III Dunsany brings the several fictions in the play to a resolution. First, the courtiers and their wives, reacting to the collapse of their useful fiction of the false apocalypse, attempt to escape the vengeance of the King. In doing so, they again belittle the spiritualist views of the prophet and the queen, laughing at their belief in gods. Ictharion mocks the fancies of the Queen:

Poor frightened brain! How strong are little fancies! She should be a beautiful Queen. But she goes about white and crying, in fear of the gods. The gods, that are no more than shadows in the moonlight. Man's fear rises weird and large in all this mystery and makes

a shadow of himself upon the ground and Man jumps and says "the gods." Why, they are less than shadows; we have seen shadows; we have not seen the gods. (Act III, 111)

The motif of shadows in this act is also repeated in the action of the executioner stalking the prophet. He is also stalked by his own feelings of failure and he laments his own lack of faith. He no longer believes that his words are from the gods. He fears that he has made the gods silent and that they will desert men and remain "proudly silent for evermore" (Act III, 115).

The action in relation to the second fiction, that of the King's apocalypse of beauty, builds to a climax in Act III. Dunsany brings his character to a complete detachment from his former duties as King: "I will never see Barbul-El-Sharnak any more. I will sit and watch the sun go down on the orchids till it is gone and all their colors fade" (Act III, 121). The state of mind of the King can be read also as that of one in pursuit of an ideal world, the highest product of human achievement. In trying to disquiet the continuing fear of his Queen, King Karnos rather proudly boasts of the solidity and strength of his reign, in a tone of defiance for Fate:

No, no. Look upon Thek. It is built of rock and our palace is all of marble. Time has not scratched it with six centuries. Six tearing centuries with all their claws. We are throned on gold and founded upon marble. Death will some day find me, indeed, but I am young. Sire after sire of mine had died in

Barbul-el-Sharnak or in Thek, but has left our dynasty laughing sheer in the face of Time from over these age-old walls. (Act III, 127)

The King's sense of idealism culminates in a proud declaration of immortality, representing a kind of aspiration to be divine like a god. The King's belief that he has conquered Time represents a kind of apocalypse for him, a concord of past, present and future, brought together in his dynasty. Dunsany marks this moment with his laughter, an expression of pride.

Dunsany combines the supreme moment of aesthetic joy, the King's apocalypse, with the moment of the destruction of the city, at sunset, divine apocalypse. First, the King expresses his pleasure in proud words:

Look at the beautiful light upon the orchids.
For how long they have flashed their purple
on the gleaming walls of Thek. For how long
they will flash there on our immortal palace,
immortal in marble and immortal in song.
(Act III, 123)

The appreciation of beauty is the pinnacle of life for the King, and the beauty of Thek seemingly confirms his earthly power. At the moment he calls himself immortal, a moment of hubris, of both exquisite sight and equally of blindness, he and his city tumble into destruction.

To convey the idea of destruction, Dunsany wrote in particular stage effects. He specifies the use of "loud and prolonged thunder," and "flashes of red light and then total

darkness" (Act III, 129). Dunsany also adds offstage laughter, which becomes "demoniac" during the final lines of the play. The judgement at the end is similar to that in The Gods of the Mountain, as the Voice-of-the-Gods confirms the existence of the gods:

Voice-of-the-Gods. [Triumphantly] They have not lied!

Ictharion. O, I am killed. [Laughter heard off.] Some one is laughing. Laughing even in Thek! Why, the whole city is shattered. [The laughter grows demoniac.] What is that dreadful sound?

Voice-of-the-Gods. It is the laughter of the gods that cannot lie, going back to their hills. [He dies.] (Act III, 129)

Dunsany's nemesis ending here is apparent in the swift action of the gods. Whereas in The Gods of the Mountain, the silent gods appear on stage and point at the beggars, in The Laughter of the Gods the gods are unseen, and the vengeful nature of their act is communicated by the offstage "demoniac" laughter.

Another difference from is in the nature of human achievement in the play. That which draws the King and his court to Thek is its legendary beauty. The climax of the play juxtaposes the beautiful, expressed in the sunset light on the orchids, with the horrific, which has been suggested all along by the fears of the queen and the prophet, and early in Act I through the imagery of the tiger lurking in the forest. By combining the sublime esthetic experience

with the horrific, Dunsany makes a statement about the nature of the pursuit of beauty. As in many of Dunsany's tales, the human who goes on a quest for some object or experience of great wealth or beauty does not return to the common, normal society which he left. In this play, one level of tension is the continuous effort by the courtiers to influence the king to return to Barbul-el-Sharnak, to the political and commercial life. The king continually resists these efforts, opting to remain in Thek to enjoy the experience of beauty.

A second point apparent in this play is the gods' limited role. Other than the reference to their living in the hills, there is little attempt to provide any mythological information about them.. Bierstadt considers their aloofness one of the disadvantages of Dunsany's gods:

Lord Dunsany has made his gods to be absolute, omnipotent, divine beyond the very outskirts of the cosmos, and in this I believe he has been mistaken. His gods are those of the ancient Hebrews; they are like the Egyptian gods, for they are implacable and apart....Lord Dunsany has removed his gods too wholly from the lives of men. They are depersonalized, detached, impenetrable, and vast, but they bear no relation to their servant, man...Dunsany has shown us the falsity of the super-man of Nietzsche, but in his place we are given a super-god even more terrible. (136-138)

While Bierstadt may well be correct in citing the implacability of Dunsany's gods, his comment about them

being like those of the ancient Hebrews is only partially correct. The God of the Old Testament is one who had a covenant with his people, and this covenant was expressed in a whole series of laws and commandments passed on to the people. The relationship between the people and their god was a personal one. This is not the case with the gods of Dunsany's *Nemesis* plays. The gods in one sense play the simple role of providing a limit to human experience, in the form of punishment. The relationship of the divine to the human is only retributive on the divinities' part. The humans in Dunsany's dramas laugh at the idea of gods and then discover one simple fact, -that the gods do exist and their laughter is horrible. This simple fact overwhelms all others. The drama of the play arises in the efforts of men to evade this inevitable fact. The irony arise out of the inequality of the relationship between gods and men. The actions of the gods preserve their essential otherness.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. The first of these, GP, was published at Dunsany's own expense. He says in PS that he actually paid for it twice, having paid two publishers, only one of which, Elkin Matthews of London, ever put the book to print. Dunsany also published many of his tales individually in Pall Mall Magazine, The Shanachie, and The Saturday Review of London.

2. "The Beggars," The Saturday Review of London, June 1909. This tale was also included in his collection A Dreamer's Tales, published in September 1910. The page numbers are taken from that collection.

3. Many critics of Dunsany's work mention his ability to invent names. In addition to Yeats, some of these are Boyd, Colum, Bjorkmann, Manlove, Lovecraft and Le Guin.

4. "Bethmoora" and "The Hashish Man," two stories from A Dreamer's Tales, both begin in London and involve the dreamer's movement into an imaginary land. Stephens was particularly fond of "the Hashish Man".

5. Dunsany quite often used the expression "at the Edge of the known world" to describe the setting for his fantasies. The subtitle for his Book of Wonder (1912) was "Adventures at the Edge of the World" and a frontispiece illustration by S.H. Sime for The Last Book of Wonder (1916) is titled "One house on the pinnacle looking over the edge of the world".

Chapter 3

The Crock of Gold

"Put Angus Og out of your head, my dear, " she replied, "for what would the likes of you and me be saying to a god. He might put a curse on us would sink us into the ground or burn us up like a grip of straw. Be contented now, I'm saying, for if there is a woman in the world who knows all things I am that woman myself, and if you tell your trouble to me I'll tell you the thing to do just as good as Angus himself, and better perhaps." (The Crock of Gold, 98)

-a Tinker woman to the Philosopher

James Stephens' second novel, The Crock of Gold, does not have just one or two supernatural figures involved in the action. The novel teems with supernatural figures from Blake's poetry, Greek mythology, and ancient Gaelic literature. Stephens brings deities, elementals and mythological characters into frequent contact with an equally wide array of humans and the result is usually a conversation about life's shared joys and difficulties. Opinions are expressed by leprecauns about their human neighbors, by a woman of the "shee" about her absentminded philosopher husband, and by the god Pan about "Love" and "Hunger." At the center of the action, an Irish god named Angus Og, who calls himself "Divine Imagination," woos an Irish maiden named Caitilin, rescues a philosopher from prison, and prophetically announces a new age of brotherhood and love for Ireland and a new unity of the ancient and modern peoples of Ireland.

In the largest sense of the word, The Crock of Gold is a comedy. The action illustrates the organic, biological unity and vitality of life and attempts to restore a lost balance to humanity, actions which are essential to the comic rhythm of literature (Langer, 331). Its story expresses a hopeful message of the renewal of humankind through unity of the contrary ways of the "Head" and the "Heart." The Irish god Angus Og acts the part of the "Redeemer" as he marries the girl Caitilin and leads the ancient and the modern inhabitants of the Irish countryside in a final dance of joy celebrating the arrival of a new age. The novel embodies Stephens' fond wish for a new national identity, according to Augustine Martin (James Stephens, 53).

The comic also operates in the novel on other levels. The engaging and loquacious narrator frequently makes whimsical asides and freely comments on the wandering actions of the characters. Stephens' treatment of the gods often results in a comic deflation of the seriousness of the divine nature and action. Though gods walk freely in the world of The Crock of Gold, their opinions and authority are often countered by a realistic human response of practical wisdom. The ethereal comments of deities are confronted by a hearty response grounded in simple human values, as when a tinker woman tries to dissuade the philosopher from

continuing on his search for Angus Og, claiming that her "wisdom" is equal to that of the god. The heart of Stephens' approach to fantasy, as he expressed it to Dunsany, is to bring the supernatural down to the level of the human and to "laugh" at the gods.

The laughter is not all directed at the gods, however. Elements of satire and parody are included in the work, as Stephens constructs a world which contains figures and events reflecting the literary and social realities of his day (Martin, p.38). Stephens presents a rich array of comic types including the absent minded philosopher, his irritable wife, clever leprecauns and bumbling country policemen. Certain characters draw their identity from the personages of the Irish Literary Revival and from its literature. The action incorporates a striving for a particularly "Gaelic" identity in language and cultural heritage.

The need for fantasy to be "solidly anchored in some kind of fictionally mimed reality" is met in the ordinary act of speech (Brooke-Rose, 234). One of the conditions of the marvelous world of this novel is that every being is endowed with the power of speech. No matter what the level of being, whether mythical or human, whether animal or divine, the characters constantly engage in conversation about joys and sorrows of life, love and brotherhood. The wonder and astonishment of an encounter between a human and

a supernatural being quickly dissipate into conversation about shared realities of a common search for wisdom. When some character isn't speaking, the highly entertaining and loquacious narrator seasons the wandering story with aphoristic commentary, usually concocted from Stephens' own brand of Blakean wisdom.

In an inscription written on a flyleaf of a first edition of the novel, Stephens commented significantly on what he felt was his unifying principle in constructing the work:

In this book there is only one character-Man-Pan is his sensual nature, Caitilin, his emotional nature, the Philosopher his intellect at play, Angus Og his intellect spiritualised, the policemen his conventions and logics, the leprecauns his elemental side, the children his innocence, and the idea is not too rigidly carried out, but that is how I conceived the story. (Bramsback, 134)

The simplicity of this rather sketchy plan applies more to the formulation of thought in the work, and not so much to the narrative structure. Recent major critics of Stephens', including Augustine Martin, Hilary Pyle and Patricia McFate have repeatedly stressed his wholesale borrowing from Blake's prophetic poems and the central role of Blake in the thought expressed in the novel. In particular, the dynamic of the opposition of the contraries of the "Head" and the "Heart" derives from Blakes prophetic poems "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" and "The Four Zoas"

(Martin, ch. 3; McFate, ch.2). Hilary Pyle goes so far as to postulate that The Crock of Gold is Stephens' attempt at a "full exposition" of the philosophy of Blake (James Stephens, 45).

Stephens' central concept of the "Divine Imagination" as the highest supernatural power is essentially owed to Blake. It is one purpose of this chapter to demonstrate the relation between Stephens' idea of Imagination and his method of presentation of the supernatural. Essentially, both are tied into the transformation of the supernatural into the ordinary. In Stephens' system, there is a closeness, nearly an identity between the divine and the human. Rather than concentrate on the supernatural as horrifying or mysterious, and portray a god who "might put a curse on us would sink us into the ground or burn us up like a grip of straw," as imagined by the tinker woman, Stephens opts for a less alienating view (The Crock of Gold, 98). He works towards an identity of the human and divine. Angus Og expresses this idea to Pan when he says "The Divine Mood shines in the heart of man" (110). From the outset Stephens creates a fictional world where there is a common effort by gods and humans to reach a collective wisdom.

Though it is true that one must first look to Blake as a primary source for the formulation of his thought, there are other sources and influences which are of equal

importance. The first of these is James Cousins' The Wisdom of the West, a treatise comparing Celtic mythology to Greek and Eastern mythologies. Stephens reviewed this work in the Irish Review in the Spring of 1912, several months before his publication of The Crock of Gold. It is likely that some of Stephens' idea for the depiction of Angus Og, especially in his prophetic role, were suggested by Cousins' work, in which there is considerable mention of Angus Og.

Stephens may owe the initial suggestion for the use of the god Pan, to his friend Dunsany. During 1911-12, Dunsany published several brief tales about a surprising discovery of Pan in a country where he had been forgotten.¹ The role of Pan as a representative of the "sensual nature" of man may also be connected to frequent allusion to this god in both the poetry and prose of the late 19th century. Both Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning make reference to the god Pan in their poetry, and he is a frequently mentioned figure in the Arcadian poetry of the late 1800's (Merivale, ch. 3).

There is also an abundance of Irish folklore used by Stephens as an essential part of the consciousness of the characters of the rural world of The Crock of Gold. Stephens draws from Irish folklore and legend to portray his leprecauns and their various adventures. The attitudes and thoughts of country people like Meehawl MacMurrachu are

infused with folk superstition and a ready belief in wondrous events.

Though the thoughts about wisdom and imagination may be borrowed from Blake and others, Stephens provides a unique setting for the framework of expression of those ideas. The opening lines of the novel establish the setting as the Irish countryside in a time encompassing both the mythic and the modern:

In the centre of a pine wood called Coilla Doraca, there lived not long ago two Philosophers. They were wiser than anything else in the world except the Salmon who lies in the pool of Glyn Cagny into which the nuts of knowledge fall from the hazel bush on its bank. He, of course, is the most profound of living creatures, but the two Philosophers are next to him in wisdom. (The Crock of Gold, p.3)

In invoking the legendary "Salmon", the narrator brings mythic time in line with the recent past of "not long ago." The salmon in Irish mythology has great wisdom, and by mentioning this creature at the opening of the story, the narrator makes a sly invocation to a particularly Irish muse (Rees, 232).

By comparing the wisdom of the Philosophers to that of the salmon, and making them "wiser than anything in the world" Stephens highlights their exceptional wisdom and makes them extraordinary characters. The maiden Caitilin, who appears later in the story, is called "the most beautiful girl in the world," and combines practical virtues

with exceptional beauty. Such characterization is common to the fairy tale and romance, whose characters often are endowed with magical gifts or great knowledge (Luthi, chs. 2,7).

Stephens maintains a rural setting for nearly all of the action of the novel. The two major journeys by the Philosopher and the Thin woman of Inis Magrath, are open air walks through the countryside, with the "Brugh na Boyne," the cave of Angus Og, as the destination.² The fields, forests, roads, hills and caves of Ireland are the scene of the various encounters between the elementals, animals, humans and gods. In line with the central theme of rejuvenation, the physical vitality and renewal experienced by the Philosopher, Caitilin and the Thin Woman take place in the open air of the countryside.

In Irish mythology, the countryside is considered the traditional home of the ancient races of gods who were conquered by the Gaels, a race of Celtic invaders. Rather than leave the land, the race of gods, called the Tuatha De Danaan (the tribes of the goddess Dana), moved underground to live in the hills, mountains and caves of the country (Rees, ch.2). Stephens' fantasy brings his human characters in contact with mythic people and places and dissolves the boundaries of mythic time and place. The humans and the gods travel the same landscape. The setting thus can be

seen as appropriate to the union of the modern Irish with their ancient ancestors, to the marriage of the shepherdess Caitilin and the god Angus Og, and, by allegorical extension, to the unity of the divine and human through the "Divine Imagination."

In contrast to his use of the rural setting, Stephens makes only minimal mention of cities, and these only in a negative light. When in prison, the philosopher hears the despairing stories by two prisoners, each of whom had been broken by the harsh social conditions of life and employment in an unnamed city. The final joyous dance of the novel, a new "Hosting of the Sidhe", has as its destination the "Town of the Ford of the Hurdles", a translation of "Baile ath Cliath," the Irish name for the city of Dublin. This journey is to rescue the Philosopher from prison and a sentence of death and to appeal to the citizens to forsake the city and to return to the "country of the gods."

The Irish place names mentioned throughout the novel resonate with significance both in the world of Irish mythology and in the literary world of Stephens' own day. In keeping with his aspirations for a new Ireland, one reflecting a particularly Irish consciousness in language and cultural history, Stephens used Irish language names for characters and places. Occasionally, he phonetically

simplifies Irish names, rendering Miceal as "Meehawl" and sidhe as "Shee."

The location of the Philosophers' house, in the wood called "Coilla Doraca," Irish for a dark or shadowy wood, makes reference to one of the "Seven Woods" of Coole Park, the estate of Lady Gregory in County Clare. Yeats names this wood "Kyle Dortha" in the preface to his dramatic poem The Shadowy Waters, dedicated to Lady Gregory:

I walked among the seven woods of Coole
Shan-Walla, where a willow bordered pond
Gathers the wild duck from the winter dawn;
Shady Kyle-dortha; sunnier Kyle-na-no
(Collected Poems, 401)

It was at Coole Park, during the 1890's and early 1900's, where Lady Gregory generously hosted many of the writers of the Irish Literary Revival, including Yeats and AE. In The Crock of Gold, "Coilla Doraca" is home to the two Philosophers, their wives, the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin and the Thin Woman of Inis McGrath, and their children, Seamus and Brigid.

Stephens use of a dark wood for an opening setting echoes that of Dante's Divine Comedy, whose hero the poet Dante found himself in a dark wood, lost, both physically and spiritually. Life in the Coilla Doraca is at a similar impasse, though the spirit is more comical. One Philosopher finds no reason to continue living, as he tells his brother:

"I have attained to all the wisdom which I am
fitted to bear....Your conversation with me,

brother is like the droning of a bee in a dark cell. The pine trees take root and grow and die. -It's all bosh. Good-bye. (The Crock of Gold, 11-12)

The second Philosopher at least expresses hope that there is something to live for beyond theoretical thought:

"It has occurred to me, brother, that wisdom may not be the end of everything. Goodness and kindness are, perhaps, beyond wisdom. Is it not possible that the ultimate end is gaiety and music and a dance of joy?" (The Crock of Gold, p.12)

Whereas the first Philosopher chooses to die, and magically whirls himself to death, the second soon leaves his dark wood and sets out on a journey to find a god. After many encounters with men, women, children, leprecauns and gods, he is finally rescued by the god Angus Og in a joyful apocalyptic dance to the "country of the gods," a paradise in Ireland. The movement from darkness to light is both physical and metaphysical, as the Philosopher and the other characters make progress to enlightenment, knowledge and a new identity.

The character of the talkative philosopher is most likely based on Stephens' friend AE, according to both Martin and McFate. A mentor to Stephens, AE was considered one of the great "talkers" of Dublin, often dominating the conversation at literary gatherings (McFate, 14-15). In The Crock of Gold, the Philosopher's talk is only infrequently literary, for the most part being a naturalistic sort of abstraction about mundane subjects such as "washing,"

"sleep," or the necessity for humans to wear clothing. When Stephens first met him, AE was editing a newspaper for the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, a task which kept him in touch with the practical details and problems of building a modern, self-sufficient Irish economy (Pyle, 21). Stephens' fictional Philosopher, though willing to discourse on a wide variety of subjects at any moment, is not a practical man. His tendency towards abstraction obscures his ability to deal with ordinary realities.

AE was also a deeply spiritual man who was very interested in and committed to Theosophy. Along with Yeats, he had studied the writings of Madame Blavatsky and Theosophy in the 1890's, and had later founded his own spiritual "Household" which met regularly for discussion of Theosophical topics. Stephens attended numerous meetings of the "Hermetic Society" and initially learned his Theosophy from hearing AE speak at those meetings (Pyle, 66-68). The Demi-Gods (1914), Stephens' third novel, incorporates considerable material appropriated from Theosophical doctrine and woven into the stories told by angels. In The Crock of Gold, the Philosopher is presented generally as a man who respects the gods, but is a comic type of an absent minded intellectual. The comic treatment of AE is for the most part gentle.

In naming the other Philosopher's wife "The Grey woman of Dun Gortin", Stephens adds Lady Gregory herself to the modern dimension of "not long ago." In addition to being a generous host to the many literary figures of her day, she was an accomplished playwright, a director of the Irish National Theatre, and an Irish folklorist. One of her pastimes was assiduously collecting folk stories and tales from the inhabitants of the small village of Gort, not far from Coole park. She published two modern prose versions of Irish mythic sagas: Cuchulain of Muirthemne (1902), Ulster cycle tales, and Gods and Fighting Men (1904), Fenian Cycle tales. In the area of folklore, she published A Book of Saints and Wonders in 1906, The Kiltartan History Book in 1909 and The Kiltartan Wonder Book in 1910. Though a person of significant stature and accomplishment in the literary world of the time, Lady Gregory like AE, undergoes brief comic treatment at Stephens' hands.

Early in The Crock of Gold, the narrator states that the cause of enmity between the Philosophers and their wives is the men's theft of the "fourteen hundred maledictions which comprised their wisdom" (The Crock of Gold, 3-4). The wives are both women of the "Shee", the legendary fairy people who live in the hills and mounds of Ireland. The Tuatha De Danaan subdued this race and distributed its tribes across Ireland before they themselves were conquered

and forced underground by the Gaels (Rees, 33f.). It is a compliment to Lady Gregory that Stephens names one of the wives the "Grey Woman of Dun Gortin," (of the castle of Gort), and makes her one of the "Shee." Giving her membership in this mythical race is a tribute to her scholarship and devotion to folklore. The Grey Woman's anger at losing her "1400 maledictions" which were her accumulated wisdom, comically downplays her contributions to literature and theatre in the Ireland of Stephens' time. Stephens dispatches the Grey Woman rather quickly, though, as she follows her husband in death, having no reason to live when he is not there for her to quarrel with or oppose.

In the overall structure of the novel, references to historical characters like AE and Lady Gregory are carefully concealed. Also, Stephens avoids any references to modern place-names or historical events. The world of this novel is essentially a marvelous world, where one is likely to encounter a god at any time or place, without much astonishment on the part of the humans or the gods.

The action, simply put, is a series of journeys, during which the Philosopher, the Thin Woman, Caitilin and the children Seamus and Brigid encounter gods, leprecauns, "Alembics," and a wide range of rural Irish folk. In the allegorical framework of the novel, the journeys are a series of experiences of change and growth. In the case of

the Philosopher and the Thin Woman, the growth is from a static paralysis of the Intellect or Emotion (the Head and the Heart), to an embracing of the opposing state. Caitilin grows through an awareness of sensuality and sexuality into Wisdom and Thought and the children become increasingly aware of the natural world around them, expanding their Innocence.

At the center of the novel, in Book III, "The Two Gods," a meeting of the gods Pan and Angus Og occurs. Both are vying for the hand of Caitilin, and Angus Og, the Irish god, wins. He functions here and later in the novel both as a redeemer and prophet. As the "Divine Imagination," he brings together the Head and the Heart in a new unity, showing the way to his bride Caitilin and to the Philosopher and his wife. As a prophet, he announces the coming of a new age, and leads a dance of the ancient and modern Irish to rescue the Philosopher in the final unifying act of the novel. But though Angus Og plays a central role in the action, the impetus which puts the action in motion comes from characters of smaller stature, the Leprecauns.

Critics have usually pointed out the connection between Stephens' own stature, less than five feet tall, and his use of Leprecauns (McFate, 1). But this comparison of both personality and size tends to distract one from the important multiple functions of these characters from Irish

folklore in the novel. The Leprecauns' tenacity and attachment to their customs set off the chain of events which brings the gods Pan and Angus in contact with the humans. In keeping with his comic method of stressing the importance of the small and ordinary rather than the great and serious, it is the insignificant loss of a cat by the Leprecauns which initiates the wandering action of the story.

According to Tolkien, the Fantasist's most difficult task is to create a consistent and credible "Secondary World" (Boyer and Zahorski, 80). Using the Leprecauns and Shee, Stephens incorporates Irish folklore to construct a world with a system of justice, habits of work, quirks of personality, and codes of behavior. This world of folkloric and mythic characters coexists with the ordinary modern world, and the final action of the story prophetically unifies the two. The initial cause of this movement to unity is the imbalance felt in the Leprecauns' world because of their loss of the crock of gold.

Stephens begins the novel with two seemingly unrelated events. The first is the death of the Philosopher, mentioned above. The second is apparently insignificant: the loss of a washboard. In Chapter III, Meehawl MacMurrachu comes to visit the Philosopher to ask him for aid in finding his wife's missing washboard. The encounter comically

counterpoints the Philosopher's abstract reflection on "washing" with Meehawl's bizarre rejoinders. Meehawl posits a theory with the Philosopher:

Well, anyhow, the washboard is gone, and my wife says it was either taken by the fairies or by Bessie Hannigan - you know Bessie Hannigan? She has whiskers like a goat and a lame leg? (The Crock of Gold, 19)

After short commentaries on the sanitary habits of humans, cats and sparrows, the Philosopher finally arrives at considering the whereabouts of the washboard, though he comically misremembers Meehawl's description:

"Your wife says that either the fairies or a woman with a goat's leg has it?"
 "Its her whiskers," said Meehawl.
 "They are lame," said the Philosopher sternly.
 "Have it your own way, sir, I'm not certain how the creature is afflicted."
 "You say that this unhealthy woman has not got your wife's washboard. It remains, therefore, that the fairies have it." (The Crock of Gold, 20-21)

In addition to being a comic encounter between two comic types, this incident functions as a means to provide basic folkloric background about fairies and folk superstition. Both Meehawl and the Philosopher possess specialized knowledge about fairy customs, and they discuss these to solve their problem. Such knowledge, though superstitious and somewhat magical in content, is introduced and made believable by means of an ordinary conversation. The meeting mixes the marvelous with the mundane, a

technique common to marvelous works (Brooke-Rose, 233-239).
 The Philosopher leads Meehawl through a catechism of common folk superstitions:

"There are six clans of fairies living in this neighbourhood; but the process of elimination, which has shaped the world to a globe, the ant to its environment, and man to the captaincy of the vertebrates, will not fail in this instance either."

"Did you ever see anything like the way wasps have increased this season?" said Meehawl; "faith, you can't sit down anywhere but your breeches--"

"I did not," said the Philosopher. "Did you leave out a pan of milk on last Tuesday?"

"I did then."

"Do you take off your hat when you meet a dust twirl?"

"I wouldn't neglect that," said Meehawl.

"Did you cut down a thorn bush recently?"

"I'd sooner cut my eye out," said Meehawl,

"and go about as wall-eyed as Lorcan O'Nualain's ass: I would that. Did you ever see his ass, sir? It--"

"I did not," said the Philosopher. "Did you kill a robin redbreast?"

"Never," said Meehawl. "By the pipers," he added, "that old skinny cat of mine caught a bird on the roof yesterday."

"Hah!" cried the Philosopher, moving, if it were possible, even closer to his client, "now we have it. It is the Leprecauns of Gort na Cloca Mora took your washboard. Go to the Gort at once. There is a hole under a tree in the south-east of the field. Try what you will find in that hole."...So Meehawl MacMurrachu went away and did as he had been bidden, and underneath the tree of Gort na Cloca Mora he found a little crock of gold. (The Crock of Gold, 21-22)

The kind of folklore Stephens uses for this conversation was found in popular collections of legend and mythology collected by both Thomas Keightley and Thomas

Crofton Croker. Both of these folklorists gathered numerous stories about Leprecauns, almost all of which included motifs of their storing a crock of gold (The Fairy Mythology, 363-384; Fairy Legends, 199-211). Vivian Mercier notes that the motif of the Leprecauns possessing a crock of gold is of "recent origin" and is not mentioned in the early (8th Century) sagas with references to the "Tuath Luchra" (People of Luchra). He contends that the power of magic was commonly attributed to both giants and little people, and this was often matched by the magic of humans (The Irish Comic Tradition, 27-31).

Stephens makes significant use of the motif of the crock of gold, however. It is a sign of the Leprechauns' attachment to material possessions and its loss becomes the sign of an imbalance in the harmony of the world. It is this latter imbalance that causes the Leprecauns to upset the world of the humans in order to regain what is "rightfully" theirs. All the action of the novel eventually results from their efforts to get back their crock.

Stephens later develops this theme in The Demi-Gods in the stories of Billy the Music and Brien O'Brien. In this novel, the pursuit of and attachment to gold disrupts both earthly and heavenly life.

To begin Chapter 4, the narrator gives a long rationale for the soon-to-come escalation in the affair of the

washboard, underlining the observance of justice as a theme. In describing the plight of the Leprecauns, he creates the background of a whole structure of order, authority and custom:

In stealing Meehawl's property they were quite within their rights because their bird had undoubtedly been slain by his cat. Not alone, therefore, was their righteous vengeance nullified, but the crock of gold which had taken their community many thousands of years to amass was stolen....They considered that the Philosopher had treated them badly, that his action was mischievous and unneighbourly, and that until they were adequately compensated for their loss both of treasure and dignity, no conditions other than those of enmity could exist between their people and the little house in the pine wood. (The Crock of Gold, 23)

The problem of the Leprecauns is further complicated by the fact that the Philosopher's wife, the "Thin Woman of Inis Magrath," would certainly protect her husband" because "she belonged to the Shee of Croghan Conghaile, who had relatives in every fairy fort in Ireland" (The Crock of Gold, 24). A sense of justice and legality pervades the description of their dilemma as the Leprecauns seek a wider court of appeal:

They could, of course, have called an extraordinary meeting of the Sheogs, Leprecauns, and Cluricauns, and presented their case with a claim for damages against the Shee of Croghan Conghaile, but that Clann would assuredly repudiate any liability on the ground that no member of their fraternity was responsible for the outrage, as it was the Philosopher, and not the Thin Woman of

Inis Magrath, who had done the deed. (The Crock of Gold, 24)

In creating this believable secondary world of the Leprecauns and various clanns, Stephens relies not only on Irish folklore, but his own experience of working for a number of years in a solicitors office. (Pyle, 15-16) An air of reality is created by the precise legal description of the Leprecauns' difficulty.

Because of their faithfulness to the laws of their fairy kingdom, what the narrator calls "customs," the leprecauns are prevented from regaining possession of their treasure:

They found that Meehawl, who understood the customs of the Earth Folk very well, had buried the crock of gold beneath a thorn bush, thereby placing it under the protection of every fairy in the world- the Leprecauns themselves included, and until it was removed from this place by human hands they were bound to respect its hiding place, and even guarantee its safety with their blood. (CG, 24)

Their immediate response to Meehawl is to use their magic powers to bother him, to gain at least a small measure of revenge. The effect on their victims is not grave, being more an example of their "nuisance" role:

They afflicted Meehawl with an extraordinary attack of rheumatism and his wife with an equally virulent sciatica, but they got no lasting pleasure from their groans. (The Crock of Gold, 25)

The use of magic or magic formulas is a common trait of the marvelous, mentioned by both Luthi and Gose (The World

of the Irish Wonder Tale, ch 8; Once Upon A Time, ch. 2).

Stephens makes limited use of this trait, confining its use to the "Earth Folk" as a way of differentiating them from humans. As in marvelous stories in general, there is little astonishment at the use magic power and it is accepted as ordinary (Brooke-Rose, 235).

Stephens often uses the magic of the Leprecauns and the Shee for comic effect. These creatures have the power of afflicting humans with minor aches and pains, but not always effectively. When the Thin Woman hears how her husband aided Meehawl in the theft of the crock of gold, she reacts so angrily that she cannot focus her power:

"Your stirabout is on the hob," said the Thin Woman. "You can get it for yourself. I would not move the breadth of my nail if you were dying of hunger. I hope there's lumps in it. A Leprecaun from Gort na Cloca Mora was here to-day. They'll give it to you for robbing their pot of gold. You old thief, you! you lob-eared, crock-kneed fat-eye!"

The Thin woman whizzed suddenly from where she stood and leaped into bed. From beneath the blanket she turned a vivid, furious eye on her husband. She was trying to give him rheumatism and toothache and lock-jaw all at once. If she had been satisfied to concentrate her attention on one only of these torments she might have succeeded in afflicting her husband according to her wish, but she was not able to do that.

"Finality is death. Perfection is finality. Nothing is perfect. There are lumps in it," said the Philosopher. (The Crock of Gold, 27)

The magic power of the Leprecauns and the Thin Woman is not enough to force Meehawl to return the crock, so the

Leprecauns try other means. In Chapter 5, they kidnap the two children by enticing them out of the wood and into their underground dwelling at Gort na Cloca Mora. As the Philosopher later correctly theorizes, they also contact the god Pan, who soon comes and lures Caitilin away from her home (Ch. 6).

The episode of the children's visit to the Leprecauns' hole is again characterised by an air of ordinariness and abundance of folkloric content. Stephens adds realistic detail to the mythic world of the Leprecauns by depicting their manners and occupation. The episode begins in a civil fashion, as the Leprecaun greets the children: "He raised his open right hand above his head (this is both the fairy and the Gaelic form of salutation)." After the children tell their Irish names, "Seamus Beg" and "Brigid Beg," the Leprecaun departs. Their response upon encountering this creature is simple and lacking any astonishment: "That's a nice Leprecaun." When the Leprecaun comes the next day, he stops to play games with the children. The list of games he mentions were all children's games common in the time of Stephens' childhood and include some Stephens learned from watching his own two children (Pyle, 51). Their inclusion in the text here adds a realistic touch and serves to unify the worlds of the children and the folk creatures. The Leprecaun lures the children by playing "leap-frog" right up

to the edge of his underground dwelling. Both children hop over him and slide right down the hole:

The Leprecaun gave a back very close to the tree . Seamus ran and jumped and slid down a hole at the side of the tree. Then Brigid ran and jumped and slid down the same hole. "Dear me!" said Brigid, and she flashed out of sight.

The Leprecaun cracked his fingers and rubbed one leg against the other, and then he also dived into the hole and disappeared from view. (The Crock of Gold, 31)

This action recalls the opening of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, in which Alice sees a White Rabbit and follows it down a rabbit-hole under a hedge. Carroll's story emphasizes Alice's astonishment at seeing the rabbit's antics:

But when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit -hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again. (Alice's Adventures, 10-11)

The wonder in this story comes from the continuing attempts by the girl to understand rationally her predicament in a world that often reverses or contradicts ordinary reality. The source of her wonder, then, is awareness of the differences of "Wonderland" from the normal world.

In The Crock of Gold the opposite takes place; the transition from one world to the other is quite simple and ordinary. The only hint of surprise is the "Dear me!" of Brigid as she slides down the hole. (Her comment, by the way, is an echo of the White Rabbit's refrain: "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!") Once inside, the children become guests and observers of a clann of Leprecauns at work making shoes. Stephens uses the episode to add to the sense of a civilized, ordered secondary world.

The description of Leprecauns as shoemakers is common to the folk traditions recounted in the collections of both Keightly and Croker.³ Stephens gives a realistic and lively description of the Leprecauns at work, and includes references to common country manners and hospitality. The children, acting politely, give salutations: "God be with all here," and "God bless the work." And the hosts, in return, offer their guests "griddle bread and milk." The picture of the shoemaking is detailed and lively:

They were all dressed in tight green clothes and little leathern aprons, and they wore tall green hats which wobbled when they moved. They were all busily engaged making shoes. One was drawing out wax ends on his knee, another was softening pieces of leather in a bucket of water, another was polishing the instep of a shoe with a piece of curved bone, another was paring down a heel with a short broad-bladed knife, and another was hammering wooden pegs into a sole. He had all the pegs in his mouth, which gave him a wide-faced, jolly expression, and according as a peg was wanted he blew it into his hand

and hit it twice with his hammer, and then he blew another peg, and he always blew the peg with the right end uppermost, and never had to hit it more than twice. He was a person well worth watching. (The Crock of Gold, 55)

When Seamus asks about their occupation, the Leprecauns tell him about the importance of the crock of gold, as a protective ransom against their capture by humans. This is a motif included in virtually all of the Leprecaun stories in both the Keightley and Croker collections. Later in the novel, when the Policemen discover that they have captured a Leprecaun, they react in a manner similar to the peasants in the folk stories of the above collections: with almost immediate and exaggerated greed (Keightley, 369ff.; Croker, 162 ff.). The children, embodying Innocence as they do in the allegorical dimension of the novel, later use this privileged knowledge to return the crock to the Leprecauns. Thus, their action solidifies a harmonic relationship between the worlds of humans and fairies.

A considerable portion of the first three books of The Crock of Gold is concerned with the arrival and activities of the god Pan. He has encounters with a variety of characters, including the maiden Caitilin, the children Seamus and Brigid, their father the Philosopher, and finally, the Irish god Angus Og. In the overall allegorical plan of the book, he represents a sensual awakening and in this capacity he primarily affects Caitilin and the Philosopher. In addition, the Greek god also represents a

kind of foreign influence, at once presenting the dual possibilities of awakening sensuality and a threat to national identity.

Pan is a "stranger" in Ireland and because of this, he gets a less than hospitable reception. Augustine Martin notes that Pan's presence and influence in the Ireland of The Crock of Gold strongly underlines the satiric element in the novel. The Irish Catholicism traditional to Ireland is infused with a heavy element of Jansenistic and Victorian mistrust of sexual expression (James Stephens, 42). The sensual and sexual awakening stirred up by Pan's visit, and openly proclaimed in his amoral philosophy of instinctual behavior, collides with the immediate sense of moral propriety of both the Philosopher and, to a lesser degree, Caitlin.

The primary moral opposition to Pan comes from the Philosopher. He must explain the significance of the god's identity to Meehawl, whose immediate concern is for the safety of his daughter, but who has a blindness to her imminent sexual awakening. In Chapter VII of Book I, the Philosopher eruditely explains who the "stranger" is:

Most of the races of the world have at one time or another been visited by this deity, whose title is the 'Great God Pan,' but there is no record of his ever having journeyed to Ireland, and, certainly within historic times, he has not set foot on these shores. He lived for a great number of years in Egypt, Persia, and Greece, and although his

empire is supposed to be world-wide, this universal sway has always been, and always will be, contested; but nevertheless, however sharply his empire may be curtailed, he will never be without a kingdom wherein his exercise of sovereign rights will be bodily and passionately acclaimed. (The Crock of Gold, 51)

The Philosopher here shows a broad familiarity with the extensive tradition associated with the god Pan. Two of his ideas are of particular significance. First, the Philosopher notes that the god Pan's "universal sway" has been and "always will be, contested." Within the Pan tradition, this undoubtedly refers to the Pan-Christ opposition which dates back to the writings of Eusebius in the early fourth century. His view is that the Christian Saviour's death had the effect of ridding "daemons" of every kind, and Pan, being a Greek and therefore pagan deity, qualified as a "daemon" (Merivale, 13). The opposition of the Christian supernatural with the pagan mythology continued throughout European literature into the modern era. French Romantics like Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo were partisans of the "merveillieux chretien" and opposed "les couleurs usees et fausses da la mythologie paienne" (the worn out and false colours of pagan mythology) (Merivale, 105). In English literature Elizabeth Barrett Browning expresses similar opposition in her 1844 poem "The Dead Pan." Her refrain "Pan is dead" bids a farewell to the Greek mythology he represents. She asserts that

Christian myth contains a more lasting truth: "God himself is the best poet,/ And the Real is His sway." (Merivale, 105).

The Philosopher also expresses an opinion that there will be places where Pan's "sovereign right will be boldly and passionately proclaimed." He need not to have looked far for such a pro-Pan appearance. Merivale recounts numerous references to Pan in both the prose and poetry of late 19th and early 20th century literature of Europe and America. Among those who revive Pan are Robert Browning, Oscar Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas, Alistair Crowley and Lord Dunsany. The Pan references range from an abstract, nostalgic, nature-spirit figure to one designating the bestial and profane goat-god within us (Browning), to another embodying a Dionysiac and more explicitly sexual god in Crowley and Wilde's poetry. There was even a "Pan Society" at Cambridge in 1907 (Merivale, ch.3).

The Pan represented by Dunsany in The Blessing of Pan, to be discussed more fully in Chapter 5, embodies more of the nostalgic, nature-spirit than he does the spirit of sexual desire. Though Dunsany's Pan moves the inhabitants of a sleepy English village to music and dance, the general effect of his presence is to move the villagers to reject modern society altogether. The tone of Dunsany's novel is different also, in that Anwrel's anxiety about Pan's growing

influence and his fear for the loss of his traditional Christian way of life are the primary focus of the action. Dunsany's presentation of Pan follows W.S. Irwin's model for Fantasy, as Anwrel is not willing to believe in Pan until the very end of the novel.

Stephens' Philosopher perhaps feels that it is not such a large step from the Pan of Victorian England to the fields of rural Ireland. He has a good idea why the god has come and he further questions Meehawl about his daughter:

"Is he one of the old gods, sir?" said Meehawl.

"He is," replied the Philosopher, "and his coming intends no good to this country. Have you any idea why he should have captured your daughter?"

"Not an idea in the world."

"Is your daughter beautiful?"

"I couldn't tell you, because I never thought of looking at her that way." (The Crock of Gold, 51-52)

With a considerably more shrewd understanding of the Irish temperament than Meehawl, he can see the vulnerability to the power of Pan. He draws out more clearly for Meehawl what sort of effect Pan can have on unsuspecting people:

I'd go up myself and have a talk with him, but it wouldn't be a bit of good, and it wouldn't be any use your going either. He has power over all grown people so that they either go and get drunk or else they fall in love with every person they meet, and commit assaults and things I wouldn't like to be telling you about. (The Crock of Gold, 52)

Hoping that innocence might influence the visiting deity, the Philosopher proposes to send his children as emissaries, and if that fails, to send for the Irish god Angus Og:

"I'll send my two children with a message to him to say that he isn't doing the decent thing, and that if he doesn't let the girl alone and go back to his own country we'll send for Angus Og."

"He'd make short work of him, I'm thinking."

"He might surely; but he may take the girl for himself all the same."

"Well, I'd sooner he had her than the other one, for he's one of ourselves anyhow, and the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know."

"Angus Og is a god," said the Philosopher severely.

"I know that sir," replied Meehawl; "it's only a way of talking that I have." (The Crock of Gold, 53)

Meehawl's response to this proposal exemplifies both the national and comic ends of the action. First, he nationalistically opposes a "stranger" striking up a relationship with his daughter, preferring one of his "own" kind, Angus Og. His figure of speech substituting "devil" for "god" comically undercuts the seriousness of the Philosopher and by extension, the importance of the gods. Any awe or wonder which one would expect the gods to inspire in Meehawl gives way before his realistic concern for the health and safety of his daughter.

The god Pan does not enter the action of the story until Chapter VI of the first book, titled, significantly,

"The Coming of Pan." In this chapter, the god reveals himself to the girl and lures her away to his cave. The encounter happens with a slow deliberate rhythm which parallels the process of growth and maturation in the young girl. The most important aspect of the wooing of Caitilin, is the gradual revelation of the identity of the god. Pan's appearance accompanies the awakening of sexual awareness in the young girl. In making this process gradual, Stephens avoids the usual rigid stylized action of the fairy tale, with its tendency for "sharply defined" actions and objects (Luthi, 51). He poetically describes the action and process of identifying the "disquietude" of Caitilin, concentrating on her internal state of mind, and juxtaposes this with the increasingly more physical and detailed appearance of Pan. When Pan finally speaks with Caitilin, the "action" becomes a conversation about morality, happiness and desire.

Apart from the slow pace of the action, the description of Caitilin does contain aspects of the traditional fairy tale. The heroine, called "the most beautiful girl in Ireland" by the narrator, embodies the qualities of womanhood and nationality. As in fairy tales like "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella", Caitilin is a beautiful girl entering a stage of sexual maturation (Luthi, chs.2,7). Her father's ignorance of her beauty and sexuality is perhaps in part due to his exploitation of her as a farm helper, and is

a satiric comment on the undeveloped sexual consciousness of the Irish people. As in the Cinderella story, Caitilin's function as a worker takes precedence over her feminine beauty. Her practical father says that "she is a good milker, and as strong as a man. She can lift a bag of meal under her arm easier than I can; but she's a timid creature for all that" (The Crock of Gold, 52).

Before introducing Pan, Stephens describes the state of "disquietude" of Caitilin. She is first in a condition of peaceful, innocent existence with natural beings:

The three cows after they had grazed for a long time would come and lie by her side and look at her as they chewed their cud, and the goats would prance from the bracken to push their heads against her breast because they loved her. (The Crock of Gold, 38-39)

She is in fact so innocent that she doesn't know she is beautiful: "The pity of it was that no one at all knew she was beautiful, and she did not know it herself" (The Crock of Gold, 37).

Stephens uses a metaphor of nakedness to describe the state of the girl's interior life. Part of her process of maturation is the attaining of wisdom through thought and understanding. The description dwells on her quickening mind, first picturing the "unrest" in her consciousness: "Sometimes an infinite weariness oppressed her to the earth. A thought was born in her mind and it had no name" (The Crock of Gold, 39). The process of the birth of thought in

Caitilin is pictured as an almost poetic act. The narrator uses an aphorism and an extended metaphor of clothing a naked figure (prefiguring her later physical nakedness) to explain the significance of the girl's interior state:

A thought is a real thing and words are only its raiment, but a thought is as shy as a virgin; unless it is fittingly apparelled we may not look on its shadowy nakedness: it will fly from us and only return again in the darkness crying in a thin, childish voice which we may not comprehend until, with aching minds, listening and divining, we at last fashion for it those symbols which are its protection and its banner....The standard of either language or experience was not hers; she could listen but not think, she could feel but not know, her eyes looked forward and did not see, her hands groped in the sunlight and felt nothing. (The Crock of Gold, 39).

The first actual encounter with Pan is through the medium of his music, via Caitilin's sense of hearing. The song of Pan is similar to the elusive "thought" which tantalized her being, something distant and careless. But it has a quality of persistence:

She watched a bird who soared and sang for a little time, and then it sped swiftly away down the steep air and out of sight in the blue distance. Even when it was gone the song seemed to ring in her ears. It seemed to linger with her as a faint, sweet echo, coming fitfully, with little pauses as though a wind disturbed it, and careless, distant eddies. After a few moments she knew it was not a bird. No bird's song had that consecutive melody, for their themes are as careless as their wings. (The Crock of Gold, 40)

The music of Pan penetrates the being of the girl, as "with a strange elation" she dances her way home:

The full freedom of her body was hers now: the lightness and poise and certainty of her limbs delighted her, and the strength that did not tire delighted her also. (The Crock of Gold, 41)

The effect of hearing Pan's music is a feeling of physical vitality expressed in dance.

On the next day, when she hears the song again, she notices that it carries a certain indefinable emotion "personal to her," and she is left with a languorous feeling. On the third visit, Pan begins to reveal himself visually, as a partial figure with "gleaming" arms and shoulders visible while "playing softly on a double pipe." When Pan next comes to Caitilin, he "fronts" her from the waist up and she is struck by his "sad and "mournful" face and eyes, reacting with the compassion of her womanly nature.

The final time Pan comes to Caitilin, he reveals his full physical form, an experience which initially frightens the girl. The narration dwells first on the girl's reaction to seeing the figure with goat legs. In a passage suggesting both her modesty and her astonishment, the girl shows at once surprise and fear:

There was something different, terrible about him. The upper part of his body was beautiful, but the lower part....She dare not look at him again. She would have risen and fled away but she feared he might pursue her, and thought of such a chase and the

inevitable capture froze her blood. (The Crock of Gold, 42)

The ensemble of physical details Stephens uses in his realistic description of the god Pan are drawn from literary conventions which reach back to the earliest mention of the god. The representation of Pan as a goat god, with the upper torso of a man and feet and legs of a goat, is the first and most essential part of his identity: "Pan, first worshipped in Arcadia, was the god of woods and shepherds, and he had the feet and legs of a goat. This is the irreducible statement of identity from which all other statements of his identity proceed" (Merivale, 1). The mention of his reed pipe comes from the myth of Pan and Syrinx, recounted by Ovid in his Metamorphoses. In that tale, Pan fashioned his pipe from the reeds into which Syrinx had changed herself.

Music is an important signal for the presence of the supernatural in Dunsany's works also. In The Laughter of the Gods, the music of the unseen lutanist inspires fear and indicates the presence of Gog-Owza, though Dunsany never allows the god to be seen. Dunsany also uses the music motif of the Pan legend to signal the presence and influence of the supernatural in The Blessing of Pan. In this work, the musician, Tommy Duffin, is seen and heard, and the influence of Pan is felt, though he is never seen.

Stephens combines the allusions to music and to the god's bestial nature in making a realistic Pan in his novel. Pan's music first attracts the girl and makes her and the animals dance. This impetus to physical activity parallels the growing awareness and sensual awakening in Caitilin. The description of the "sad" and "mournful" eyes of Pan is also part of a traditional representation of this god. Various Victorian motifs of Pan portray the god as an "unsuccessful lover," as a "sad and lonely" and a "dying, exiled god." These motifs evoke both the idea of a god who has lost his kingdom in a struggle with Christianity, and also a being who suffers the effects of "Desire" and "Hunger", names which Pan gives himself (Merivale, ch.3). In general though, Stephens presents a god who is not horrifying or terrifying in aspect. Other than her instinctively modest reaction of fear at seeing the lower half of the god, Caitilin is not afraid of him.

The mournful aspect of Pan is repeated and amplified later in Pan's conversation with the children and Caitilin. His half-beast nature doesn't permit him to answer Caitilin's question about the "end" of wisdom; he only knows about Desire and Hunger. The childrens' comment that "Pan is sick" ironically capsulizes the limitations of his condition and the problem with Hunger and Desire, that they

are bestial and low and cannot rise to the heights of Wisdom and Imagination.

The rendering of a realistic psychological reaction by the girl is effective as a way to stress the strangeness and power of Pan. When she sees his lower half, it is the first actual sign to the girl that Pan is essentially different and not human. But Stephens avoids dwelling on the astonishment of the girl, thus creating a potentially "fantastic" scene in the supernatural sense of the word. He diverts the power and emotion of the scene through the aphoristic commentary of the narrator, which universalizes the emotional reaction of Caitilin. The focus of the scene shifts to a consideration of the phenomenon of fear: "The thought of anything behind us is always terrible. The sound of pursuing feet is worse than the murder from which we fly" (The Crock of Gold, 42). As Caitilin continues to gaze at Pan, concentrating on his "wonderful, sad, grotesque face," the narrator freely expands on her universal womanly qualities:

Gaiety is good to look upon and an innocent face is delightful to our souls, but no woman can resist sadness or weakness, and ugliness she dare not resist. Her nature leaps to be the comforter. (The Crock of Gold, 43)

Pan the god thus becomes less than a fear or awe inspiring supernatural being; he is an object of Caitilin's human, womanly compassion.

A second step in making Pan into a more ordinary creature is the conversation which ensues between Pan and the the maiden. In this exchange, dominated by Pan, he both introduces himself as "Master of the Shepherds" and makes a strong apologia for his philosophy, in extensive answers to the girl's simple questions. Pan first expresses his dissatisfaction with the lack of reception for him in Caitilin's country:

They [shepherds] sing and dance and are glad when I come to them in the sunlight; but in this country no people have done any reverence to me....I am very lonely in this strange country. You also, although you danced to the music of my pipes, have covered your face against me and made no reverence.
(The Crock of Gold, 44)

Caitilin's response to this appeal shows her moral upbringing: "I will do whatever you say if it is right" (The Crock of Gold, 44). At this, Pan begins a prolonged discussion of his doctrines of morality. He essentially proposes an amoral way of life: "There is no right and no wrong, but only the will of the gods" (The Crock of Gold, 44). In his system, this means one should follow one's desires, and he offers this path to happiness to Caitilin: "I want you to forget right and wrong, to be as happy as the beasts, as careless as the flowers and the birds. To live to the depths of your nature as well as the heights" (The Crock of Gold, 45). Pan names these two extremes "Love" and

"Wisdom" and further discusses the dynamic of their relationship.

Pan's appeal to her finishes with a metaphor of a "Crown of life" buried deep in experience. This metaphor is very reminiscent of Dunsany's image of "diamond deep down in miles of clay" in his short tale, "The Beggars" (discussed in Chapter 2 above). Like the beggars who make a plea to a dark and mysterious inner life, Pan asks Caitilin to embrace a new wonderful experience:

The Crown of Life is not lodged in the sun:
 the wise gods have buried deeply where the
 thoughtful will not find it, nor the good:
 but the Gay Ones, the Adventurous Ones, the
 Careless Plungers, they will bring it to the
 wise and astonish them. All things are seen
 in the light - How shall we value that which
 is easy to see? But the precious things
 which are hidden, they will be more precious
 for our search: they will be beautiful with
 our sorrow: they will be noble because of our
 desire for them. Come away with me, Shepherd
 Girl, through the fields and we will be
 careless and happy, and we will leave thought
 to find us when it can, for that is the duty
 of thought, and it is more anxious to
 discover us than we are to be found. (The
 Crock of Gold, 45-46)

The effect of this speech in one way has been to verbalize and to add words as "raiment" to the unspoken thought of the girl. When she accepts Pan's invitation, Caitilin enters a new stage of her process of maturation.

Stephens makes use of his motif of "nakedness" in a dual way here. Pan's doctrine adds a garment to the girl's naked thought, and in an ironic undercutting of the

sublimity of the speechmaking of Pan, the girl responds not to his words, but to his nakedness:

So Caitilin Ni Murrachu arose and went with him through the fields, and she did not go with him because of love, nor because his words had been understood by her, but only because he was naked and unashamed. (The Crock of Gold., 46)

Throughout her encounter with Pan, Caitilin consistently reacts more to sensual stimuli of sight and sound than to intellectual doctrine.

It is a unique mark of Stephens' fantasy that there is little or no demonstration of supernatural power, no magic, and no marvelous deeds as part of the encounter. Rather, Stephens uses the meeting to articulate a philosophy, his own brand of Blakean prophecy, about the nature of love, desire and wisdom. Other than the initial reaction of fear at the strangeness of Pan's body, there is no other suggestion of any act which is other than normal. The encounter quickly becomes an ordinary happening. In Stephens' fantasy, the marvelous gives way to the didactic function of supernatural character.

Succeeding encounters of Pan with humans reveal more about his doctrine. The next humans to encounter him are the children, Seamus and Brigid, who are sent by the Philosopher to ask Pan to do "the good thing" and send Caitilin home. The children are led by a friendly goat directly to Pan's cave. The technique of marvelous or

miraculous acts by animals is common to European Fairy tales, and this is one instance of several in The Crock of Gold where animals either talk or take some marvelous part in the action (Luthi, ch.5). Other than this intervention though, the action of this episode does not contain any mention of extraordinary or marvelous happenings. The response of the children to Pan is even less remarkable than that of Caitlin's. Pan is simply a stranger to them:

When they were cleaned she pointed to a couple of flat stones against the wall of the cave and bade them sit down and be good, and this the children did, fixing their eyes on Pan with the cheerful gravity and curiosity which good-natured youngsters always give to a stranger. (The Crock of Gold, 65)

The encounter is typical of many others in the novel, in that the children are treated hospitably and offered food, in an almost ritualistic act. In this case the fare is bread and, appropriately, goat milk and goat cheese.

The meeting of the children and Pan is one of the passages closest in character to Kenneth Grahame's fantasy The Wind and the Willows. According to Patricia Merivale, that work is the only other significant instance of a "benevolent" Pan in early modern literature. Grahame's chapter "The Piper at the Gates," presents a pastoral god who is a kind friend to animals, and very much a rural god. Pan's wonderful and enchanting song draws the two animal characters, "Rat" and "Mole," to an island where Pan has

sheltered the lost child beaver they are searching for. The narration concentrates on a sense of awe and reverence, as Pan is referred to as an "august presence" and "Him." The two animals, in a trance-like state, see a vision of the Goat God seated in a clearing, with the baby animal sitting peacefully at his feet. Pan never speaks, and his only action is to sprinkle a dust of forgetfulness over the onlookers and then disappear, leaving the three animals with only a vague memory of a religious experience. Throughout the scene, there is a mood of tranquility, and the effect of the encounter is to present a kind and transcendent Pan (The Wind and the Willows, ch.7).

Stephens' scene of Pan and the children imitates the act of Pan taking the children to himself: "so the two children went over to Pan and sat down on each side of him, and he put his arms around them" (CG, 66). Their response is simple and direct: they "like" Pan. But Stephens' avoids making Pan a transcendent figure here, and instead uses the encounter for more conversation about Pan's teachings and views. First there is a discussion of food, and then "Hunger." Pan expounds his theory of "Hunger" as a good: "Every person who is hungry is a good person, and every person who is not hungry is a bad person. It is better to be hungry than rich" (The Crock of Gold, 67). The talk switches to the topic of "wisdom", and the children give

examples of their wisdom. Their views are a comic triumph of common sense over thought and words. They don't listen when their father speaks "because he is always talking", and they don't sleep when their mother speaks: "If we went to sleep then our mother would pinch us and say that we were a bad breed" (The Crock of Gold, 68). Pan, interestingly, gets bettered in the conversation when he asks Caitilin what she likes best. She says she doesn't know, and then turns the same question back on him:

"May the gods keep you safe from that knowledge," said Pan gravely.
 "why would you say that?" she replied. "One must find out all things, and when we find out a new thing we know if it is good or bad."
 "That is the beginning of knowledge," said Pan, "but not the beginning of wisdom."
 "What is the beginning of wisdom?"
 "It is Carelessness," replied Pan.
 "And what is the end of wisdom?" said she.
 "I do not know," he answered, after a little pause.
 "Is it greater carelessness?" she enquired.
 "I do not know, I do not know," said he sharply. "I am tired of talking," and, so saying, he turned his face away from them and lay down on the couch. (The Crock of Gold, 68-69)

This encounter shows a growth on the part of Caitilin, and a weakness on the part of Pan. He is not completely wise. In an ironic end to the conversation, the children note the god's irritation. Seamus remarks that "Pan is sick," and Brigid expresses the hope that "he will be well again soon" (The Crock of Gold, 69).

When Caitilin sends the children home and hurries back to care for her "sick" god, it is a sign that the children's mission has failed. In Stephens' system of thought, one must conclude that Innocence, though immune to its power, is not able to conquer Desire. The effect of this episode is partly comic at the expense of the god Pan, however the next episode, when the Philosopher comes to visit, turns out in Pan's favor, at the expense of the Philosopher.

Book II, "the Philosopher's Journey," concerns the experiences the philosopher has on his way to find Angus Og. After hearing that Pan had not responded to his children's request to depart, the Philosopher asks his wife to go visit the god. He reasons that she would be impervious to his influence because "her age, her appearance and her tongue were sufficient guarantees of immunity against the machinations of either Pan or slander" (The Crock of Gold, 74). In keeping with the state of enmity between husband and wife, she refuses his request as "malignant and subtle tactics customary to all husbands" (The Crock of Gold, 74). It is only then that the Philosopher decides to "lay the case before Angus Og" (The Crock of Gold, 74).

When the philosopher sets out to find Angus Og, he passes by the direction of Pan's cave and accidentally discovers Caitilin. Her nakedness catches his attention:

The she-goat which she had just milked was bending again to the herbage, and as Caitilin

trod lightly in front of him the Philosopher closed his eyes in virtuous anger and opened them again in a not unnatural curiosity, for the girl had no clothes on. (The Crock of Gold, 74-75)

The episode again is a commentary on the motif of nakedness, as he is disturbed by seeing her, and reacts in a manner most uncharacteristic of him - with emotion. He follows her into the cave and when he enters, he calls her a "Hussy!".

The conversation between Pan and the Philosopher is a Stephensian comic version of the dialogue in Plato's Republic, as the two sit in a cave and discuss the nature of virtue. Their ideas about virtue and vice turn out to be diametrically opposed, and the Philosopher becomes very upset about Pan's position:

"The idea of virtue," said the Philosopher, with some indignation, "has animated the noblest intellects of the world."
 "It has not animated them," replied Pan; "it has hypnotised them so that they have conceived virtue as repression and self-sacrifice as an honourable thing instead of the suicide which it is..." "Life is already very simple," said Pan; "it is to be born and to die, and in the interval to eat and drink, to dance and sing, to marry and beget children."
 "But it is simply materialism," cried the Philosopher..."You leave out the new thing," said the Philosopher. "You leave out brains. I believe in mind above matter. thought above emotion. Spirit above flesh." (The Crock of Gold, 77)

Pan's weapon is stronger than logic and brains, though, and he reaches for his "oaten pipe." At this the Philosopher runs out, instinctively reacting in fear to the

power of feeling and sensuality evoked by the music of Pan. The encounter ends with Pan's music chasing the Philosopher across the field: "As he went up the rugged path he could hear the pipes of Pan, calling and sobbing and making high merriment on the air" (The Crock of Gold, 78). This encounter is a victory of Pan's emotion and feeling over the thought and reason of the Philosopher.

The final episode involving Pan occurs in the third book of The Crock of Gold, "The Two Gods." Though the entire action is a meeting of gods, each of whom is wooing the maiden Caitilin, it is hardly a battle of Titans. There is much discussion of ideas and hardly any demonstration of supernatural powers.

The second divinity who appears as a character is the god named Angus Og. His primary function in the story is that of a savior who rescues Caitilin from the god Pan. Though he doesn't appear until Book 3, "The Two Gods", he is mentioned in several conversations prior to his arrival at Pan's cave. Stephens' choice of Angus Og as a hero is consistent with his pursuit of a particularly Irish wisdom in the novel.

The first mention of this god combines the comic and nationalistic dimensions of the work. When the Philosopher has determined from Meehawl the identity of Pan as the music playing stranger, he decides that he may need the help of an Irish god to oust the foreign suitor. The Philosopher's seriousness about gods is undercut by the more practical and offhand comments of Meehawl. Caitilin's father isn't pleased that her daughter is consorting with a stranger, and would prefer her, at least, to be with someone Irish:

"Well, I'd sooner he had her than the other one, for he's one of ourselves anyhow, and the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know."

"Angus Og is a god," said the Philosopher severely.

"I know that, sir," replied Meehawl; "it's only a way of talking I have. But how will your honor get at Angus? for I heard say that he hadn't been seen for a hundred years, except one night only when he talked to a man for half an hour on Kilmashogue." (The Crock of Gold, 52-53)

Meehawl's "way of talking" turns gods into devils, and he isn't particular about which sort of creature grabs his daughter, as long as he's Irish. Among the rural folk of The Crock of Gold, knowledge of and belief in the existence of Angus Og seems to be somewhat common. Not only does Meehawl know of him, he knows when he was supposedly last seen. This may be Stephens' sly reference to George Moore's novel Hail and Farewell, in which the author and AE set out on a bicycle trip to Newgrange (the "Brugh na Boinne") to discover ancient gods. At one point, Moore "imagines" that Angus Og is present to them, but says that he (Moore) doesn't have the same spiritual power as AE and consequently cannot see or talk to the god (Salve, chs.2-3).

A second reference to this god occurs during the Philosopher's journey in Book II. While speaking with the three tinkers, the Philosopher mentions the purpose of his journey, and meets with a reaction which shows that his hearers aren't seriously interested in the gods. Much like Pegeen Mike in Synge's Playboy of the Western World, the tinker woman is attracted to a man who has the courage and imagination to wander the world in search of a god. The tinkers speak with the same west-of-Ireland speech as Synge's characters:

"Where are you going to, stranger," said the first man.
 "I am going to visit Angus Og," replied the Philosopher.

The man gave him a quick look.
 "Well," said he, "that's the queerest story I ever heard. Listen here," he called to the others, "this man is looking for Angus Og." The other man and woman came closer.
 "What would you be wanting with Angus Og, Mister Honey?" said the woman.
 "Oh," replied the Philosopher, "its a particular thing, a family matter." (The Crock of Gold, 92)

The tinkers show some knowledge of popular lore about gods as they continue to question the philosopher. In their travels they have probably seen ancient stones carved with Ogham or heard stories of Ossian, the poet of the Finn Cycle, and Amergin, the poet of the Gaels:

"How do you know where to look for himself?" said the first man again: "maybe you got the place where he lives written down in an old book or on a carved stone?"
 "Or did you find the staff of Amergin or of Ossian in a bog and it written from the top to the bottom with signs?" said the second man. (The Crock of Gold, 93)

Again relying on specialized knowledge, the Philosopher replies with his own particular method for finding a god: "if the god wants you to see him, you will go to his rath as direct as if you knew where it was, for he will be leading you with an airy thread reaching from his own place to wherever your are" (The Crock of Gold, 93). Though curious, the strangers have no desire to find the god themselves. In fact, the woman even tries to discourage the philosopher from continuing his journey. She finds him a likely bachelor, admiring his imagination and spunk. She attempts

to argue with him from practical wisdom, and sees no need for gods:

"Put Angus Og out of your head, my dear," she replied, "for what would the likes of you and me be saying to a god. He might put a curse on us would sink us into the ground or burn us up like a grip of straw. Be contented now, I'm saying, for if there is a woman in the world who knows all things I am that woman myself, and if you tell your trouble to me I'll tell you the thing to do just as good as Angus himself, and better perhaps." (The Crock of Gold, 98)

Though she shows a vivid imagination about the fearful and horrific possibilities of the supernatural, the tinker woman basically takes a realistic stance in trying to dissuade the philosopher from his journey. She exhibits an earthy self-reliance and makes a strong pitch to capture one whom she perceives as an eligible bachelor.

Though Angus Og is well known, if ignored and seen as useless, to the inhabitants of the Irish countryside, he is a figure also famous in Irish literature. One can still legitimately ask why Stephens chose to use him as a hero in his novel. One answer is likely to be found in Stephens' reading of James Cousins' The Wisdom of the West. As Stephens' told Lord Dunsany in a letter in 1911, he decided to "adopt" a god, and found Angus Og particularly suited to his needs (Letters, 17). The god is attractive for several reasons. First, Angus Og is a youthful god, as his name, "Young" Angus, suggests. This is appealing to Stephens, who

himself is full of youthful creative energy and sees the era of his novel as the "Morning of the World" (Letters of JS, 17). The correspondence of Stephens and Dunsany during late 1910 and early 1911 is full of mutual admiration and encouragement about each of their respective careers. Stephens tells Dunsany that "we are seeking the same thing, great windy reaches, & wild flights among stars & a very youthful laughter at the gods" (Letters, 17). Not long after this, Stephens added in another letter to Dunsany that "there is only one writer I am really afraid of and that is yourself. I do believe that you & I are the only writers doing real stuff" (Letters, 26). Dunsany was equally generous in his praise of Stephens. Upon reading Stephens' novel The Charwoman's Daughter, he wrote to Stephens:

I'm delighted to see that we have a new novelist. You won't have much competition. The competition among English novelists appears to be like a race with only 4 or 5 horses running and about four thousand donkeys - perhaps more. (Appendix Letter 6).

Both Stephens and Dunsany were becoming acknowledged literary artists, young newcomers ready to replace an older generation.

Another reason why Angus Og would appeal to Stephens is that, according to Cousins' study, Angus Og can be considered both a prophet and a usurper. The prophetic role fits well with the poetic purpose of the novel. Angus would be a proper god to usher in a new age for Ireland, a

literary apocalypse. The prophecies of Angus Og which the Philosopher delivers to the descendants of the ancient Irish families in Book IV, bear out this role. They call for a re-awakening of the consciousness of the race, predicting that the "sleepers of Erin" are about to return. The final prophecy, in particular, predicts that a new poet would arise in Ireland, who would be the son of Angus and Caitilin.

The role of Angus Og as a usurper also fits with Stephens' general nationalistic leanings. The poets and writers of Yeats's, Lady Gregory's and AE's generation hoped to bring about a revival of national consciousness through the imagination and literature and not by means of politics or the gun. Angus Og, as a god of love and imagination, is an apt figure to be the leader of Stephens' apocalyptic return of the old Celtic gods and usher in a new age of brotherhood. In the ancient myths, Angus Og usurped the power of his father, the Dagda Mor, and became the new leader of the race. Stephens uses him in the same context in The Crock of Gold (Cousins, 25).

Angus Og makes his initial appearance in the story in Book III, "The Two Gods," when he visits the cave of Pan in an effort to rescue the shepherdess Caitilin. In describing Angus Og, Stephens uses physical attributes found in ancient Irish literature. As in Pan's encounter with the girl, the

episode concludes in a conversation about ideas, and not in marvelous or supernatural acts.

The swift arrival of Angus Og at the cave of Pan contrasts sharply with the slow, self-revelation by Pan earlier in the novel. Whereas Pan became visible in stages to Caitilin, Angus Og enters the cave of Pan preceded by a brief lyrical overture, a description of the "joyous" song of birds. The lyrical passage pictures the song of birds in imagery which creates a mood as well as describes their physical flight, a poetic blend of sound and sight:

A round soft tenderness of song rose and fell, broadened and soared, and then the high flight was snatched, eddied a moment, and was borne away to a more slender and wonderful loftiness, until, from afar, that thrilling song turned on the very apex of sweetness, dipped steeply and flashed its joyous return to the exultations of its mates below, rolling an ecstasy of song which for one moment gladdened the whole world and the sad people who moved thereon; then the singing ceased as suddenly as it began, a swift shadow darkened the passage, and Angus Og came into the cave. (The Crock of Gold, 108-109)

This passage visualizes a bird rising and soaring to the heights and functions as a prelude to the statements of Angus Og. He, as the "Divine Imagination," can soar to heights inaccessible to Pan and attain the Wisdom and Happiness which is beyond Carelessness.

Unlike the description of Pan, with its attending detail of the face and body, the picture of Angus Og has

little physical detail. Stephens concentrates on the emotional attributes, accentuating the two qualities of swiftness and sweetness:

The god was slender and as swift as a wind.
His hair swung about his face like golden blossoms. His eyes were mild and dancing and his lips smiled with quiet sweetness. About his head there flew perpetually a ring of singing birds, and when he spoke his voice came sweetly from a centre of sweetness.
(The Crock of Gold, 109)

In picturing Angus Og accompanied by birds, Stephens relies on representation of the god found in ancient Irish texts. O'Curry mentions that birds are associated with Angus Og as the external expression of his virtue of kindness:

In the Dinnsenchis it is stated that "Eoin Baile" were Four Kisses of the Aengus of Brugh na Boinne, which were converted by him into birds which haunted the youth of Erin.
(Lectures, 478)

Stephens combines this reference to birds with that of song, also an attribute of Angus Og mentioned in ancient texts. Arbois de Jubainville, in his study of the Celtic Mythological Cycle, records a story of Angus and his bride "Caer" who visited the palace ("Brugh na Boinne") where his father, the Dagda Mor lived, and sang to the assembled crowd: "they sang a song so beautiful that all the hearers slept, and their sleep lasted three days and three nights. Never before had Irish music such a grand success" (Celtic Mythological Cycle, 289).

Hardly any of the action in the encounter of Pan, Caitilin and Angus qualifies as "marvelous" in the fantastic sense of the word. Only at the very beginning of the encounter is there the suggestion of supernatural power, as each god invokes a mother goddess, Demeter from the Greek tradition and Dana from the Celtic. Pan asks for a sign from Angus Og that he "must go", and receives a brief demonstration of his rival's power:

Angus Og lifted his hand and from without there came again the triumphant music of the birds.
 "It is a sign" said he, "the voice of Dana speaking in the air," and, saying so, he made obeisance to the great mother. (The Crock of Gold, 110)

To this gesture, Pan responds with a similar act, showing his power over the beasts:

Pan lifted his hand, and from afar there came the lowing of the cattle and the thin voices of the goats.
 "It is a sign, " said he, "the voice of Demeter speaking from the Earth," and he also bowed deeply to the mother of the world. (The Crock of Gold, 110)

There is a brief escalation of the demonstration of power when Angus makes appear a "bright and very terrible" spear in his hand, but Pan rejects force as a means of problem-solving. Instead, the two gods agree to allow Caitilin to "choose" between them, thus forgoing the use of their power and submitting to the will of the girl:

But Pan only said, "Can a spear divine the Eternal will?" and Angus Og put his weapon

aside, and he said: "the girl will choose between us, for the Divine Mood shines in the heart of man." (The Crock of Gold, 110)

The terminology of the ensuing discussion about the identity of the god Angus Og, "The Divine Imagination," and the nature of the human condition and the search for happiness is Stephens' borrowing of essentially Blakean ideas. Sometime after finishing The Crock of Gold, Stephens himself admitted that though he didn't think Blake was a great poet, "he is still very good to steal from; and let it be conceded that theft is the first duty of man" (Pyle, 52). In the overall allegorical structure of the work, the identity of the gods Pan and Angus Og fixes them as powers within the whole human person. In Book I, Pan has already been identified with sensual love (Blake's Tharmas), in accord with his physical form and his ability to cause sensual awakening in those whom he contacts. The rest of Book III is given almost exclusively to Angus Og's explanation of his identity, and his commentary on the unification of the contraries, the Head and the Heart.

Though he is a particularly Irish god, Angus Og speaks almost entirely in Blakean terms. Upon entering the cave, Angus Og introduces himself not by name, but by his conceptual identity. He first calls himself "Infinite Love" and "Joy", terms consonant with his traditional Irish identity, but Pan responds that those are his names also. Stephens' expansion of Angus Og's identity comes later in

the conversation, when he responds to Pan's imperative of "Hunger": "the greatest thing in the world," said Angus Og, "is the Divine Imagination" (The Crock of Gold, 111). The Irish god then continues with an explanation of the relation of the "Divine Imagination" to the battle of opposing states within the person. The god's speech effectively lays out a Blakean version of the fall and the condition of humanity before the coming of the Redeemer. Angus Og's speech uses concepts drawn mainly from Blake's works "the Marriage of Heaven and Hell," "Jerusalem," and "the Four Zoas," laying out the basis of the human condition:

For, behold, there has been no marriage of humanity since time began. Men have but coupled with their own shadows. The desire that sprang from their heads they pursued, and no man has yet known the love of a woman. And women have mated with the shadows of their own hearts, thinking fondly that the arms of men were about them...The desire of a man shall be Beauty, but he has fashioned a slave in his mind and called it Virtue. The desire of a woman shall be Wisdom, but she has formed a beast in her blood and called it courage: but the real virtue is courage, and the real courage is liberty, and the real liberty is wisdom, and Wisdom is the son of Thought and Intuition; and his names also are Innocence and Adoration and Happiness. (The Crock of Gold, 112-113)

In Blake's "Four Zoas," the respective powers of reason, passions, the body and senses, and the spirit and imagination, are embodied as Urizen, Luvah, Tharmas and Urthona and live in antagonism. In The Crock of Gold, the conflicts of the Philosopher and the Thin Woman, (Urizen and

Luvah), result from their coupling "with their own shadows." Caitilin, too, under the influence of Pan, or Tharmas, cannot truly mate with her opposite, Urthona. She desires Wisdom and Happiness, but Pan is not able to give it to her. Only the action of Divine Imagination can offer her redemption and true union with Urthona (McFate, 41).

The speech of Angus is prophetic here, as his coming is soon to be responsible for the true marriage of the Philosopher and the Thin Woman as well as his own future relation with Caitilin. But before he can do this, he must make his plea to the girl to come with him and leave Pan.

The appeal Angus makes cuts two ways; he speaks as a Blakean Redeemer, an embodiment of the "Divine Imagination", and as a "forgotten" Irish god. His unhappiness comes from an uncaring and callous world, unwilling to listen to his speech and laughter, or to enjoy his joyful birds:

"I want you," said Angus, "because the world has forgotten me. In my nation there is no remembrance of me. I, wandering on the hills of my country, am lonely indeed. I am the desolate god forbidden to utter my happy laughter. I hide the silver of my speech and the gold of my merriment. I live in the holes of the rocks and the dark caves of the sea. I weep in the morning because I may not laugh, and in the evening I go abroad and am not happy. Where I have kissed a bird has flown; where I have trod a flower has sprung. But Thought has snared my birds in his nets and sold them in the marketplace. (The Crock of Gold, 113)

The solution to this problem is a new marriage of the Head and the Heart, of the opposites in man and woman. The end of Angus Og's appeal is a prophetic hymn to the power of the Divine Imagination to heal self-centered and lost humanity. He announces that the "breath of the Almighty" has the power to redeem and renew:

It gathers ever to the center. From the far without to the deep within, trembling from the body to the soul until the head of a woman and the heart of a man are filled with the Divine Imagination. Hymen, Hymenaea! I sing to the ears that are stopped, the eyes that are sealed, and the minds that do not labour. Sweetly I sing on the hillside. The blind shall look within and not without; the deaf shall hearken to the murmur of their own veins, and be enchanted with the wisdom of sweetness; the thoughtless shall think without effort as the lightning flashes, that the hand of Innocence may reach to the stars, that the feet of Adoration may dance to the Father of Joy, and the laugh of Happiness be answered by the Voice of Benediction. (The Crock of Gold, 114-115)

The imagery of this hymn combines miraculous physical regeneration with a renewal and coming of wisdom. The speech is a foreshadowing and prophecy of the marriage of Angus Og and Caitilin and the apocalyptic march to rescue the philosopher from prison in the marketplace. At the end of this appeal, Caitilin leaves Pan and joins Angus Og. Her action derives from her womanly compassion rather than any intellectual assent to the doctrine or teaching of Angus Og:

"she did not go with him because she had understood his words, nor because he was naked and unashamed, but only because his

need of her was very great, and therefore, she loved him, and stayed his feet in the way, and was concerned lest he should stumble" (The Crock of Gold, 115).

In a review of James Cousins' The Wisdom of the West in early 1912, before he had finished writing The Crock of Gold, Stephens makes several comments in significant praise of Blake. A look at his review, as well as the text of Cousins work sheds some valuable insight on Stephens' use of both a Blakean system of thought and the choice of Angus Og as an important celtic character in the novel.

Stephens' primary reason for his use of Blake as a source is that he considers Blake "possibly the sole example we have of the myth maker" in modern literature (Irish Review, 100). In attributing the highest quality, "Divine Imagination", to Angus Og, Stephens is drawing directly on what he understands and praises as Blakean myth:

Blake does not postulate a Trinity, but a Quaternary, in his Republic. His battlefield is the human body; the protagonists under the titles of Urizon, Luvah, Tharmas and Urthona, are Powers, Intellect, Love, Spirit, and Matter....The interaction and aloofness, the tyrannies, slaveries and rebellions of these are the theme. At some time one of these states is in the dominant, and again a different one takes the sway, and the battle cannot be ended until Imagination, or The Redeemer, has fused them into the peace of Universal Brotherhood, which is his objective. (Irish Review, 100-101)

In an earlier essay (1909) of his own titled "Imagination," Stephens stresses the point that the Imagination is the key element to human identity. He says

that it is the highest human power, a "divine element" which makes the ordinary glow:

it tells us what we were and to where we have attained, whatever hope we have of climbing the mountain Despair is due to its prophecy. It, and it alone, can look at a man and discern the majesty of God (Uncollected Prose, 63-67)

By making Imagination a god Stephens raises humanity to a higher level, because Angus Og unites with humanity in a spirit of new "Brotherhood" and proclaims a new identity for his people.

In his work, subtitled "An Interpretive Study of Irish Mythology", Cousins compares the Irish "Pantheon" with that of the Greeks. He states that the relations of Cronos and Rhea are comparable to those of the Dagda Mor and the goddess Dana. Of particular importance in these relations is the role of the sons, Zeus and Angus Og:

It happens that we have in the mythological literature of Ireland an almost identical story to the effect that the Dagda - who is also called Eochaid Olathair, or "Great Father"- whose kingdom has all the appurtenances of a Land of the Blest, was dispossessed and driven into exile by his son Angus the Young. (Cousins, 25)

Cousins further adds the important detail that both Zeus and Angus are equally considered "usurpers" of their fathers' dominion as well as being possessors of the "power of prophecy." The significance of the power of prophecy given to Angus Og is readily apparent in both his speeches

quoted above and in the sayings that the god gives to the Philosopher to deliver (Book IV). These all refer to the coming of a new age, using the imagery of "sleepers" awakening. The third and last one delivered by the Philosopher predicts a new poet to arise in Ireland, a poet who will tell the "sleepers" the "meaning of their names."

At the end of Book III, Angus Og goes off to his cave, the "Brugh na Boinne," with Caitilin and is not seen again until Book VI, "The Thin Woman's Journey and The Happy March." Books IV and V concern further adventures of the Philosopher.

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Book IV, "The Philosopher's Return," details his return journey from the cave of Angus Og to Coille Doraca, during which he delivers the god's prophecies to the descendants of legendary Irish heroes. There are no supernatural characters or marvellous actions in these episodes. For the structure of the action, though, Stephens uses a technique of reduplication of events which is inherent to marvelous literature (Brooke-Rose, 234).

On the return journey, occurrences happen in groups of three. The Philosopher has three encounters with strangers and to these he delivers the three prophecies of Angus Og. Though the use of adventures occurring in triplicate is common to both the marvelous and the folk-tale, Stephens may have chosen this specific structure as an imitation of certain "trinitarian" techniques of Gaelic literature, cited by Cousins. In discussing the De Danann stage of mythology, Cousins notes the importance of trinitarian concepts in the "spiritual monism" of Celtic theology:

through the marriage of Dana with Bress the Fomorian, are born Brian, Juchar and Jucharba, who are regarded by authorities as a triple presentation of a single divinity,

the god of art and literature, and who are the joint progenitors of a son, Ecne, interpreted as knowledge (Cousins, 32).

Cousins maintains that the trinitarian principle exercised "great influence" over the minds of the ancient worshippers of the Celtic god Bran, seen particularly in literature:

In the epic called "The Fate of the Children of Tuireann," we find the triplicity of Brian, Juchar and Jucharba in conflict with the triplicity of Cian, Cu and Ceithann. After a delay of three days and three nights a fairy cavalcade arrives to participate in the conflict. When Brian, Juchar and Jucharba slew Cain, the eric, or blood-fine, demanded by Cain's son Lugh, consisted among other things, of three apples from the islands of the Hesperides, and three shouts on a hill. In the pursuit of their quest they were opposed by the three daughters of the King of the islands. The King of Greece, from whom they were to obtain a magical skin, offered instead three times its fill of gold. They stole the skin, slew the king, and rested three days and three nights at his Court. At the hill where they were to shout the three shouts they fought with the three sons of the king, each triplicity spearing the other.

These three deities were grandsons of the Dagda, who was said, in an ancient tale, to have three names. His wife also was said to have the three titles, falsehood, deceit, and shame. When the Milesians, who are supposed to be the progenitors of the Irish race arrived in the country, they found it ruled by three grandsons of the Dagda, Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht and Mac Grene, whose wives Fola, Banba and Erin, are three names for Ireland. (Cousins, 32-33)

Stephens uses not only the technique of triplicating adventures, but also stresses the theme of the importance of names and lineage cited by Cousins.

The three encounters of the Philosopher in book IV mirror a similar set of encounters in Book II. In the first encounters, the people (a woman at the well, an old woman, and the tinkers) do not give their names and the meetings are generally unfriendly. In the latter encounters (Book IV), the strangers all give their names as descendants of mythical Irish heroes, share food with the Philosopher, and are receptive to the prophecies of Angus Og.

In Book IV, the Philosopher leaves Angus Og's cave with a new vigor: "he regained the shining words and gay melodies which his childhood had delighted in, and these he sang loudly and unceasingly as he marched" (The Crock of Gold, 124). He starts his journey at dawn, and there is a vivid description of birds awakening, which contrasts to the silence and darkness of his former life in the Coilla Doraca. As he sits to eat, discovering a "furious" appetite, he sees a group of people approaching, three boys, three girls and their father. In an act of instinctive kindness, the Philosopher offers some of his meager biscuit to the visitors:

"I am about to breakfast," said he, "and if you are hungry perhaps you would like to eat with me."

"Why not," said the man, "for the person who would refuse a kind invitation is a dog. These are my three sons and three of my daughters, and we are all thankful to you." the Philosopher divided his cake into eight pieces and gave one to each person.

"I am so sorry it is so little," said he.

"A give," said the bearded man, "is never little," and he courteously ate his piece in three bites although he could have easily eaten it in one, and his children also made much of their pieces. (The Crock of Gold, 126)

In return, they share their food with him and tell him their names. At this, the Philosopher delivers one of the prophecies of Angus Og:

"My name," said the bearded man, "is Mac Cul."

"Last night," said the Philosopher, "when I came from the house of Angus Og in the Caves of the Sleepers of Erin I was bidden to say to a man named Mac Cul -that the horses had trampled in their sleep and the sleepers had turned on their sides."

"Sir," said the bearded man, "your words thrill in my heart like music, but my head does not understand them."

"I have learned," said the Philosopher, "that the head does not hear anything until the heart has listened..."

"All the birds of the world are singing in my soul," said the bearded man, "and I bless you because you have filled me with hope and pride." (The Crock of Gold, 127-128)

The man is a descendant of Finn Mac Cool, the leader of the Fianna, whose adventures are told in the Fenian Branch cycle of tales recounted by Lady Gregory in Gods and Fighting Men (1904). Finn Mac Cool is often portrayed with his band of hunters, and in The Crock of Gold, Stephens makes the same association, picturing him with a large family. In one of the tales, "the Last of the Great Men," a smith discovers Finn and his band sleeping in a cave. He finds a horn, the "Dard Fiann" and blows a blast which shakes the cave and makes the sleepers turn on their sides

(Gods and Fighting Men, 336). Stephens uses this motif in the prophecy to Mac Cul.

As he leaves them, the Philosopher sees a demonstration of the heart as Mac Cul embraces his children in a public act of love and affection.

The second encounter is with a young girl and boy, who are carrying on a coy courtship. The Philosopher first talks with the girl and then the boy about their secret life of the heart. The girl gratefully gives him a kiss for "wasting" time with her. The boy says his name is Mac Culain, and demonstrates athletic energy like his ancestor, the legendary hero Cuchulain of the Red Branch (Ulster) cycle of tales. (Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirthemne (1902) is one of the modern recountings of these tales). Among the details Stephens uses from these tales are the mention of the hounds and Cuchulain's horse, the "Grey of Macha". In one of the tales of the boyhood of Cuchulain, he kills the fierce hound of "Culain" and thus received a new name, changing his from "Setanta" to "Cuchulain," meaning "the hound of Culain." (Cuchulain of Muirthemne, p.11) In The Crock of Gold, MacCulain works for a man who has hounds. (Stephens confers status of a higher being on Cuchulain by naming one of the angels after him in The Demi-Gods, but less is made in that novel of his particular legendary identity.)

The Philosopher also has a prophecy for this young man:

"When I came last night," said the Philosopher, "from the place of Angus Og in the cave of the Sleepers of Erinn I was bidden say to a man named MacCulain that the Grey of Macha had neighed in his sleep and sword of Laeg clashed on the floor as he turned in his slumber."

The young man leaped from the grass.

"Sir," said he in a strained voice, "I do not understand your words, but they make my heart to dance and sing within me like a bird."

(The Crock of Gold, 134-135)

Like MacCul, the young man does not yet understand the meaning of the prophecy, though his heart is moved.

In the third encounter, there is a discussion of the differences between old age and youth. The young boy whom the philosopher meets gives his name as Mac Cushin, and is a descendant of the poet Ossin, who was a poet of the Fenian Cycle of tales, and who comes back from the Land of Youth to meet Saint Patrick in Yeats's The Wanderings of Oisín (1889) and in Gregory's Gods and Fighting Men (1904). The boy is to be a poet and the Philosopher delivers to him the longest and most significant of the prophecies:

"I was bidden to say to one named MacCushin that a son would be born to Angus Og and his wife, Caitilin, and that the sleepers of Erinn had turned in their slumbers."

The boy regarded him steadfastly.

"I know," said he, "why Angus Og sent me that message. He wants me to make a poem to the people of Erinn, so that when the Sleepers arise they will meet with friends."

"The Sleepers have arisen," said the Philosopher. "they are about us on every

side. They are walking now, but they have forgotten their names and the meanings of their names. You are to tell them their names and their lineage, for I am an old man, and my work is done."
 "I will make a poem some day," said the boy,
 "and every man will shout when he hears it."
 (The Crock of Gold, 140-141)

This final prophecy from Angus Og stresses the importance of poetry in the renewal of identity in Ireland, and by extension, connects the return of the "Divine Imagination" with a literary revival. In making the new poet a young boy, Stephens is perhaps making a prediction about his own importance on the literary scene. The Philosopher even admits that his "work is done" and one would presume he is ready to pass responsibility on to a new generation.

Book IV concludes with the Philosopher's arrival at Coille Doraca, where he is quickly snatched by the Policemen and taken off to jail.

Book V, titled "The Policemen" concerns the Philosopher's adventures with the bumbling country policemen as they trundle him off to "gaol" and includes two stark stories the Philosopher hears when he sits in the "gaol" in darkness. The action of this book swings from the comic adventures of the trip with the Policemen, including a rescue attempt by the Leprecauns and some inane conversation by the Philosopher and the Policemen, to the painful social realities of the stories by the prisoners. The only hint of fantasy comes in the rescue by the Leprecauns.

As has been noted above, the action of the story has been propelled by means of the small and insignificant characters. In keeping with the comic nature of the novel, the narrator introduces this part of the action with a mock-heroic discussion of the motives and actions of the Leprecauns. From their point of view, the primary issue remains one of "Justice" or the maintenance of "equilibrium"; they need to regain possession of their crock of gold. Their need forces them into a "dangerous alliance" which the narrator duly notes with a comical overstatement of its importance:

for the first time in history, the elemental beings invoked bourgeois assistance....When the Leprecauns of Gort na Cloca Mora found they were unable to regain their crock of gold by any means they laid an anonymous information at the nearest Police Station showing that two dead bodies would be found under the hearthstone in the hut of Coille Doraca, and the inference to be drawn from their crafty missive was that these bodies had been murdered by the Philosopher for reasons very discreditable to him. (The Crock of Gold, 122-123)

Right after the Philosopher is taken away by the Policemen, his children find and return the crock of gold to the Leprecauns. Full of remorse, the Leprecauns in turn make an attack on the Policemen to rescue their prisoner. The attempt takes place in darkness, and in the ensuing melee, the Philosopher comically escapes by continuing to walk ahead, oblivious to what is happening around him.

Stephens again relies on folklore about Leprecauns to construct the detail of the encounter with the Policemen.

Two elements common to the tales collected by Keightly and Croker stand out in this episode. First, when an Irish peasant discovers or captures a Leprecaun, he or she acts with immediate avaracious greed, threatening the Leprecaun and demanding to be given the crock of gold. And second, the Leprecaun always makes his escape when the peasant is distracted and looks away for a brief instant.⁵

In The Crock of Gold, when the Leprecauns free the Philosopher, one of their number is captured by the Police, who are only momentarily awed by the "queer miracle" happening to them:

"I'm holding him by the two arms," said Shawn, "he can't stir anything but his head, and I've got my chest on that."
 The sergeant struck the match, shading it for a moment with his hand, then he turned it on their new prisoner.
 They saw a little man dressed in tight green clothes; he had a broad pale face with staring eyes, and there was a thin fringe of grey whisker under his chin - then the match went out.
 "It's a Leprecaun," said the sergeant.
 The men were silent for a full couple of minutes-at last Shawn spoke.
 "Do you tell me so"" said he in a musing voice: "that's a queer miracle altogether."
 "I do," said the sergeant. "Doesn't it stand to reason that it can't be anything else? You saw it yourself."
 Shawn plumped down on his knees before his captive.
 "Tell me where the money is?" he hissed.
 "Tell me where the money is or I'll twist your neck off."

The other men also gathered eagerly around, shouting threats and commands at the Leprecaun. (The Crock of Gold, 165-166)

Stephens' Policemen are a slow and loutish lot, and the Leprecuan need not wait long for them to be distracted. Once they turn on themselves, the Leprecaun slips away:

"while we were looking at the Leprecaun," said the voice of woe, "I must have forgotten about the other one-I, I haven't got him-"
 "You gawm!" gritted the sergeant.
 "Is it my prisoner that's gone?" said Shawn in a deep voice. He leaped forward with a curse and smote his negligent comrade so terrible a blow in the face, that the man went flying backwards, and the thud of his head on the road could have been heard anywhere.
 "Get up," said Shawn, "get up till I give you another one."
 "That will do," said the sergeant, "we'll go home..."
 "Oh!" said Shawn in a strangled tone.
 "What is it now?" said the sergeant testily.
 "Nothing," replied Shawn.
 "What did you say 'Oh!' for then, you block-head?"
 "It's the Leprecaun, sergeant," said Shawn in a whisper-"He's got away-when I was hitting the man there I forgot all about the Leprecaun: he must have run into the hedge."
 (The Crock of Gold, 167-168)

Once the Philosopher is reunited with his wife and family, the topic of discussion turns towards his safety. The Thin Woman proposes that he avoid the police by moving in with the Leprecauns or with Angus Og at the Brugh na Boinne. In a gesture of friendship, the Leprecauns ask him to join their fairy world:

"Noble Sir," said he, "there isn't much room in our house but there's no stint of welcome in it. You would have a good time with us

travelling on moonlit nights and seeing strange things, for we often go to visit the Shee of the Hills and they come to see us; there is always something to talk about, and we have dances in the caves and on the tops of the hills. Don't be imagining now that we have a poor life for there is fun and plenty with us and the Brugh of Angus Mac an Og is hard to be got at." (The Crock of Gold, 172)

But though he has a love for dancing, the Philosopher has other principles on which he feels he needs to act. In accord with the allegorical plan for the novel, he decides to put his power of intellect to the test and to submit himself to the rigors of the Law:

I would like to dance, indeed," returned the Philosopher, "for I do believe that dancing is the first and last duty of man...-but this time, decent men of the Gort, I cannot go with you, for it is laid on me to give myself up to the police."

"You would not do that," exclaimed the Thin Woman pitifully: "You wouldn't think of doing that now!"

"An innocent man," said he, "cannot be oppressed, for he is fortified by his mind and his heart cheers him." (The Crock of Gold, 172-173)

Chapter XVI concerns the Philosopher's incarceration in jail. The major part of the content is taken up with the stories of the two prisoners, told in the dark by faceless voices. These stories, about clerks who have lost their jobs in the city, and are victims of an uncaring and indifferent society, are reworking of two Stephens' stories which first appeared in Sinn Fein in 1909 (McFate, 38). For use in this context, Stephens omitted names of characters and of any reference to a geographical place, thus

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maintaining a setting of a vague time and place. The Philosopher discovers that his mind as well as his body is truly in jail, and he is not able to respond in any way to the sad predicament of his fellow prisoners. Left with little comment as they are, the two stories of depressing life in the city seem to be out of place in the pastoral world of this novel. Their only justification may be that they serve to intensify the suggestion that modern society itself is a kind of prison and in need of a liberation and renewal. That liberation is the subject of the final book of The Crock of Gold.

Stephens combines two separate actions in the two chapters of Book VI, indicated by the title "The Thin Woman's Journey and the Happy Dance." The first of these actions concerns the adventures of the Thin Woman and her children on their journey to seek the aid of Angus Og. In the final chapter, Angus Og gathers together the "Sluage Shee (The Fairy Host)" and leads them in a dance to rescue the Philosopher and reunite him with his family.

As do her husband's two journeys, the Thin Woman's trip to visit Angus Og contains three encounters with strangers. The first, with an unfriendly and angry fat woman, occurs while the Thin Woman and her children are eating their "three cakes" baked for the journey. The Thin woman dispatches the visitor with a veiled threat of magical

action: "I've given you more than two words; let you take care or I'll give you two more that will put blisters on your body forever" (The Crock of Gold, 205). The succeeding encounter is a more marvelous one, as the children and their mother eavesdrop on a conversation between a fly and a cow. Stephens presents the animals' brief discussion of life's "troubles" as a perfectly ordinary occurrence. The listeners find the episode amusing, as the cow complains about humans who "lie against his back" and the fly about spiders who are "voracious people without any manners" (The Crock of Gold, 208).

During the journey, the Thin Woman takes the time to offer some of her wisdom to her children, speaking to them in quasi-Blakean terms about Beauty and loveliness:

"Beauty has no liking for Thought, but will send terror and sorrow on those who look upon her with intelligent eyes.... therefore men should seek loveliness rather than beauty, and so they would always have a friend to go beside them, to understand and to comfort them, for that is the business of loveliness: but the business of beauty - there is no person at all knows what that is. Beauty is the extreme which has not yet swung to and become merged in its opposite. (The Crock of Gold, 211)

Her talk also anticipates the upcoming joyful dance of unity, when she comments on the reasons why fairies dance:

It is not known that the fairies seldom dance for joy, but for sadness that they have been expelled from the sweet dawn, and therefore their midnight revels are only ceremonies to remind them of their happy state in the

morning of the world before thoughtful
curiosity and self-righteous moralities drove
them from the kind face of the sun to the
dark exile of midnight. (The Crock of Gold,
210)

Her trip to visit Angus Og will soon aid the return of
the "morning of the world."

The third encounter on her journey is one of the
strangest in the novel, a meeting with the "Three
Absolutes." The woman sees their three naked figures
sitting around a fire and they command her to draw near. As
in other encounters with gods and supernatural creatures,
the episode contains a physical description of the
characters and a conversation with them.

Augustine Martin states that the presence of these
three figures in the novel is difficult to account for. He
identifies them as "shadowy" visitors from the pages of
Blake: "the three Britons who escaped after the last Battle
of King Arthur as related in Blake's Descriptive Catalogue
of 1809" and further as embodiment as "Urizen, Luvah and
Tharmas" (Martin, 52). When asked by the Thin Woman, they
identify themselves first as "the Three Absolutes, the Three
Redeemers, the three Alembics - the Most Beautiful Man, the
Strongest Man and the Ugliest Man" (The Crock of Gold,
214).⁶ In physical proportion and manner of sitting, the
figures seem to be in the style of figures in Blake's
engravings for Jerusalem. The three beings are seated on the
ground, the "Strongest Man" gripping the earth with his

hands, and the "Ugliest Man" sitting "like a colossal toad squatting with his arms about his knees" (The Crock of Gold, 213).⁷

The narrator only briefly dwells on the fear caused by these figures, mentioning that "the Thin Woman could feel the children like little terrified birds pressing closely and very quietly to her sides" (The Crock of Gold, 215). Ironically, the presence of her weak and fearful children later gives their mother the strength to oppose the wills of the supernatural creatures. As in Caitilin's and the Philosopher's encounters with Pan and Angus Og, once identities are established, the meeting quickly becomes a discussion.

The Thin Woman asks for the figures to define themselves, and they do: "I will tell you that...Beauty is Thought, and Strength is Love and Ugliness is Generation." These definitions are Stephensian alterations of those made by Blake, who writes that

"the Strong man represents the human sublime, the Beautiful Man represents the human pathetic, and the Ugly Man represents the human reason. They were originally one Man who was fourfold. He was self divided and his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. (Blake, 374)

Each of the figures, called both gods and men by Blake, asks the woman to forgo her journey and come with him and live in a perfected state. Though their appeals are strong,

especially that of the third man, to whom she is attracted as well as repulsed, the Thin Woman successfully replies to their demands. Her answers are based on the primacy of her journey and on her motherly faithfulness and love for her children. In effect, she exhibits virtues of faithfulness and love which display values opposite to those of anger and selfishness which prompted her actions in Book I. When she successfully fends off their questions, the three allow her to continue on her journey. The exit of the three figures is both marvelous and majestic:

So the three Absolutes arose and strode mightily away; and as they went their thunderous speech to each other boomed against the clouds and the earth like a gusty wind, and, even when they had disappeared, that great rumble could be heard dying gently away in the moonlit distances. (The Crock of Gold, 218)

Patricia McFate justifies the presence of these gods in the story on the grounds that they are Blakean figures who have "become" Irish, but there is nothing in their behaviour or description which suggests any particularly Irish qualities. (McFate, 41) The episode is, finally, too formulaic and somewhat too artificial to fit comfortably in the novel.

The final chapter of the novel stresses the theme of the unity of the ancient and modern peoples of Ireland and is seen both in the gathering of the Shee in the Happy Dance and in the unity of Caitilin and Angus Og. The chapter

begins with a picture of the state of mind of Caitilin, emphasizing how she has grown towards a more universal consciousness:

Never again could the gratification of a desire give her pleasure, for her sense of oneness was destroyed -she was not an individual only; she was also part of a mighty organism ordained, through whatever stress, to achieve its oneness, and this great being was threefold, comprising in its mighty units God and Man and Nature -the immortal trinity. (The Crock of Gold, 221)

The action of the chapter comprises a movement through space from the Brugh of Angus Og to the city and through time from the ancient gods to the modern day. When Angus comes to Caitilin in his cave, he announces to her that they will take a journey to the city to prepare for a new relation with the people of Ireland:

"We will go down to the world of men -from our quiet dwelling among the hills to the noisy city and the multitude of people. This will be our first journey, but on a time not distant we will go to them again, and we will not return from that journey, for we will live among our people and be at peace."
 "May that day come soon," said she.
 "When thy son is a man he will go before us on that journey," said Angus, and Caitilin shivered with a great delight, knowing that a son would be born to her. (The Crock of Gold, 222)

When Angus and Caitilin begin their journey, Stephens repeats the motif of birds. In this passage they are symbols of his love and are also messengers, whose purpose is to gather his people for the Happy Dance:

About his shining head the birds were flying; for every kiss he gave to Caitilin became a bird, the messengers of love and wisdom, and they also burst into triumphant melody, so that the quiet place rang with their glee. Constantly from the circling birds one would go flying with great speed to all quarters of space. These were his messengers flying to every fort and dun, every rath and glen and valley of Eire to raise hte Sluaige Shee (The Fairy Host). They were birds of love that flew, for this was a hosting of happiness, and therefore, the Shee would not bring weapons with them. (The Crock of Gold, 222-223)

Stephens uses Gaelic names for the wide ranging list of the host which gathers. The group is comprised of mythological heros and characters from all the provinces of Ireland. The first to be named are the "younger Shee, members of the Tuatha da Danaan, tall and beautiful men and women" from the "quiet underworld," who were queens and guardians (The Crock of Gold, 223). The next to be named are the "people of Lupra, the ancient Leprecauns of the world, leaping like goats among the knees of the heroes" (The Crock of Gold, 224). The last in order of arrival are the oldest of the gods and their families. Among these, Stephens includes "Dagda Mor, the Father of Stars" and "Mananaan Mac Lir" who "came from his wide waters shouting louder than the wind." In keeping with the pastoral nature of the work, the last god to be named is the goddess Dana "the Mother of the gods, steadfast for ever," and she is praised for her pastoral qualities.

Once the host is together, Stephens describes their appearance with only a brief impressionistic glance: "On fair hair and dark the sun gleamed: white arms tossed and glanced a moment and sank and reappeared" (The Crock of Gold, 225). His interest is in the internal quality of unity of the group, and this receives more emphasis in the text:

The voices of free people spoke in her ears
and the laughter of happy hearts,
unthoughtful of sin or shame, released from
the hard bondage of selfhood. For these
people, though many, were one. Each spoke to
the other as to himself, without reservation
or subterfuge. They moved freely each in his
personal whim, and they moved also with the
unity of one being...Through the many minds
there went also one mind, correcting,
commanding, so that in a moment the
intechangeable and fluid became locked, and
organic with a simultaneous understanding, a
collective action which was freedom. (The
Crock of Gold, 226)

The role of Angus Og and Caitilin becomes less important once the host is gathered. The function of Angus had been to gather the group, and once they are present and ready to march, he and his bride join the group and blend in with the others. In terms of the theme of organic unity, their selfhood is merged with the identity of the group.

There is only a brief passage describing the march to the city, followed by a final longer passage which is a song of appeal to the citizens to "Come away!" Instead of

singling out one particular god to describe, Stephens gives an impression of the group:

In a little they reached the grass land and the dance began. Hand sought for hand, feet moved companionably as though they loved each other; quietly intimate they tripped without faltering, and, then, the loud song arose - they sang to the lovers of gaiety and peace, long defrauded- (The Crock of Gold, 227)

The nature of the appeal made by the people of the Shee is an invitation to a new freedom from the oppression of modern civilization. Stephens uses a reference to the "dark people of Fomor," the mythical race conquered by the Tuatha De Danaan, to indicate the forces that bind the citizens:

Amazed ye look and do not comprehend, for your eyes are set upon a star and your feet move in the blessed kingdoms of the Shee. Innocents! in what prisons are ye flung? To what lowliness are ye bowed? How are ye ground betwen the laws and the customs? The dark people of the Fomor have ye in thrall; and upon your minds they have fastened a band of lead, your hearts are hung with iron, and about your loins a cincture of brass impressed, woeful! (The Crock of Gold, 227)

The appeal to escape is also an echo of both a poem of Yeats, "The Hosting of the Sidhe," and Dunsany's tale, "The Beggars." Yeats' poetic refrain, "Come Away, Come Away" is the invitation to humans to enter the otherworldly existence of the Sidhe. Dunsany's beggars try to invoke a more imaginative and wonderful inner life in the citizens of London: "Has thy soul dreams of the angels, and of the walls of faery that thou has guarded it so utterly, lest it

dazzle astonished eyes?" (99). Stephens' ending invites the inhabitants of the "Town of the Ford of the Hurdles" (an English rendering of the Irish name for Dublin, Baile ath Cliath) to join hands with their ancient ancestors in a unifying dance of joy:

Is it for joy you sit in the broker's den,
thou pale man? Has the attorney enchanted
thee?... Come away! for the dance has begun
lightly, the wind is sounding over the hill,
the sun laughs down into the valley, and the
sea leaps upon the shingle, panting for joy,
dancing, dancing, dancing for joy... (The
Crock of Gold, 228)

In a contrast to the horrific "danse macabre" of The Gods of the Mountain, where the gods come to punish human transgression, Stephens unites the gods and the humans in a dance of joy, an act which expresses the renewal of life and a hopeful and positive identity for the dancers. What the Philosopher suspected, that "the ultimate end is gaiety and music and a dance of joy," comes to pass.

Notes to Chapter Three

1 Merivale notes that three brief tales, "The Death of Pan," "The Prayer of the Flowers," and "The Tomb of Pan" appeared in Fifty-One Tales (London: 1915). She suspects that they may be in part imitations of Turgenev's prose poems. "The Tomb of Pan" also appeared in the Irish Review in May 1913, pgs. 179-180.

2 This is the modern day site of the Megalithic tomb of Newgrange, on the shores of the Boyne river in County Meath.

3 I have not been able to discover the significance of the particular number "fourteen hundred" used by Stephens. It is the only time the number appears in the text.

4 Croker's two stories "The Field of Boliauns" and "The Little Shoe" include references to Leprecuans making shoes ("brogues") as their primary occupation. Keightley's story "Clever Tom and the Leprechaun" is substantially the same as Croker's "The Field of Boliauns." ("Boliaun" is an Irish word for "ragweed.")

5 Both Croker and Keightley's stories mentioned in the note above contain the motifs of greedy peasants and quick escape by Leprecauns.

6 Stephens here uses Blake's language in identifying the individual figures. Blake describes the three Britons as "the Strongest Man, the Beautifullest Man, and the

Ugliest Man" in "A Descriptive Catalogue" in David V. Erdman (ed), The Poetry and Prose of William Blake (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965) p.533

7 Both the nakedness and the bulk of the figures recall Blake's style. Stephens description of the figures of the Strongest Man and Ugliest Man in particular resemble Blake's drawings of Urizen in plates XVI and XVII in the First Book of Urizen (Keynes Edition).

Chapter Four

Stepping on Wonder

Within two years of the appearance of The Crock of Gold, James Stephens published The Demi-Gods, his second fantasy novel. This novel shares many of the stylistic and thematic characteristics of The Crock of Gold. The Demi-Gods explores the themes of the opposition between men and women in a war of the sexes, and the disruption caused by the single-minded pursuit of money. The novel contains much conversation between supernatural and human beings about the unity of being, and its action culminates in a the reuniting of old lovers and the inception of a new love between an angel and a young Irish girl. Stephens incorporates Kabbalistic and Theosophical ideas into the conversations and stories about love and greed which are told by both humans and angels.¹ Set in rural Ireland, the novel's action follows the wanderings of tinkers through the countryside and also extends to the cosmological heights of the heavenly universe, through the stories told by and about numerous angelic beings.

There is very little of the pure fantastic in The Demi-Gods. Following the initial encounter of the three angels with the tinkers, there are very few supernatural actions which cause astonishment on the part of any characters. The humans quickly come to terms with the presence of angels in their midst and the action continues as a simple and mundane series of normal human events. Judged on Todorov's scale

opposing the realistic to the marvelous, Stephens' novel does not develop any sustained hesitation about believing in the possible supernatural nature of events. Once the angels appear, the characters quickly accept their existence. This attitude, supported by the commentary of the narrator, quickly moves the novel into the genre of the marvelous. As this transition from the fantastic to the marvelous is made, Stephens uses narrative commentary to discuss the nature of astonishment and wonder, and the human capacity for accepting the marvelous. The narrator also engages in witty and humorous remarks about heavenly matters and beings, and about the human, and particularly Irish, propensity and capacity for wonder and belief in the marvelous.

The encounter of the human and the supernatural in The Demi-Gods is comic in a number of ways. Though they are by nature beings of a higher order, the angels are untrained in human ways and become the subjects of two tinkers, Patsy MacCann and his daughter Mary. Initially, the angels need instruction in such mundane topics as why it is better to eat cheese and bread rather than grass, and the pleasures of tobacco and strong drink. This humanization of angels is treated as a comic process and can be viewed as Stephens' "youthful laughter at the gods", or in this case "demi-gods".

In a wider comic sense, Stephens presents a story about the attaining of personal wisdom and harmony through spiritual development. Similar to his plan for The Crock of Gold, in which the various characters represented facets of the complete person, the characters in The Demi-Gods exist at different levels in a chain of being. Stephens does not hold to this plan rigorously, but it is clear that characters from the ass up to archangels are part of a process of development to higher stages. The angels act as "guardians" and counterparts to humans in the story, and the spiritual beings explain that their mission is to assist the humans on their journey to a full development of being. In the stories told by the angels, Stephens incorporates Theosophical and Kabbalistic thought about the development of phases of being. These stories mirror the two major themes of the work: the development of the relations between the sexes and the problems associated with greed. The humans are assisted by the angels, their spiritual counterparts or "guardians", in conquering their greed and accepting their opposite in love, thus creating a novel about the harmonious development of being. The novel ultimately takes the form of a "concord fiction", noted by Frank Kermode as one of forms of apocalyptic literature. (Kermode, 17)

Stephens organized the plot of The Demi-Gods as a deliberately simple series of actions. A couple of tinkers, Patsy MacCann and his daughter Mary, are visited one evening by three angels, whom they accept as traveling companions. Together, the group wanders about the Irish countryside, foraging for food, seeking shelter and encountering fellow adventurers, both human and supernatural. Stephens presents life in its simplest elements and bare essentials. The angels, though supernatural beings, have needs for nourishment and companionship similar to the humans. They eat the same food and engage in conversation ranging from the very mundane to the profoundly spiritual. The group makes a circuit of the west of Ireland, moving from abandoned shelter to open countryside and carefully avoiding towns and villages. The setting throughout remains pastoral and very simple. As the group travels, stories are told, understandings arrived at, conflicts arise and are solved, and new relationships are formed. The action becomes a kind of pilgrimage, attended by both supernatural and human pilgrims, whose goal is not a place but a state of mind and a new level of spiritual development.

The novel is divided into four books, named after four of the human characters. In Book I, "Patsy MacCann", three angels with Irish names of Finaun, Caeltia and Art, land near the encampment of Patsy and his daughter Mary and join

them in the night. After overcoming their initial astonishment at seeing angels, Patsy and Mary accept the angels as traveling companions and continue on their way (chs. 2-4). The remaining 7 chapters of Book I contain much commentary about the nature of Patsy and Mary's way of life, humorous parts about the angels learning human customs, narrative asides about social structure, and some observations about the similarities of the angels to their human counterparts.

Book II, "Eileen ni Cooley", is named for Patsy's contentious lover, who appears in its opening chapter. The group encounters Eileen and her male friend on a road and they seek shelter in an abandoned cottage from a gathering rainstorm. Eileen and Patsy resume their old argument, she claiming that he is "force" and he contending that she is "rebellious and adulterous". The external rainstorm mirrors the storm of emotions erupting in the Patsy-Eileen relationship. To calm the situation, the archangel Finaun tells his story of the eternal struggle of the contraries, which reflects the actual battle between Patsy and Eileen (ch xvi). Augustine Martin identifies this story as an adaptation of a creation story in Madame Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine (Martin, 77-78). Following this story, Eileen and Patsy make up, but Eileen sneaks away from the group in the night.

The Third Book, titled "Brien O'Brien", includes more encounters with strangers and supernatural creatures. First comes "Billy the Music," a greedy farmer turned wandering minstrel, who tells a biographical story of greed, oppression of his workers, his miraculous amassing of wealth, and eventual conversion to a simple, artistic way of life (ch. xx). Having given up farming, he wanders about Ireland peddling poems and singing songs. Included as characters in this story are Brien O'Brien, whom Billy calls a "spooky" type, and Billy's guardian angel Cuchulain, who has come to set Billy on the right path. Connected to this story is one told by Patsy's guardian angel, Caeltia, about the greed of Brien O'Brien and his upsetting of heaven over the loss of a three-penny piece (ch xxv). This story also refers to some of Madame Blavatsky's descriptions of creation (Martin 77-78). Book III concludes with a story by the angel Art about his encounter with Brien O'Brien when the latter was a "being of the fifth round" and his attempts to upset creation as a cosmic joke. In this story, Brien O'Brien is blasted out of heaven and demoted in status to the human level. These stories contain much of Stephens' laughter at the Theosophists and Kaballists, especially Yeats's acquaintance MacGregor Mathers, who considered himself a magician and is a model for Brien O'Brien in the cherub Art's story.

In Book IV, "Mary MacCann", the troupe is rejoined by Eileen ni Cooley, and then later by Brien O'Brien and the angel Cuchulain. Patsy attacks Brien O'Brien, both because the latter had stolen clothes from Patsy and Mary and because he had mistreated Eileen ni Cooley. Although both Art and Caeltia wish to fight with Brien, it is Patsy who finally does. During the struggle, Brien bumps into Patsy's donkey and disturbs his peace of mind. Settling an old score for his masters, the wise ass kills the dissembler Brien O'Brien with a kick to the head, then continues to graze contentedly. The three angels decide to bring their journey to a close and they prepare to depart. Mary talks Patsy into retrieving the angels' garments, which he had stolen and sold, and the troupe completes its circuit of Ireland. As the angels put on their wings for departure, Art, the youngest angel, decides to stay with his love, Mary. The ending is that of a romantic comedy, as Patsy and Eileen, having learned some wisdom from their guardian angels, decide to stay together, and Art and Mary begin a life together.

Though the novel contains multiple encounters with supernatural beings, there is little of the fantastic which takes place. The three angels which visit Patsy and Mary have come, as Finaun says towards the end of the journey, "to give help to the powers" (The Demi-Gods, 144). Patsy's

reply to him signals the less than fantastic nature of their actions: "I didn't see you doing much" (The Demi-Gods, 144). Exactly who or what the "powers" are is never explained, but their various stories suggest that they have come to the world of Patsy and Mary MacCann primarily for educational purposes: they assist the humans on their path of development. Such a purpose distinguishes the uses of the supernatural in The Demi-Gods from those in The Crock of Gold and in Dunsany's works. The greek god Pan comes to Ireland to renew the spirit of desire and to receive homage from the people, and the celtic god Angus Og returns to the land to form a new union with his people, who have forgotten him. Dunsany's nemesis gods make appearances with the clear purpose of putting an end to the ways of certain humans. Dunsany accentuates the differences of the human and the divine or supernatural in both the Nemesis plays and to a much lesser degree in The Blessing of Pan, although the latter, like The Demi-Gods, has the structure of a concord fiction.

Moreso than in The Crock of Gold, the supernatural beings in The Demi-Gods can be identified with particular human characters, as emanations of those characters in a different "round" of evolution, in Theosophical terms. Each of the central human characters has a guardian angel, who both physically resembles its human counterpart and exhibits

similar personality traits. The angels themselves represent different levels of angelic being, most likely arranged in accordance with the Kabbalistic system of MacGregor Mathers.²

Because of the ready acceptance of the supernatural by the characters, The Demi-Gods does not fit the dicta for the genre of "pure fantasy" espoused by Rabkin. Except for the description of the initial arrival of the angels in Book I, Stephens avoids sustained emphasis on the quality of astonishment which is central to Rabkin's theory. Once they have joined Patsy and Mary as fellow travelers, the angels appear as and act like normal humans.

The only substantial fantastic incident happens early in Book I of The Demi-Gods, in the initial meeting of Patsy and Mary with the angels. The wonder and astonishment of the humans is addressed by the narrator. The encounter begins with the reaction of the two at seeing angels. When the angels step from the darkness into the campfire light, the MacCanns are suitably shocked:

For an instant neither MacCann nor his daughter made a movement; they did not make a sound. Here was terror, and astonishment the sister of terror: they gaped: their whole being was in their eyes as they stared. From MacCann's throat came a noise; it had no grammatical significance, but it was weighted with all the sense that is in a dog's growl or a wolf's cry. (The Demi-Gods, 23)

At this point in the story, Stephens represents the angels as generally human in form, with the addition of wings and elaborate robes. The reaction of the MacCanns arises not just from being suddenly startled, but from seeing very strange beings. This incident exactly embodies Rabkin's theoretical criteria for the fantastic, that it overturn prevailing "ground rules". One doesn't see angels everyday. This key sign of the fantastic is indicated in the narrator's description of Patsy's reaction when Art, the youngest angel speaks to him: "At the sound of words Patsy seized hold of his sliding civilisation" (The Demi-Gods, 23). Stephens here uses the narrator to provide a transition to the world of the marvelous which ensues.

It is the mark of Stephens' human characters in this narrative world that they quickly resolve mysteries, or at least come to terms with them in a realistic sort of way. In this regard, the world of The Demi-Gods does not differ very much from that of The Crock of Gold. Stephens presents both Pan and Angus Og as characters whose encounter with humans is initially frightening and disturbing, but quickly evolves into a comfortable conversation in which wisdom and insight are shared. In The Demi-Gods the narrator theorizes about the experience and provides a unique Stephensian view of the kind of astonishment appropriate to fantasy:

the remarkable thing about astonishment is that it can only last for an instant. No person can be surprised for more than that time. You will come to terms with a ghost within two minutes of its appearance, and it had scarcely taken that time for MacCann and his daughter to become one with the visitors.

(The Demi-Gods, 25)

Stephens clearly chooses to avoid pursuing a description of the troublesome aspects of the human-supernatural encounter. This narrative strategy illustrates a clear difference between his fantasies and those of Dunsany. In both the *Nemesis* plays and The Blessing of Pan, Dunsany sustains the hesitation about belief in and acceptance of the supernatural throughout the narrative. The dire or happy consequences of the revelation of the supernatural happen at the end of the work. Stephens' characters "come to terms" with their astonishment in moments.

As to why the MacCanns accept the strange situation so easily, the narrator provides several explanations. The first is a "scientific" answer which provides a weak psychological rationale for the lack of continued astonishment. They are bored by the mystery of the incident: "but when he has given a name to any appearance then mystery flies away, and reality alone remains for his cogitation" (The Demi-Gods, 25). The second reason arises from the ethnic background of the MacCanns, who, being

Irish, have an openness to such an experience in their blood:

The MacCanns, so far as they professed a religion, were Catholics. Deeper than that they were Irish folk. From their cradles, if ever they had cradles other than a mother's breast and shoulder, they had supped on wonder. They believed as easily as an animal does, for most creatures are forced to credit everything long before they are able to prove anything. (The Demi-Gods, 25)

Stephens' tinkers are not largely different in their capacity for imagination from the tinkers and west-of-Ireland characters in the works of John Millington Synge.³ Even though they readily accept the angels as only briefly astonishing, the MacCanns are not at the same time presented as unrealistic characters. Stephens shows a realistic side to Patsy and Mary as they begin to examine their situation:

'Mind now,' he continued fiercely, 'we don't know who them fellows are at all, and what would the priest say if he heard we were stravaiging the country with three big, buck angels, and they full of tricks maybe? so go you now and be lifting in the things and I'll give you good help myself'... What call have we to be mixing ourselves up with holy angels that'll be killing us maybe in an hour or half an hour? and maybe they're not angels at all, but men that do be traveling the land in a circus and they full of fun and devilment?' (The Demi-Gods, 28-29)

Patsy's instinct moves him to consider self-preservation in the face of whatever supernatural power might be represented by the angels or temporal power by the local priest. Here Stephens presents a human practical concern taking precedence over and thus undercutting the importance of the supernatural. This sort of laughter continues in Book I when Patsy and Mary begin to instruct the angels in human ways.

The encounter of Billy the Music with Cuchulain the Seraph in Book III achieves a similar effect. The angel uses physical force to punctuate the declaration of his mission to aid Billy's moral reformation. Billy seems to accept Cuchulain's words at face value:

'But the other man calmed down a bit,
and he came over to me wagging the
girl's skirts.
'"Listen!" said he, "I'm the Seraph
Cuchulain."
'"Very good," said I.
'"I'm your Guardian Angel," said he.
'"Very good," said I.
'"I'm your Higher Self," said he, "and
every rotten businesss you do down here
does be vibrating against me up
there....Repent, you beast," said he,
and he landed me a clout on the side of
the head that rolled me from one end of
the barn to the other. (The Demi-Gods,
116)

Cuchulain's brute force methods are perhaps a wry reflection of his folkloric namesake, who was a ferocious warrior known for his great strength and athletic ability.

In addition to great physical force, Stephens endows Cuchulain with a persuasive power which comes from an internal or spiritual source. Billy's later comments on the influence of his words:

'The queer thing is that I believed every word the man said. I didn't know what he was talking about, but I did know that he was talking about something that was real although it was beyond me.... I took him at his word anyhow, and on the minute I began to feel a different creature, for, mind you, a man can no more go against his Guardian Angel than he can climb a tree backwards.' (The Demi-Gods, 117)

Billy's reaction to Cuchulain's words seems to be a simple and realistic acceptance of an irresistible power almost like a natural law. Stephens endows many of his human characters with this quality.

In depicting the experience of the adaptation of angels to corporeal life, Stephens uses light and humorous incidents. When the angels awake in the morning and experience hunger for the first time, they see the donkey grazing and attempt to imitate him. The seraph Caeltia becomes an angelic gourmet:

He picked up a fistful of grass and thrust some of it into his mouth, but after a moment of difficulty he removed it again.

'It is soft enough to eat,' he said musingly, 'but I do not care greatly for its taste' (The Demi-Gods, 36)

When the angels finally do eat more acceptable fare, they consume food which Patsy has stolen, and thus become minor accomplices in his transgression. Throughout the rest of the story, they willingly accept food, drink and tobacco stolen by Patsy, without ever acknowledging the moral improprieties involved in their actions. In this aspect of their behavior, Stephens' angels exhibit more human weakness of the flesh than spiritual strength.

When the angels are identified by name, in Chapter xii of Book I, Stephens again indulges in light humor at the expense of a serious attitude towards heavenly matters. Here the narrator makes unabashed claims about the appropriateness of their particularly Irish identity by invoking the authority of a "Saint":

It may be surprising to learn that the names of the angels were Irish names, but more than eight hundred years ago a famous Saint informed the world that the language spoken in heaven was Gaelic, and, presumably, he had information on the point. He was not an Irishman, and he had no reason to exalt Fodhla above the other nations of the earth, and, therefore, his statement may be accepted on its merits, the more particularly as no other saint has denied it, and every Irish person is prepared to credit it.
(The Demi-Gods, 59)

The whimsical arguments by the narrator convey a questionable theological status on Irish folklore. This

laughter may also be directed at Mathers' and Blavatsky's writings, which make substantial explanations of heavenly orders of beings and esoteric languages of creation.⁴ By extension, those who joined in the circle of devotees and disciples of these religious views, like Yeats and AE, also could be included as objects of laughter.

Stephens continues laughter in this vein in Book II, when Finaun tells his story of creation. At the finish of the tale MacCann admits that he slept through the telling, and Mary says she didn't listen because she was "thinking of other things at the time" (DG.84). Only Eileen understood it, but admits she "would not know how to tell what it was about" (DG, 84). The humans either don't listen to what heavenly beings say, or can't explain what they have heard. Such reactions undercut the importance of the angelic tales.

Other instances of the comic confrontation of the human with the supernatural can be seen in the series of stories told about the Brien O'Brien. This character first appears in Book III, in the story told by Billy the Music. Billy identifies him as a companion of the seraph Cuchulain, who is Billy's guardian angel, and who apparently suffers from the same tendency towards greed as Billy does. Cuchulain, a famous warrior hero in the folk legends of Ulster known for his ferocity in battle, doesn't escape comic treatment either, as he shows up at Billy's farm attired in a dress

stolen from Mary MacCann. How Brien, a vicious and stubborn type, came to be linked with Cuchulain is related in stories by Caeltia and Art. In each of these stories, Brien succeeds in disrupting heavenly affairs, to the point that he must be thrown out. In Book III, Chapter xxv, Caeltia relates how Billy takes a 3 penny piece with him to heaven, is judged by Rhadamanthus, drops his coin on the way to hell, and raises a cry in hell to get it back. Brien makes so much noise that he disturbs all of hell and heaven, prompting Rhadamanthus to hurl him back to earth, accompanied by Cuchulain, who has picked up the coin and won't release it.

The cherub Art's story, in the following chapter, tells of an earlier time when Brien O'Brien was a magician, a being of a higher round of evolution than humans, and attempted to disrupt the process of creation. Stephens derives this story from the "Cosmogogenesis" section on creation in Madame Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine. Brien O'Brien attempts to perpetrate a cosmic joke by interrupting the creation process and intoning the second holy syllable out of order. When Brien's protective encirclement of kabbalistic triangles breaks down, he is blasted out of heaven and back to earth. Stephens evidently modeled the cosmic magician-humorist after MacGregor Mathers.⁵ This story has little connection with the events of the rest of

the novel and is the most obscure of the tales told by angels.

Brien O'Brien, whom Augustine Martin calls the "cosmic buffoon" of the novel, undergoes a third change in his cosmic status at the instigation of MacCann's ass. In Book Four, Chapter 30, the ass kicks Brien in the head for disturbing his meditation. Stephens presents this as a cosmic event engineered by a lower being upon a superior one: "The donkey had again related the infinity without to the eternity within, and his little hoofs were as peaceful as his mild eye" (The Demi-Gods, 155).

The comic interplay between the human and the supernatural, in the Brien O'Brien stories, and in the encounters of the MacCanns with the angels, represent a more persistent and extended laughter than Stephens gives his readers in The Crock of Gold. The supernatural figures in The Demi-Gods are often more observers than actors in the action of the novel. Though they have a function of imparting knowledge to their human counterparts through their stories, the angels are often ignored or not understood by them.

The deliberate underplaying of the fantastic behaviour of the supernatural beings in this novel serves to emphasize the work as a moral fable. The effects of the angels' visit are subtle and internal. Patsy decides to reform his

behavior by returning the angels robes, which he had sold. The relationship between Fatsy and Eileen is healed and the two become more tolerant and loving towards each other. The cherub Art decides to abandon his angelic life to stay in human form and become a partner to Mary in a life of poetry and song on the road.

An assessment of Stephens' use of the supernatural in this novel shows that there is a deliberate underplaying of the fantastic elements in order to emphasize the more subtle spiritual function of the angels. The effect of the visit of the angels is the creation of more harmonic relationship between male and female and the reformation certain characters' greed. Both of these effects are changes to the internal emotional and spiritual world of the characters. Stephens' novel describes little effect on the external physical world, differing substantially from the fantasies of Dunsany, which end in the destruction of a city (The Laughter of the Gods), or in physical transformation of a village (The Blessing of Pan).

The overall presentation of the angels is consistently comic, both in the gentle laughter at the Theosophical and Kabbalistic elements of thought, and in the humanizing of supernatural creatures. The final state of harmony between the sexes also makes the work a romantic comedy, and similar in this respect to The Crock of Gold.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Stephens used S.L. MacGregor Mathers' The Kabbalah Unveiled and H.P. Blavatsky's The Secret Doctrine as source material for the stories told by the seraph Caeltia and the cherub Art in Book chs. 25 and 27.

2. Mathers, in The Kabbalah Unveiled, provides a chart "showing the relations of the Sephiroth with the Four Worlds." BRIAHA, the ten archangels, none of whom are named Finaun, represent the creative world, and YETZIRAH, the ten orders of angels, containing both Seraphs and Kerubim, represent the formative world. Nowhere does Mathers represent "guardian" angels. Stephens thus mixes Christian and Kabbalistic systems in calling his angels guardians.

3. Synge's characters in The Playboy of the Western World readily accept and even embellish the claims of Christy Mahon. They find stories of outrageous behaviour more acceptable than ordinary tales.

4. Blavatsky writes about the "Army of the Voice" and of mysterious syllables of creation in The Secret Doctrine. Mathers includes numerous Hebrew and Chaldean names in The Kabbalah Unveiled.

5. A recent exhibit of "Yeats and His Circle" contained a poster depicting MacGregor Mathers in magician's robes and surrounded by kabbalistic triangles and designs.

The exhibit toured the U.S.A. in 1989 and was sponsored by the Irish Minister for Cultural Affairs.

Chapter Five
A New Arcadia

In The Blessing of Pan, Lord Dunsany constructs a novel with an apocalyptic return of gods different from that in his Nemesis plays. This novel portrays the creation of an Arcadia, a pastoral utopia in the British countryside, effected by the return of the god Pan. The Blessing of Pan more closely resembles the comic apocalyptic fictions of James Stephens, insofar as Dunsany's novel presents the god Pan returning as a positive, life-giving friend to the inhabitants of a small village. Largely ignored by critics, The Blessing of Pan represents some of Dunsany's best fantasy fiction. It is notable as a multifaceted comic work, and is one the most complete expressions of apocalyptic vision in his writing.

Examined as a fantasy, this novel fits cleanly and simply into the category as described by Irwin and Rabkin. Dunsany's plot plays Irwin's "Game of the Impossible" as it presents the gradual discovery of a series of events which a normal 20th-century person would consider impossible. The vicar Elderick Anwrel, who throughout most of the novel opposes the influence of Pan, is continually astonished at his discoveries of the presence of the god. As he attempts to stop Pan's encroachment into his parish, Anwrel is ignored by his fellow churchmen, loses heart and finally gives in to Pan's call to join the villagers in a simplified way of life apart from the modern world.

The central supernatural figure in this novel, Pan, is the same that James Stephens uses in The Crock of Gold. Like Stephens, Dunsany utilizes several attributes from the common folkloric tradition of Pan. In particular, he uses motifs of the music and pipes of Pan as well as the physical attributes of the god's part-goat, part-human form. He also represents Pan's seductive power to elicit desire, but in a way that is less explicitly sexual than Stephens'. In The Blessing of Pan, Dunsany uses the influence of Pan's powerful music to prompt the villagers to a return to a self-sufficient way of life based on harmony with nature. The action of returning to nature and primitive, agrarian ways, makes this novel both an escape from and a criticism of the modern age of steel, which Dunsany envisions as having "machinery with teeth and claws of steel getting its grip on the earth" (The Blessing of Pan, 212).

Dunsany presents the supernatural in this novel as a subtle, quiet force which he often expresses metaphorically as a "wildness" in nature. Instead of depicting the god physically, the narration recounts the ways he influences the behavior of the villagers and leads them to abandon their orderly habits and their traditional religion. The power of Pan works to bring man and nature together in a new union. Dunsany gives a vision of this new unity, a kind of pastoral symphony, in the final chapter,

"The Return of the Wild," which describes a village life self-sufficient and separated from modern society.

Dunsany's treatment of character in The Blessing of Pan achieves a depth of psychological realism not seen in the Nemesis plays. The action follows the central figure, the vicar Anwrel, as he attempts to combat the influence of the god Pan over the parishoners in the village of Wolding. The unsuccessful attempts by Anwrel to notify proper authorities, while Pan's influence steadily grows, heighten the tension and increase Anwrel's fear and anxiety. He is the only person to perceive the full implications of the change in the villagers and becomes increasingly isolated in his efforts to combat Pan's work. For the vicar, the issue becomes the loss of Christian influence and the way of life it engenders. In his isolation, he finally chooses to join the return to primitive ways and the new cult of Pan.

Dunsany presents a variety of responses to the supernatural throughout the novel. Besides Anwrel, who maintains a sense of astonishment at the presence of Pan, other characters react incredulously or with calm acceptance of the supernatural. Dunsany depicts most of the villagers reacting in a dreamy, trance-like state to the call of the music. Anwrel is the only one to question the nature and purpose of the experience. Others, outside the village,

treat the vicar's suspicions as the result of overwork, or exaggeration.

Even moreso than in the Nemesis plays, Dunsany hides the supernatural from view, presenting Pan only through his influence on individual human characters. The subtlety of this approach increases the sense of mystery surrounding the supernatural and adds to the humorous effect. For example, when Anwrel makes his appeal to his Bishop for help, he never actually mentions the name of Pan, as if to say his name would be a sign of madness or irrationality. Leaving the name of Pan unspoken also adds to the conspiratorial air among the inhabitants of Wolding, as increasing numbers are quietly gathered into the new cult. The parishoners react with quiet wonder at the influence of Pan, whereas Anwrel, the only character who sees the full implications of Pan's presence, remains astonished and fearful of the pagan influence.

The action of the novel fits the pattern of a fantastic fiction as described by modern theorists like Todorov and Rabkin. Dunsany presents a simple and clear action in the attempts of the vicar Elderick Anwrel to identify and oppose the influence of a supernatural force in his village. The opening chapter presents an apparently harmless domestic situation into which the awareness of the supernatural has intruded in a troublesome manner. In the

opening lines, Dunsany uses the image of a "blow-fly" suspended in air to suggest both the invisible power at work in Wolding and the troubled thoughts beneath the calm exterior of the vicar:

A blow-fly poised upon the summer air, that
burned the may but scarce brought out the
rose, was maintaining his perfect stillness
by a whirl of wing-beats too swift for a
brain to calculate or even an eye to see...
(The Blessing of Pan, 3)

Like the blowfly, Anwrel remains motionless, undecided about sending a letter to his bishop alerting him of his suspicions about the effects of mysterious music on his parishoners. Dunsany's blow-fly image is a good illustration of the kind of "hesitation" of the character before a supernatural event which Todorov cites as essential to the fantastic (Todorov, 25). The letter presents the first evidence of the supernatural, in the vicar's description of the strange behaviour of young girls:

I heard the notes piercingly clear, but could not see the player. And then I saw two or three girls together going up a little path, a kind of track that leads away from the village and goes over Wold Hill....I do not know how to express it, but they turned at once, as soon as they saw me, almost as wild things might, and went deliberately away to the woods....But oh, my lord, believe me when I say that that tune is no common melody, but is something I never have known to come out of music, and has some power I never dreamed to be possible. (The Blessing of Pan, 7)

The vicar's response to the music meets the criteria cited by Rabkin as a sign of the fantastic, the appearance of an apparent impossibility, an event which contradicts the "ground rules" of the world Anwrel knows (The Fantastic in Literature, 8). Inasmuch as he both saw its effects and felt its power, the vicar verifies the existence of Pan's music and shows his own vulnerability to it.

Once the presence of the supernatural is established, The Blessing of Pan moves out of the genre of the pure fantastic as described by Todorov. For a work to remain fantastic, Todorov argues, there must be sustained ambiguity about the nature of the experience, meaning that the reader and character both waver about the possible rational explanation of the event (The Fantastic, 39). In The Blessing of Pan, the vicar believes that from the beginning that Pan's influence is real; the action follows his continual discoveries of evidence of Pan's presence and his attempts to thwart his influence. Dunsany's narration does not present any ironic point of view to suggest that the vicar's experience should be disbelieved or mistrusted; the reader, thus, would share the same attitudes towards the reality presented. In Todorov's categories, this would be a work primarily located in the genre of the marvelous, in which the supernatural is openly acknowledged.

Dunsany's wry humor also penetrates the first episode and signals a kind of response to the supernatural repeated throughout the novel. When the vicar gives the letter to his wife Augusta to read, her response ignores and undercuts the emotion and danger perceived by Anwrel: "You split the infinitive, dear, when you said 'to partially suppress'...the Bishop might not like it." (The Blessing of Pan, 8). Augusta never says whether she believes in her husband's suspicions or thinks he is slightly daffy.

The discovery of the supernatural also follows Irwin's format for the game played in fantasy fiction, the turning of the impossible into fact. Dunsany uses a series of discoveries made by Anwrel to substantiate slowly the identity of the god Pan, and build a more convincing belief in the mind of Anwrel. The vicar first identifies the young man, Tommy Duffin, the player of the music, and later sees the reed pipes (ch. 3). The vicar registers astonishment when the boy takes them from his pocket: "For a wild fancy unbidden was crossing the vicar's mind, saying against all reason, 'The very pipes of Pan'" (The Blessing of Pan, 24). Dunsany sustains the sense of astonishment in his character through his recognition that the experience is a "wild fancy" come true.

An old woman's memories of the visit of a substitute vicar adds to the evidence gathered by Anwrel.

The woman's tale of Rev. Arthur Davidson's double jointed ankles and his strange dancing further astonish the vicar and confirm his suspicions that the goat-god's influence is present:

'He wore spats, sir,' said Mrs. Tichner.

"Yes," said the vicar. 'I believe I heard he did.'

"And he had a joint, sir, below his spats as he danced."

"Good gracious," said the vicar, awed by her tone. "His ankle of course."

"Yes, sir," she said. "And he had another just above."

That was her moment of triumph: he had brought no stories like that back from Brighton... He had expected the curious events of today to have strange roots back in the past. He had looked for an odd tale from Mrs. Tichener; but not for this! (The Blessing of Pan, 68-69)

This passage also exemplifies Dunsany's quiet humor. In contrast to the presentation of Pan in Stephens' The Crock of Gold, in which the god appears in a naked form playing his pipes to Caitilin, Dunsany's Pan shows up dressed in clerical garb and spats, dancing in a garden.

Dunsany later unites the motifs of music and dancing by connecting them to the renewal of ancient ritual. As he used the music of Gog-Owza in The Laughter of the Gods, Dunsany uses the music of Pan to signal the presence of the supernatural. In a chapter titled "They Dance to the Pipes", the young people follow Tommy Duffin to the "Old Stones of Wolding" and dance to his music. Dunsany's slow

rhythmic prose describes the action as a return to a primitive, ancestral ways:

And, as the tune drew gradually down the ages the ritual to which the Old Stones were accustomed once, wilder dances and stranger rites came back to that valley after so long a while, for the music disturbed the heavy sleep of oblivion that history could not stir. So there danced about those old, remembering stones, this way and that way as the strange music swept them, like fallen leaves on varying gusts of wind, Willie Latten and all his men who had thought to break the pipes with a twist of the hand; and with them went the girls they had planned to free; for there was in the pipes a power that drew to the Old Stones, as in Summer the North draws swallows. (The Blessing of Pan, 114)

In this passage one also sees how Dunsany avoids discussion of any particular personal human desire or emotion in relation to the power of Pan. Dunsany accounts for their actions by reference to instinctual movements in nature and ancient ways. The Blessing of Pan's "pantheism" doesn't concentrate on the effects of desire on any individual, but rather on the collective actions and ritualistic behaviour of a group of people. The tone of the narration conveys a kind of nostalgia for ancient, forgotten ways.

Dunsany expands the connection of the god Pan with ancient pagan ways through references to religious and anthropological lore. Early in the novel, when the vicar Anwrel visits the city of Snichester to see his bishop, he first stops at the cathedral and views a window depicting

the actions of St. Ethelbruda. By use of this window, Dunsany adds a kind of folkloric authenticity to the suspicions of Anwrel. The vicar sees the Saint engaged in a combat similar to his own: "He saw a small window showing St. Ethelbruda, beating away the last of the pagans with a branch or a bunch of leaves" (The Blessing of Pan, 81). Rather than receive encouragement from such iconography, the vicar becomes depressed, feeling that his story would be perceived as outlandish:

He looked again at St. Ethelbruda in her gay dress beating the pagan; then to the gloom of the pillars; and nowhere could he find any support for the tale he had to tell...It seemed to have all been decided, once for all and long ago, in ritual, in glass and in stone, that this story of his was wrong. (The Blessing of Pan, 81)

Dunsany most likely borrowed the identity of his fictional St. Ethelbruda from that of a real St. Ethelburga, who died c. 647. This woman, the daughter of King Ethelbert of Kent, had married King Edwin of Northumbria, a pagan, and had persuaded him to become a Christian. After his death, paganism returned, and she was forced to return to Kent and later founded an abbey at Lyminge (Delaney, 202). In The Blessing of Pan the legendary St. Ethelbruda likewise has no power to stop the return of paganism to the village of Wolding. Her modern defeat by the god Pan is one of Dunsany's comic touches in the novel. Anwrel realizes (in ch. XXIV, "The Defection of St. Ethelbruda") that St.

Ethelbruda has lost her power to aid him when he visits her shrine in the forest and discovers from a villager that she no longer has the power to cure warts.

Dunsany also provides several anthropological motifs which add an air of modern authenticity to the novel. The use of the "Old Stones of Wolding" recall the many neolithic sites like Stonehenge and Newgrange which dot the British isles. The vicar Anwrel's interest in aeoliths, ancient stone artefacts, provides a convenient means to explain his decision to join Pan at the end of the novel. Anwrel even uses an ancient stone axe-head to sacrifice a bull in Ch. XXXIII.

The opposition of the Christian and the pagan powers in The Blessing of Pan provide rich comparisons to The Crock of Gold. Anwrel sets out to enlist the aid of Christian help to combat Pan, in an action similar to that of the philosopher seeking the aid of the celtic god Angus Og to oust Pan from the Irish countryside. In Dunsany's novel, however, Pan does not appear as an outsider, since he is associated with a pre-Christian era in the ritual sacrifices at the Stones of Wolding. Stephens presents the full bodied Pan in conversation with the philosopher, whereas Dunsany presents Pan only through humans whom he has influenced. Pan's association with music, dance and fertility is common to both novels.

A final comparison is the conversion of Anwrel. He finally abandons his Christian ways and joins with the Pan-worshippers, becoming their minister and offering sacrifices at the Old Stones of Wolding. In The Crock of Gold, the Philosopher needed no conversion, since he had always been on the side of Angus Og and the Irish gods, and had worked actively to oust Pan. After his visit to Angus Og, the Philosopher serves the god by delivering his prophecies to various people he meets. As does the Philosopher, Anwrel eventually joins in a dance as an expression of the new unity. The general theme of a return to "old ways", signified in music and dance is common to both novels.

The laughter in The Blessing of Pan operates on several levels. Dunsany satirizes the lack of imagination of the authority figures of the church in their inability and unwillingness to believe in the return of the pagan god that the vicar Elderick Anwrel has discovered. Dunsany's wry humor is evident in the various responses to Anwrel's polite appeals to ecclesiastical authorities. Another object of laughter and comic treatment is the fictional "Saint Ethelbruda", who is presented as a patron saint of the valley of Wolding and functions as a kind of local champion to whom Anwrel appeals. Her failure to respond to Anwrel's need signals a loss of power of the

Christian faith. Still another form of laughter is revealed in the character of Perkin and his concept of "illusions". His theory that all religions are necessary "illusions" echoes the cosmic laughter which Dunsany expressed in the *Nemesis* plays.

Dunsany satirizes the lack of imagination and limited vision of church authorities in several episodes of the novel. When Anwrel first notifies his Bishop of his suspicions (Ch.I), the Bishop seems to have missed the point. He sends back a response suggesting that Anwrel is overworked and that he take a vacation in the seaside resort of Brighton (Ch. IV, "The Air of Brighton"). Later, Anwrel discovers that the Bishop had sent a classical scholar, Hetley, to replace him during his fortnight away, and Anwrel takes hope that Hetley can verify his suspicions. In Ch. XX, "What Hetley Heard", Anwrel visits Hetley, only to discover that he is nearly deaf and could not hear Pan's music. When Anwrel tells Hetley of the strange influence which "is turning my poor folk to the most heathen fancies" (The Blessing of Pan, 151), Heltley's reply is shortsighted. He suggests that Anwrel teach his people cricket: "I had thought that the pulpit was my one strong place from which to attack sin, I now found a more impregnable place on the cricket-field" (The Blessing of Pan, 151-152). And when Anwrel finally speaks with his Bishop, (Ch. XXII), he

discovers that the Bishop cannot understand the nature of Anwrel's trouble. The Bishop inquires about Anwrel's leisure time, and asks him about wildflowers, eoliths and chess openings, but not about heathen practices. Anwrel's problem, seen from the point of view of church authorities, is that he is somehow leading an unbalanced life and needs to practice proper diversions to keep his imagination in check.

Dunsany also represents the battle for the village of Wolding on the supernatural level with the opposition of the fictional St. Ethelbruda to Pan. This country saint represented in the Snichester Cathedral windows (Ch. IX), who once chased the pagans away, has little power to stop the influence of Pan. The local villagers stop visiting her statue and shrine in the country when she suddenly loses her power to cure warts (CH. XXIV). Dunsany gives a second view of St. Ethelbruda's defeat in the tale of a visit to heaven recounted by Perkin (Ch. XXXI). In this brief tale, slightly reminiscent of the heavenly stories of Book III of The Demi-Gods, Perkin tells of the angels "playing at jealousy" of St. Ethelbruda because of her power:

For, you know, she does work miracles; and they had been holy for ages before she was heard of, yet they've never been able to do a half of what she can. Not a half of it. (The Blessing of Pan, 238-239)

Perhaps because the powers of a wart-curing saint seem too slight for an angel to be jealous of, Dunsany dispatches meek St. Ethelbruda with a breath of wind. Perkin tells of her defeat as an event of minor consequence in the heavenly regions:

And then as they played, as in my opinion they had been playing for ages (the same game all that time), the wind suddenly ceased. Not a puff to make them remember, not a breath to try in vain to trouble the apple-blossoms. And the angels sat still as wild roses under their harvest moons, with nothing whatever to play at.

I knew what that was. She's beaten, I said. She can't work miracles any more, and there's not enough left to make jealousy even in play. Who's beat her, I said? Why, that goat-legged fellow you were speaking of, who was here before her time. (The Blessing of Pan, 238)

Perkin's slightly irreverent tone in referring to the god Pan as a "goat legged fellow" recalls the remark made by Stephens' character Meehawl MacMurrachu about the Irish god Angus Og being a "devil you know" (The Crock of Gold, 53). Both remarks serve the comic purpose of reducing the importance of the gods.

Dunsany uses Perkin to function as a cosmic guide for Anwrel. He is the first person outside the village who verifies the experience of the supernatural undergone by Anwrel. In the St. Ethelbruda episode, Perkin has access to the supernatural realm, although there is little explanation in the text about the origin of his powers. He first

appears in Ch. XXIII as a character whom normal society considers mad, but to whom Anwrel turns for help as a last resort. Perkin offers Anwrel a theory of "illusions" as a way to understand and accept the impossibility of the coming of Pan. Perkin's views express a laughter at the futility of human endeavor which is similar in tone to the laughter of the gods in the Nemesis plays. Perkin's laughter also signals his own loss of faith in the traditional structures of society and religion:

I tell you. I saw the mayor in all his robes one day. I just laughed at it all. I saw tall silk hats and laughed again: I do to this day. And I saw the cathedral with its coloured windows, and I laughed at that too. The illusion went out of everything. (The Blessing of Pan, 169)

Dunsany uses this character to aid Anwrel in eventually accepting the new reality of Pan's influence. Perkin advises the vicar to hold on to his "illusions", here meaning traditional religion, in the hope that Anwrel's "illusions are strong enough to keep him out" (The Blessing of Pan, 172). But if Pan is stronger, Perkin advises Anwrel not to fight because

Pan was always friendly to Man. That's you and me you know. We may have changed a lot this last two thousand years; but that's you and me still. Why, I'd let him come nosing in. (The Blessing of Pan, 172)

Perkin's rather casual manner of referring to Pan and the significance of his visit underlines the theme indicated in

the novel's title, that Pan's return is a "Blessing". Friendliness and harmony characterize the Arcadia which Pan revives in Wolding. The conversation with Perkin aids Anwrel to accept and participate in the new Arcadia.

Dunsany signals the establishment of an Arcadia through deescription of the abandonment of the ordered, regular ways of the village of Wolding for a less regulated, more primitive pattern of existence. This change is depicted consistently through a series of images of the return of "wild things." The primary agent of this change is the power of the music played by Tommy Duffin.

In chapters XI thru XVI, Dunsany details the gradual luring away of the villagers by Tommy and his pipes. The music evokes a desire to return to "old ways", a theme Dunsany has written of earlier in The Gods of the Mountain. Tommy Duffin recognizes a sense of mystery and rebelliousness in the music:

Yet no boast seemed too great for that wonderful music that could answer the riddles of night, and hush the mysteries that lurked upon darkening hills, and seemed to beckon the spirit of man to stray from the paths it knew. (The Blessing of Pan, 89)

The temptation to "stray" from known paths can be read as a form of escape from modern, civilized ways. The idea is prevalent in Dunsany's early work, for example, The Dreamer's Tales and The Laughter of the Gods, but has a

specific meaning here of returning to a more primitive lifestyle.

When the young people follow Tommy, they respond with a sense of wonder evoked by the music. In Ch. XV, "The Old Stones", Dunsany describes what they hear in the music as a combination of naturalistic and magical sounds:

It was not strange that they followed; for the new tune that Tommy Duffin was playing was the march of the things of the wild. There were calls in it that are known to birds that migrate, which their leaders utter at the turn of the wind that shall carry them on their journey; there were notes that were taken from the quavering ending of howls that have summoned packs; there were notes of earthly trumpets and, following after, clear answers from elfin horns. All manner of tides of life had moved to the notes of that music; it was no wonder they followed. (The Blessing of Pan, 109)

The music as described here has a double lure of romance and naturalistic instinct. The notes of "elfin horns" are a call from the realm of imagination and fancy, and the "calls" and "howls" of animals indicate an instinctual, primitive yearning.

In Ch. XV, "The March of the Old Folk", the music rejuvenates the older villagers and they begin to follow the young through the wood to the Old Stones. Dunsany depicts this action through the eyes of the vicar, who remains in the village. Anwrel also experiences the lure of the music but feels a tension, as he is both drawn to join in the march and held back by his sense of duty:

The sound of footsteps was fading, and a stillness settling over all the village, through which the notes of that music drifted yet. The sound seemed to turn to the right and go up the hill, and still the vicar stood listening. Why not go, too? Why not go over the hill to the grey old stones, and hear that golden music beat against their ancient silence? There would be no perplexities amongst their calm, no weariness in the hold of that splendid music. (The Blessing of Pan, 127)

The vicar finds that he is finally powerless to stop the influence of the music and keep hold of his parishoners. He, too, is drawn to the Old Stones to join them.

Dunsany presents Anwrel's decision to go to the Old Stones as prompted by ancestral memory welling up through his subconscious. Alone in his home at night, Anwrel looks at a palaeolithic flint and wonders:

What should he do? What did the great flint want? Perhaps the Old Stones knew. He must go to the Old Stones.

He would take the palaeolith. How carry it? Queer memories came to the tired mind from the flint, that a mind not frayed now by anxieties would never have felt at all, queer memories of how the old axe liked to be carried. (The Blessing of Pan, 250)

The question of how the "old axe" should be carried is answered in the penultimate chapter, "The Blood on the Stone", when Anwrel sacrifices a bull before his gathered flock and in the shadowy presence of the god Pan.

Dunsany remains consistent in his presentation of the supernatural in the final chapters when he depicts the god Pan hovering over the villagers at the Old Stones. He

avoids the "broad, crowded roads" of the supernatural and presents Pan subtly, as a ghostlike figure who nearly merges with the natural background. Only an old woman thinks she recognizes the figure:

And some say they saw a dark shape larger than man's, in the wood a little above them, playing this music of which the hills and the woods seemed made, and some could not pick it out from the dusk and the branches of trees. But Mrs. Thichener, whose eyes had got queer of late, but who could see better and better the further away things were, called out "It's that there Reverend Davidson." (The Blessing of Pan, 256-57)

Dunsany here identifies Pan with the natural surroundings, as a god who animates nature.

Dunsany uses the final chapter, "The Return of the Wild", to describe in broad terms, the new way of life in Pan's Arcadia. Images of wild nature returning are central to his slow-paced rhythmic description of the changes in Wolding:

But birches slipped every year from the edges of woods, and began to grow, at first like fairy children that you barely saw unless you were looking for magic. Then a few years went by, and there they were standing at the end of a field, with a silvery light on their leaves enchanting the green, and holding that part of the field for what was there before plough-shares. And in a little while you must have seen, had you strayed at all in those fields, that there was a certain neighbourliness permitted to any wild sapling, that showed that no industrious farmers dwelt there. (The Blessing of Pan, 265-66)

Dunsany paints a picture of self-sufficient, harmonic life in Wolding. The people have simple, primitive rites of marriage and burial (Mrs. Airland is buried in the "trunk of a hollow tree"), and the children learn crafts like "snaring", "jam-making" and "soaking and cleaning rabbit-skins" (The Blessing of Pan, 274). Wolding is both avoided and ignored by the modern world and achieves a quiet escape into the past. The narration signals a return to a fairy-tale existence, a "Once Upon a Time" setting:

So the world came our way, t'wards the things that we know today, while Wolding seemed to go by a path of its own, back and back to times that one thought were done with for ever. (The Blessing of Pan, 270)

With its orientation to the past and to a simpler way of life the new Arcadia of Wolding looks for a fullness of time, not in the progress of the future, but in a nostalgic return to a close union with the natural rhythms of life.

The coherent vision of a new world in The Blessing of Pan represents one of Dunsany's most complete imaginative apocalypses. He equates the return of the god Pan with a return to simple values and practices, to an age which is a "fullness of time" in Kermode's terms. In its opposition to, and escape from the complications and weariness of "tired shopkeepers," The Blessing of Pan also meets Kermode's criteria for a modern apocalypse, one which attempts to address some crisis in modern existence (The

Sense of an Ending, 94). In The Blessing of Pan, the crisis comes in the form of a call to lead a less complicated way of life. And though he might be accused of escaping from the modern world, Dunsany has a quiet laugh at the unimaginative and those who cannot hear the rhythm of the wild in Pan's music. For life in the new Wolding is life without cricket.

Conclusions

In assessing the connections between the works of Lord Dunsany and James Stephens examined in this study, there is to be found a basic thematic common ground from which each author emerges to construct remarkably different fantasies. The essential commonality lies in the apocalyptic nature of their works. Each of the plays or novels has a basic action of a god or supernatural being coming to earth to either establish or renew a relationship with humanity. Each work also includes some element of what James Stephens called "youthful laughter at the gods", a human vision of the supernatural. The varieties of laughter incorporated in these novels and plays extend, however, beyond just the "youthful" type which Stephens noted in his 1910 letter to Dunsany. There is laughter at society and at certain contemporary figures, and there is laughter by gods at humans.

Stephens' gods, in The Crock of Gold and The Demi-Gods attempt to reunify the human and divine, and they express a happy laughter. The nemesis gods of Dunsany's plays are a vengeful sort and their laughter mocks human efforts. Implicit in these forms of laughter are divergent ways of representing the supernatural, and consequently, modes of writing fantasy literature.

Stephens' happy laughter arises from situations in which supernatural beings and humans encounter one another

face to face in realistic and ordinary settings. Stephens' gods, like Pan and Angus Og are visible, represented physically, and vocal, and they strive to engender a greater spiritual unity with their human neighbors. Some of these gods are drawn from popular folklore and are often not complete strangers to the Irish people they meet. The leprecauns of Gort na Cloca Mora and the women of the Shee co-exist with and often pester humans in the marvelous world of The Crock of Gold. Others, such as the angels of The Demi-Gods, are physical and spiritual counterparts of the human characters. Stephens' fantasies are essentially marvelous works, in which the humans fully accept the presence of supernatural beings, and all beings live together in the pastoral countryside of Ireland.

The vision of unity expressed in both of Stephens' novels, borrowed in part from Blakean and Theosophical ideas, supports the fictive construction of a marvelous world. The supernatural characters articulate central ideas about the development of the whole person and the achievement of harmony between the sexes. Angus Og declares that he is "Divine Imagination" and says he has come to unite the "Head and the Heart." The archangel Finaun tells a story incorporating Theosophical ideas about the fall and overcoming the enmity between the sexes. Stephens' apocalyptic vision culminates in in romantic unity in each

of his novels, as the god Angus Og chooses the maiden Caitilin as a bride and the cherub Art gives up his heavenly existence to live a life of song and poetry with Mary MacCann.

In creating of a fictive world in which Irish gods and folkloric characters walk and talk side by side with humans Stephens has become forerunner of other Irish comic fantasist. Most notable among these is Flann O'Brien (Brian O'Nolan), who created comic conversations between folkloric characters and modern ones in his novels At Swim-Two-Birds (1939) and The Dalkey Archive (1966). O'Brien expresses laughter at both folkloric characters and his contemporaries. Whereas Stephens submits Yeats, Lady Gregory and AE comic treatment in The Crock of Gold, O'Brien laughs at James Joyce in The Dalkey Archive. The legacy of Stephens in modern Irish fantasy literature is worthy of further study beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Dunsany's approach to representing the supernatural takes a different direction altogether. He keeps his gods hidden and remote. In the Nemesis plays, the gods return from a legendary past to assert their power and take vengeance on unbelieving humans. In The Blessing of Pan, the god returns to the modern world to establish a new arcadia and return an entire village to a simple, natural existence. Both the plays and the novel studied here

represent an escape from the commerce and politics of modern society. In this, Dunsany and Stephens are alike. The pastoral world of both of Stephens' novels exists on the fringes of the modern world, and its characters keep clear of the modern cities. The settings for Dunsany's nemesis plays are escapes to a pure fantasy world in vague legendary times. The new Arcadia in The Blessing of Pan also is folded back in time to a more simple age out of contact with the modern world.

Dunsany consistently represents the supernatural as opposed to the human and separate from it. This is the source of the dramatic tension in his works. In the Nemesis plays, the actions of Agmar and of King Darnak transgress divine respect by mocking the gods, and they suffer for their transgression. Even in The Blessing of Pan, which ends with a kindlier vision, the vicar Anwrel struggles against Pan's influence, which threatens his Christian way of life throughout the novel.

One can see, finally, the difference between the fantasy of Dunsany and Stephens revealed in the manner in which each responded to the advice of their common friend AE. Dunsany chose not to connect his fantasies to any larger system of thought as AE had suggested: "I think all these stories would however gain greatly in their power if you mastered one system of philosophic thought" (Letters

from AE, 58). The Nemesis plays and The Blessing of Pan each gain their power by representing the supernatural as mysterious, inaccessible and threatening. Stephens, on the other hand, takes AE's advice to heart; his works become extended conversations about philosophic issues. In effect, Stephens approaches the marvelous through the mundane and ordinary, whereas Dunsany approaches it through the mysterious.

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APPENDIX

The Dunsany Letters

This group of letters from Lord Dunsany to James Stephens were made available to me courtesy of Mrs. Iris Wise, the stepdaughter of James Stephens. She sent me photocopies of 26 handwritten pages of letters from Dunsany. All of the letters printed here were written on Dunsany's stationary, folded once to give four writing surfaces for each sheet. Mrs. Wise told Mrs. Roma Woodnutt, of the Society of Authors, that the letters had "no dates except for two or three, perhaps marked by her father and she has no idea which page follows which." Mrs. Wise added that these letters are the "most muddly letters she has in her files." The latter comment probably refers to Dunsany's handwriting, which, due its grand flowing strokes, is often undecipherable. I have indicated in the the typed text where I have been unable to make out certain words.

When read as responses to the letters from James Stephens during the period between December 1910 and late 1912, these letters reveal a continuing conversation between these two fantasists who admired each other's imagination and talent, and who offered each other insightful critical comment on their current works.

In addition to the letters included here, there were several others dated May 1928 and later. These do not shed any further insight on the topics discussed below, although they do testify to a continuing friendship of the two authors.

I am thankful to Mrs. Iris Wise for sending me the photocopies of these letters, and to Mrs. Roma Woodnut for securing permission from the Society of Authors to have them printed as part of this dissertation.

The Letters of James Stephens, edited by Richard Finneran, were published by MacMillan in 1974.

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