

An Odd Sort of God for the British: Exploring the Appearance of Pan in Late Victorian and Edwardian Literature

Richard Stromer, Ph.D.

Of all the gods and heroic figures of the classical world, the one which would seem among the least likely to stir the minds and the hearts of British poets and novelists would be the goat-god, Pan. Given the traditional British love of self-control and propriety, a god the ancient Greeks envisioned as rambunctious, instinctual, uncivilized, and lusty would hardly seem suitable inspiration for English literary art. Despite the incongruity of this mating, however, the fact remains that Pan has been something of a staple figure within English literature from the time of the Elizabethans onward.

Evidence of this oddity was first uncovered by Helen H. Law in 1955, with the publication of her extensive bibliography of Greek myths cited in English poetry since Shakespeare. In that bibliography, Law lists 106 citations attributed to Pan, with the next nearest total attributed to Helen at 63 citations and to Orpheus at 61. Studying this list of citations in terms of date of authorship, however, points up an even odder anomaly, namely that nearly a third of the citations to Pan were for works written between 1895 and 1918. Patricia Merivale, in her exhaustive study of the role of Pan in literature from classical times till the present day, not only cites Law's research, but also attaches particular importance to the spate of Pan-related English prose also published in the thirty-odd year period between 1890 and the end of World War I.

The mere fact that of this large body of Pan-related literature appeared in England in so short a period becomes even more of a mystery when one realizes that this body of work also reflected a considerable break with the way Pan had generally been portrayed in English literature before that time. While the tendency of earlier British authors had been to depict Pan as something of a benevolent and even transcendent character, the bulk of the pre-war depictions tended to portray Pan either as enigmatic and morally ambivalent or as unequivocally sinister in nature. This essay both explores the darker nature of Pan as he frequently appears in late Victorian and Edwardian fiction and reflects on some possible explanations as to why a morally ambivalent interpretation of this divinity should have so captivated the imagination of writers during this period.

When considering the use of a classical figure in the literature of a latter culture, it is often useful to first comprehend how that figure was originally viewed by the ancient Greeks and Romans. In the case of the role of Pan in English literature, particularly of the period in question, three particular sets of classical associations with Pan need to be explored. First, what was the original nature of Pan's relationship to Arcadia, the region which gave rise to his myth, and to the natural world in general? Secondly, what was the nature of Pan's sexual reputation and what sort of sexuality was associated with him? And finally, what was the nature of Pan's role as bringer of both panic and nightmare?

Perhaps the best-known portrait of Pan as a pastoral deity of ancient Arcadia is that offered in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. In that work, Apuleius depicts Pan as a benevolent, old dispenser of wisdom who offers aid and consolation to the desperate Psyche. In this version of the story of Psyche, when the young woman fails at her attempt to commit suicide by drowning and is washed ashore, Pan greets her, describing himself simply as "only and old, old shepherd and very much of a countryman" (qtd. in Merivale 135). This image of Pan as an idealized, avuncular, old shepherd was among the most popular in English poetry till the early nineteenth century.

Given the enormous popularity of the pastoral vision of Pan in English literature, it's worth noting the largely fictional nature of the conception of Arcadia upon which it is based. As Borgeaud ironically notes, "the Arcadia of the poets—that happy, free Arcadia caressed by zephyrs, where the love songs of the goatherds waft—is a Roman invention" (5). Based on earlier, idealized accounts written by Alexandrian

Hellenistic writers of the pastoral world that they envisioned Pan to inhabit, this bucolic Arcadian world was greatly popularized by Roman authors such as Apuleius. This fantasy realm, however, bears little resemblance to the actual Arcadia which shaped the original character of Pan as a divinity, a region described by Philippe Borgeaud as “a barren and forbidding landscape inhabited by rude, almost wide primitives” (6). Nevertheless, the image of a bucolic Arcadia presided over by a genial Pan found a welcome place in the imagination of many English poets and novelists.

Very much in opposition to this image of a benevolent, genial god of woodland and meadow is that of Pan as a phallic deity widely associated with lustful and rampant sexuality. In terms of this latter aspect of the god, Pierre Grimal tactfully notes that Pan was a divinity “endowed with considerable sexual energy,” who pursues “nymphs and boys with equal sexual ardor” (340). Along with Aphrodite, Pan was a key divinity traditionally associated by the Ancient Greeks with sexual passion. Unlike Pan, however, Aphrodite's amorous exploits often combined sexuality with that more refined love associated with Eros. In contrast, Pan's erotic nature, like that of the satyrs with whom he often kept company, was largely oriented toward the pursuit of purely carnal gratification. In part, this aspect of Pan is related to his role as guardian and facilitator of the fertility of herding animals. More significantly, however, Pan's erotic appetites and ithyphallic image are simply a reflection of his own goat-like nature.

In addition to Pan's associations with the pastoral realm and with lustful sexuality, a third aspect traditionally connected with this deity is his role in the creation of panic states of consciousness. A word derived from the goat-god's name, panic is described in classical sources as including any “disturbances, fears, confusions, terrors, excitations, or tumults” induced by Pan (Borgeaud 88). Perhaps the earliest example of panic induced by Pan is the one described in the *Homeric Hymn to Pan*, in which his mother runs away in terror upon first beholding her goat-like offspring. Certainly the first recorded evidence of wide-scale panic in history occurs in a play attributed to Euripides, in which Pan induces panic among the Trojan sentries set to guard the perimeter of an encampment. Citing this and other famous ancient stories telling of the intervention of Pan at battles such as Marathon, Wilhelm Heinrich Roscher writes, “Thus Pan also became a god of war because he often sends panicky terror to large groups of people, particularly armies” (63).

In a similar vein, Roscher focuses attention on the considerable attribution by classical writers to Pan as “Ephialtes, the demon or evil spirit of nightmares” (1). While “direct evidence for the significance of Pan as Ephialtes or exciter of nightmares first appears in the era of Augustus,” Roscher observes, “on fundamental consideration of all the facts there can hardly be any doubt that the concept of Pan as a nightmare demon originated much earlier, even in his original Arcadian home” (59). Offering additional evidence of Pan's ability to incite madness, Roscher points to Longus, the second century Hellenistic author of a major retelling of the story of Daphnis and Chloe. In this work, Longus recounts an unusual version of the story of the nymph Echo. According to Longus “Pan is enraged with the girl because he envies her, her music, and because he is ugly. He dements the shepherds and goat herdsmen. They tear the girl apart like wolves or dogs and through her limbs in all directions. The limbs, however, go on singing” (Roscher 71).

Part of the enormous distinction between the benevolent and sinister sorts of images of Pan found in later literary portrayals stems from the existence of two divergent etymologies ascribed to his name from earliest times. As Merivale, Borgeaud, and others point out, Pan's name was most likely originally derived from the same Greek root word as “pastoral.” In contrast, both the *Homeric Hymn to Pan* and the *Orphic Hymn to Pan* connect the goat-god's name with the Greek word “pan,” meaning “all.” As Merivale observes, “The history of the Pan motif would gain as much in logic as it would lose in variety and charm” if the correct derivation had been recognized from the beginning. While the explanation of the erroneous derivation of Pan's name is given a light-hearted touch in the *Homeric Hymn* — we're told that all the gods laughed at the comic sight of the infant Pan when he was brought to Olympus by his father, Hermes — in the Orphic Hymn we are presented with a most serious account of Pan as a sort of all-encompassing spirit-of-nature or world-soul:

I call strong Pan, the substance of the whole,
Etherial, marine, earthly, general soul,

Immortal fire; for all the world is thine,
And all are parts of thee, O pow'r divine (qtd. in Merivale, 233)

Further ambiguity regarding Pan's nature as a divinity grew as a result of conflicting interpretations ascribed to the most famous ancient story associated with this god. This story traces itself back to an often-quoted section of Plutarch's *Moralia*. In this passage, Plutarch relates the story of a ship's pilot commanded by an unseen voice to announce the following message while passing near the Greek island of Palodes: "Great Pan is dead." Plutarch comments that after the pilot delivered this sad communication, the air immediately became filled with a terrible lamentation. Commenting on the oracular quality of this story, James Hillman observes that it has meant "many thing to many people in many ages" (24).

In particular, two opposing interpretations of the Plutarch story would have great significance for the later evolution of Pan as a literary figure. Both of these interpretations grew out of the fact that the date roughly ascribed by Plutarch to this strange event loosely coincided with the date early Christians ascribed to Christ's ministry and crucifixion. The earliest Christian authority to comment on this coinciding of historical dates was Eusebius of Caesarea, a theologian and church historian living in the late third and early fourth centuries. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius writes of Plutarch's account, noting: "It is important to observe the time at which he says the death of the daemon took place. For it was the time of Tiberius, in which our Saviour, making His sojourn among men, is recorded to have been ridding human life from daemons of every kind" (qtd. in Merivale 13).

Since to the early Christians, all pagan deities were seen as demons, Eusebius' equating Pan with the demonic was a logical conclusion, particularly since he was no more specific on the question of exact dating than Plutarch had been. About a thousand years after Eusebius, however, a Renaissance scholar who wrote under the name of Paulus Marsus looked back both to Plutarch and the ancient tradition connecting Pan's name to the Greek word for "all." Emphasizing the connection between this etymology and the abstract pantheistic conception of Pan implied by the *Orphic Hymn*, Marsus writes:

The holiest men declare that this voice was heard [. . .] that night... in the thirteenth year of Tiberius' reign, at which time indeed Christ died [. . .] who with a voice miraculously issuing forth from the solitude of the deserted rocks, was announcing that the Lord [. . .] was dead. Now what does Pan mean if not all. Thus the lord of all and of universal nature had died. (qtd. in Merivale 13)

Despite the lack of historical evidence as to who these "holiest men" were or where this author found a more precise date of the announcement of the death of Pan than was offered by Plutarch, this account seems to have been given credibility by other Renaissance scholars. As a result, a second and diametrically opposing interpretation of Plutarch's account became available to later authors. From that point onward, Merivale observes "an army of commentators, taking their text from Plutarch and their gloss from Eusebius (Pan as demon) or from the tradition represented by Paulus Marsus (Pan as Christ), opted for one or the other" (14).

Based partly on the fantasy image of Arcadia created by the Romans and partly on the Rousseau-inspired image of the "noble savage," yet another variation on the meaning of Pan emerged in the literature of the Romantic period. This image of Pan focused once again on the pastoral dimension of the goat-god, viewing him as a personification of that instinctual and unsophisticated aspect of the natural world which stands in greatest opposition to the extreme rationality of the Enlightenment. Given the traditional Christian view that man was *above* the world of the nature and instinctual life, just as God was transcendent of the physical universe, this Romantic vision of Pan saw the goat-god as an embodiment of the old pagan ideals of man's place *within* the natural world.

Much of the writing of the Romantics about Pan is essentially nostalgic in nature, as in Keats line from *Endymion*: "Pan will bid us live in peace, in love and peace among his forest wilderness" (qtd. in Merivale 57). These works express a yearning for an imagined lost pagan world of pastoral graces that was lost with the emergence of Christianity. They also tend to disembodify Pan in the manner of the Orphic Hymn and emphasize his largely ethereal qualities as the overarching spirit of the whole of nature.

More interestingly, however, is the tendency during the latter third of the nineteenth century for Victorian poets to begin employing Pan in more ambiguous guises. Though few authors before the 1880s—apart from a handful of Gothic writers—chose to focus on Pan's more sinister qualities, a number of them did try to open English literature to more ambiguous portrayals of Pan, presenting him as a figure both godlike *and* bestial in nature. A major example of this shift is the portrayal of Pan, for example, can be seen in several of the poetic works of Robert Browning. Commenting on the more earthy and sexual nature of Pan as he appears in several of Browning's poems, Merivale writes that his Pan is not “a goat-god outside ourselves, but as the goat-god within ourselves, not exclusively sexual, but largely so, because sexuality is [. . .] the most vivid aspect of our animal natures” (90).

Whether employing the more Romantic and nostalgic vision of Pan as representing a lost pagan world of instinctual awareness or the more cautious and orthodox vision of the goat-god as a dangerously primitive and hedonistic throw-back to paganism, a large number of Victorian and Edwardian British authors felt drawn to the use of this mythic figure. Perhaps, as Merivale writes, more than any other classical figure, Pan evoked the great dualities which these men and women “were so painfully aware: Paganism or Christian faith; hedonism or morality; the truth of Romance or the truth of science; civilization or the retreat to Arcady” (117).

During the early portion of the Victorian period, the genteel vision of Arcadian Pan seemed most in keeping with the spirit of the times. Also, given the growing popularity of plot-centric narrative poetry and of prose fiction, interest in the more philosophical and abstract Orphic Pan declined sharply. As a result, Pan is generally portrayed in Victorian literature as an active participant in the story being told and is given a range of distinctively personal characteristics. While the most common portrayals of Pan in early Victorian literature continued to draw on the almost genteel imagery of the Pan of the Pastoral tradition, as the century progressed, it became more common for less purely positive portrayals of Pan to make appearances in poetry and fiction.

These images of Pan tended to focus more frequently on Pan's sexual reputation and on his relationship to panic states and nightmares than on any Arcadian qualities of the god. Moreover, when Pan's role as a god of nature *was* employed in these works, such portrayals often focused on the exoticness, the wildness, and even the dangerousness of the natural world. Victorian and Edwardian authors writing of Pan in this more ambivalent and darker mode included Max Beerbohm, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Machen, Somerset Maugham, Kenneth Graham (of *Wind in the Willows* fame), Algernon Blackwood, H.H. Munro (writer of short stories under the penname of Saki), E.M. Forster, and D.H. Lawrence. To illustrate the manner in which these authors incorporate a darkly enigmatic sense of Pan in their work, I've selected three pieces of short fiction to discuss very briefly. These short stories are Blackwood's “A Touch of Pan,” Saki's “The Music on the Hill,” and Forster's “The Story of a Panic.”

Though all three stories employ Pan in quite different ways in terms of plot structure, one interesting quality that all three share in common is a sort of division of the world into two categories of people. The first of these types is comprised of the very few who are sensitive and receptive to the call of Pan and, as a result, have nothing to fear from him. The second category is made up of the vast majority of people, all of whom have lost the ability to approach Pan with reverence and appreciate the gifts that are his to bestow. Toward these people, Pan indeed shows his sinister, panic-inducing, and terrifying dimensions.

“A Touch of Pan,” first published in 1917, compares the amorous experiences of two different couples at the sort of house party so often portrayed in the fiction of this period, a gathering of glittering people who are typically portrayed as jaded, bored, and cynical. The first of these couples, on which the bulk of the story focuses, feel vaguely alienated from the rest of the guests at the house party and chose to slip away from the goings-on in the manor house and out into the moonlit night. This couple, Blackwood writes, “had the secret of some instinctual knowledge that was not only joy, but a kind of sheer natural joy” (289).

Wandering through the woods of the estate, the pair become increasingly entranced by the beauty of the night and filled with a kind of awe. Pan sweeps the couple up into what Merivale describes as “a merry Bacchic revel [. . .] which blurs into a quasi-religious vision” (191). When Pan finally appears to the lovers,

Blackwood writes, "There was an instant's subtle panic, but it was the panic of reverent awe that preludes a descent of deity" (303). We are told at the climax of the story that Pan has blessed the lovemaking of the young couple and that "with the stupendous presence there was joy, the joy of abundant, natural life, pure as the sunlight and wind" (304). At the conclusion of their lovemaking, the pair returns to the manor house and watch the other guests from outside. As the man stares into the glittering room, Blackwood comments,

He saw his familiar world in nakedness [. . .]. Instead of wind and dew upon their hair, He saw flowers grown artificially to ape wild beauty, tresses without luster borrowed from the slums of city factories [. . .]. Pretended innocence lay cloaked with a veil of something that whispered secretly, clandestine, ashamed, yet with a brazen air that laid mockery instead of sunshine in their smiles [. . .]. (305)

"The Touch of Pan" ends with a brief account of another couple attending the same house party, a pair comprised of a cynical and self-serving married man and the considerably younger woman he seeks to make his mistress. The man remains completely unaware of the heightened energy around him. The young woman, however, becomes increasingly frightened of something unnatural and threatening that she senses in the woods around them and is certain that they are being watched. "They crept stealthily out of the woods," writes Blackwood, "casting frightened backward glances. Afraid, guilty, ashamed, with an air as though they had been detected, they stole back towards the garden and the house." Blackwood concludes the story with an image of the wind rising to clean the woods of the traces of artificial scent and residue of shame, as "the trees stood motionless again, guarding their secret" (310)

Saki's "The Music on the Hill," first published in 1911, is a very short story which functions as a sort of cautionary fable about the dangers of maintaining an irreverent attitude towards Pan when out in the natural world. The main character in this story is strong-willed and unpleasant woman who had recently married—or "captured," as she saw it—a rather pacific and well-to-do husband. With the intention of "settling him down," she convinces him to leave his house in town and move out to his remote, heavily wooded country house, a place called Yesney. "There was a sombre almost savage wildness about Yesney," Saki writes, adding ironically, "in its wild open savagery there seemed a stealthy linking of the joy of life with the terror of unseen things" (180).

Upon viewing this wild landscape with some nervousness, the woman observes that "one could almost think that in such a place the worship of Pan never died out." In reply, her husband calmly informs her that "the worship of Pan never has died out" and that "he is the Nature-God to whom all must come back at last." When she expresses shock and incredulity at the idea that her husband actually believes in Pan, he tells her quietly "I've been a fool in most things [. . .] but I'm not such a fool as not to believe in Pan when I'm down here," adding "if you're wise you won't disbelieve in him too boastfully while you're in his country" (181).

Some time after this exchange, as the woman is inspecting the estate, she is startled by a strange sound, described by Saki as "the echo of a boy's laughter, golden and equivocal" (181). Shortly thereafter, the woman comes upon a small sanctuary set out in a copse of trees containing a beautiful bronze statue of a youthful Pan and an altar set with newly cut bunch of ripe grapes. The woman contemptuously removes the grapes and on the way back to the house is briefly startled by the face of what she takes to be a gypsy boy staring at her from out of a tangle of undergrowth. When confronting her husband with her suspicions, he tells her that there aren't any gypsies in that area and inquires if she disturbed the sanctuary space. When she acknowledges removing the offering, he observes reflectively "I don't think you were wise to do that [. . .]. I've heard it said that the Wood Gods are rather horrible to those who molest them" (183).

Despite his advice that she avoid the woods and orchards on the estate, on the next day the woman again decides to continue her "tour of inspection" of another corner of the estate. On her way there, she spots one of the estate's giant rams in an agitated state, hears the sound of "a low, fitful piping, as of some reedy flute, and begins to wonder if the ram's agitation is somehow connected with the piping. Just as the woman is lulled into a kind of daze by the music, she suddenly sees a giant stag moving toward her through the woods. Mesmerized by the awesome sight of the stag and hearing the now wildly playing pipes, she realizes in absolute panic and terror that the stag is about to charge toward her. In the last moments before

she is gored to death, she again sees the face of the boy and hears the sound of his laughter, “golden and equivocal” (185).

Perhaps the most complex of the three stories, “The Story of a Panic” tells of group of English men and woman on holiday somewhere in Italy. As with his other stories and novels set in Italy, Forster partly uses the wildness of the Italian landscape and informality and openness of the Italian cultural perspective to comment on the ultra-civilized and deadening Englishness of his main characters. In this story, comments Merivale, Pan becomes “the guide into a profound mystical experience, which has as concomitants the emotions of terror and ecstasy” (181). Unfortunately, for most of the characters in this story, because of their inability to open themselves to the potentially destabilizing aspects of an encounter with Pan, their experience leads only to terror.

The story begins with a group of English tourists, all staying at the same hotel, deciding to take a hike into the woods for a picnic. The narrator of the story is a middle-aged man who personifies the English virtues of commonsense, lack of imagination, extreme dignity, and moral rectitude. Also included in the little troop is Eustace, a dispirited and lonely boy, the ward of two elderly maiden aunts and the only young person in the group. The account of this outing climaxes with a scene of total, sudden, and unmitigated terror. In vividly describing the experience of this panic attack through the eyes of the narrator, Forster offers a compelling portrait of the effect of Pan-induced terror:

Then the terrible silence fell on us again [. . .]. A fanciful feeling of foreboding came over me; so I turned away, to find to my amazement, that all of the others were on their feet, watching it too.

It is not possible to describe coherently what happened next: but I, for one, am not ashamed to confess that, though the fair blue sky was above me, and the green spring woods beneath me, and the kindest of friends around me, yet I became terribly frightened, more frightened than I ever wish to become again, frightened in a way I have never known either before or after. And in the eyes of the others, too, I saw blank, expressionless fear, while their mouths strove in vain to speak and their hands to gesticulate.

Who moved first has never been settled. It is enough to say that in one second we were tearing away along the hillside [. . .]. I saw nothing and heard nothing and felt nothing, since all the channels of sense and reason were blocked. It was not the spiritual fear that one has known at other times, but brutal overmastering physical fear, stopping up the ears, and dropping clouds before the eyes, and filling the mouth with foul tastes. And it was no ordinary humiliation that survived: for I had been afraid, not as a man, but as a beast. (11-12)

Once the panic had passed, the dazed and disheveled English tourists return to the site of their picnic, only to discover that one of their party had not fled in terror with the rest. In the middle of the clearing, Eustace is lying flat on the ground in a kind of ecstatic trance and near the boy are the fresh tracks of large goat.

The unnerved adults determine to return to the inn and, for some unexplained reason, the previously sullen and withdrawn Eustace begins to cavort wildly through the woods on the trip back. This odd behavior is continued later that night, when the narrator is awakened to the sight of Eustace leaping joyful though the garden courtyard of the hotel, speaking incoherently to seemingly invisible companions. When the aroused guests, lead by the indignant narrator, attempt to force the boy to return to his room, he says that it is too small and that he will die if forced to return there. Most astonishingly, the boy is speaking in a manner completely out character. “Never have I listened to such an extraordinary speech,” says the narrator. He continues:

Eustace Robinson, aged fourteen, was standing in his nightshirt, saluting, praising, and blessing, the great forces and manifestations of Nature. He spoke first of night and the stars and planets above his head, of the swarms of fire-flies below him... of the great rocks covered with anemones and shells that were slumbering in the sea. He spoke of rivers and waterfalls, of the ripening bunches of grapes, of the smoking cone of Vesuvius and of the hidden fire-channels which made the smoke, of the myriads of lizards who were lying curled up in the crannies of the sultry earth, of the showers of white rose-leaves that were tangled in his

hair. And then he spoke about the rain and the wind by which all things are changed, of the air through which all things live, and of the woods in which all things can be hidden. (28-9)

Following this remarkably poetic and deeply spiritual vision of the natural world, the boy, now crying in terror at the thought of being constrained, is captured and sent back to bed. Shortly thereafter, however, Eustace is freed with the aid of a local boy who works at the hotel. Before the horrified eyes of the other guests, Eustace leaps over parapet into an olive tree and lands safely far below. “As soon as his bare feet touched the clods of earth,” says the narrator, “he uttered a strange loud cry, such as I should not have thought the human voice could produce.” The story ends with the narrator telling us that “far down the valley towards the sea, there still resounded the shouts and laughter of the escaping boy” (38).

When we consider any of the “believers” in these three stories—the loving couple in “The Touch of Pan,” the husband in “The Music on the Hill,” or Eustace in “The Story of a Panic”—we see Pan's ability to convey deep wonder and awe. Moreover, at least in the first and third cases, Pan permanently alters the consciousness of those who seek his gifts, simultaneously making them joyfully aware of their own instinctual bonds with the world of nature and painfully aware of the lifelessness of the civilized world in which they live. When we consider what the “others” in these stories experience—whether the simple fright and banishment of the second couple in the Blackwood story, the terror of a genuine case of full-blown panic in the case of the English adults in the Forster story, or the violent death of the wife in the Saki tale—we can recognize a clear sense of warning from these authors as to the dangers of ignoring or dishonoring the instinctual energies represented by Pan.

When we consider the larger questions posed in this paper—first, why should Pan have become such a common subject for late Victorian and Edwardian authors and, secondly, why the images of Pan portrayed by these writers are typically so darkly ambivalent in nature—we need to consider the broader historical and social context which prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century. In retrospect, we can see that the *fin-de-siecle* world of Europe truly did mark a great, even cataclysmic, passage in the history of human civilization. For the grand illusion, built up over the course of centuries, that intellect and high culture would keep the European world safe from its own self-destructive tendencies was smashed beyond recognition in the slaughter of the Great War. Moreover, once the carnage was over, even the illusion that there had been a golden age preceding that war came to be questioned.

As Barbara Tuchman writes of this period, “The proud tower built up through the great age of European civilization was an edifice of grandeur and passion, of riches and beauty and dark cellars” (463). That observation is particularly interesting in the light of an observation made by one of Freud's followers in 1913: “The mind is like a city which during the day busies itself with the peaceful tasks of legitimate commerce, but at night when all the good burghers sleep soundly in their beds, out come these disreputable creatures of the psychic underworld to disport themselves in a very unseemly fashion” (qtd. in Hale 99). Perhaps Pan came to function as a conscious representative of those disreputable figures of the underworld of the psyche. In this vein, Aldous Huxley wrote of the role played by Pan in early modern literature, noting that the ancient goat-god represented “the dark presence of the otherness that lies beyond the boundaries of man's conscious mind” (qtd. in Merivale 228).

We can also speculate on the particular nature of English society and culture in the period preceding the First World War and see several factors which might predispose the literature of that country to the compensatory qualities of Pan. First, we can see today that Victorian and Edwardian social conventions demonstrated tremendous hypocrisy regarding sexual matters. While male and female prostitution was widely practiced in the poorer neighborhoods of Britain's cities throughout this period, the attitudes of the vast majority of middle class Britons reflected the most stringent of sexual mores. Secondly, with the end of the nineteenth century, even the last vestiges of any meaningful connection between the vast majority of urbanized, industrialized Britons and the world of the English countryside disappeared. Finally, given that the theories of Freud and his followers were not to gain serious recognition till after the war, there was little reason for ordinary Britons to consider their own deeply repressed instinctual natures. Considering all of these factors, it hardly seems surprising then that a deity such as Pan—a rambunctious, instinctual, libidinous god of all things and places wild—should have become a cultural icon presaging cataclysmic social and cultural changes lurking just over the historical horizon.

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