

Mythic Form and Mythic Function: Lord Dunsany's
The Gods of Pegana and Time and the Gods

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Abstract

Lord Dunsany, an Irish peer and prolific author of fantasy who lived from 1878 to 1957, wrote in the midst of the Irish Literary Renaissance. Compared to such contemporaries as Yeats and Synge, however, Dunsany has received relatively little critical attention. Much of the Dunsany criticism that does exist over-subordinates the content of Dunsany's work to its beautifully ringing style. This emphasis produces criticism that tends either to praise his writing as merely lyrical and charming or to condemn it as mere escapist fancy devoid of any deeper meaning. But the mythological themes of Dunsany's early short stories demonstrate both high style and a strong, underlying message of human self-empowerment; they merit closer attention.

Because Dunsany is little known, in my Introduction I provide a brief biographical sketch. In Chapter One I summarize Joseph Campbell's theories on myth to provide a context for my analysis of Dunsany's short stories. Campbell identifies four basic functions of myth: 1) the cosmological, which enables humanity to form a universal scheme; 2) the metaphysical, which helps humanity cope with the often harsh realities of such a scheme; 3) the sociological, which establishes an unimpeachable social order; and 4) the psychological, which provides the means to

transform subconscious dream images into an understandable form. In this way, according to Campbell, myth has always served as an interpreter of reality; therefore, a myth system can reveal much about the world-view of the group or individual that holds it.

In Chapter Two, I apply Campbell's theories to Dunsany's world-view as revealed in his first volume of short stories, The Gods of Pegana (1905). The stories in The Gods of Pegana, a set of interdependent fragments, read much like myths both in style and in content; each story represents a passage from the "bible" of Pegana's world. By performing the functions of mythology, especially the creative psychological function, the stories in The Gods of Pegana become mythological themselves, and thus provide insight into Dunsany's own world-view. Reading the stories as myth reveals that for Dunsany, even in a universe that seems entirely under the sway of fate and chance, humanity can at least partially control its own destiny. In this chapter, I demonstrate how Dunsany associates this control with the creative power of myth.

In Chapter Three I turn to Dunsany's second volume of short stories, Time and the Gods (1908). In Time and the Gods, Dunsany returns to the world of Pegana and to his theme of mythic self-empowerment. But the stories in Time and the Gods are more fully developed than those in The Gods of Pegana and the message more emphatic. In The Gods of Pegana, Dunsany offers a prophetic message of empowerment that his

characters mostly ignore; in Time and the Gods the prophecy begins to be realized, and some of the characters gain a kind of spiritual control over their tyrannical gods. I compare the two volumes and discuss the progression of Dunsany's theme from The Gods of Pegana to Time and the Gods. A failure to recognize this humanist theme in Dunsany's work, along with an unwillingness to acknowledge fundamental similiarities between Dunsany and contemporaries like Yeats, has kept previous criticism from placing Dunsany in the literary context his work merits. In my concluding remarks, I summarize Dunsany's mythological world-view as it appears in these first two volumes of short stories, and classify it as essentially Romantic.

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Introduction

The relatively slight recognition hitherto accorded Lord Dunsany, perhaps the most unique, original, and richly imaginative of authors living at this time, forms an amusing commentary on the natural stupidity of mankind.¹

Had I read [Dunsany's work] when I was a boy, I had perhaps been changed for better or worse, and looked to that first reading as the creation of my world²

In the introduction to their edition of critical essays The Binding of Proteus, editors Marjorie McCune, Tucker Orbison, and Philip Withim compare myth in literature to the elusive Proteus of Greek mythology. In the Proteus myth, Menelaus could only force Proteus to reveal the truth of the future by relentlessly gripping Proteus as he continually changed form. The editors insist that a reader must grasp myth in literature as well as Menelaus grasped Proteus in order to glean any truth from that literature. Analysis alone, however, can never provide a reader with this grasp;

¹ H. P. Lovecraft, Foreword, Tales of Three Hemispheres, by Lord Dunsany (Philadelphia: Owlswick Press, 1976) vii. Although this piece was published in 1976, Lovecraft originally wrote it in 1922, while Dunsany was still alive.

² William Butler Yeats, Introduction, Selections from the Writings of Lord Dunsany, by Lord Dunsany (Shannon: Irish Univ. Press, 1971) xx.

one must apply an intuitive, unconscious knowledge as well.

According to these editors:

Because a myth is a mystery, it cannot be explained beyond a certain degree, for the point of a mystery is that it must be experienced. Art, though it is many other things as well, is the epiphany of a myth, as Joseph Campbell tells us; art is symbol and archetype manifested. Art, then, is its own mystery and beyond a degree may not be explained. It too must, like Proteus, be experienced, and only those who can grip very firmly are granted revelation.³

In this spirit I base my study of the work of Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron Dunsany, on the myth theories of Joseph Campbell; by studying Dunsany and his stories in the light of Campbell's scholarship, I hope to lead my reader to a firmer grasp of the mythic nature of Dunsany's art.

Many of Dunsany's works, especially his early short stories, share almost identical elements: fantastic settings--usually mythic locations ruled by terrible gods, or as Dunsany says, places "beyond . . . the fields we know"⁴; characters who often function more as types than as distinct individuals; and the recurring themes of man's place in the cosmological scheme and his relationship with whatever

³ Marjorie McCune, Tucker Orbison, and Philip Withim, eds., The Binding of Proteus (London: Associated University Press, 1980) 11.

⁴ Martin Gardner, Foreword, A Dreamer's Tales, by Lord Dunsany (Phil.: Owlswick Press, 1979) x.

universal power or powers there may be. Dunsany's fusion of these common elements places his early short stories firmly in the realm of what one may call, for lack of a better phrase, "fantastic literature."

Dunsany's unique handling of these elements, however, has for the most part confounded would-be critics of his early fiction, many of whom simply do not know what to make of the strange little tales. Some critics have, in passing, compared his drama favorably with that of his more famous Irish contemporaries, Yeats and Synge; few have delved deeply into the nature of his fiction; fewer still have displayed any real understanding of the functionings of his early short stories. Even S. T. Joshi, who provides an excellent overview of Dunsany's work in his volume The Weird Tale (1990), momentarily throws up his hands when faced with these stories. Although he will eventually provide a thought-provoking analysis of Dunsany's early short stories, Joshi first admits,

In fact, from a critical perspective it is very hard to say anything about [Dunsany's] early work: one can simply rhapsodize over it as an unrivaled and unique body of fantasy literature.⁵

Although Joshi praises Dunsany's work, critics have traditionally been unfriendly to fantastic literature, denying all but its most brilliant writers (Scott, Poe,

⁵ S. T. Joshi, "Lord Dunsany: The Career of a *Fantaisiste*," The Weird Tale (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990) 44.

Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis, for example) entrance into the circle of "legitimate" literature. Until very recently Dunsany has suffered, unfairly I propose, the slight regard so often conferred on writers of fantasy. Some critics have evaluated the quality of Dunsany's fiction as high style without much content. John Wilson Foster, for example, writes, "Certainly Dunsany's [fantasies] are escapist and testify to the limitations of pure story devoid of the mystery of tradition as well as of the relevance to life."⁶ And in speaking of Dunsany's short story collection, The Gods of Pegana, George Brandon Saul complains,

Though generously reviewed by Edward Thomas, it seems to me rather a series of notations on an invented pantheon than a set of stories. Its antique verbal patterns . . . permit some rolling rhetoric, but one keeps asking, 'To what significant end?'

The answer is any reader's to propose.⁷

Certainly there can be no one answer to Saul's question, but the case is not so hopeless as he suggests. Although critics again and again apply the terms "dreamer," "myth-maker," "dream-like," and "mythical" to Dunsany or his works, they do so without fully recognizing the primary positions that dream and myth hold in his fiction. Dunsany's stories are indeed dream-like and mythical, not as a merely eloquent

⁶ John Wilson Foster, Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art (Syracuse UP, 1987) 295.

⁷ George Brandon Saul, "Strange Gods and Far Places: The Short Fiction of Lord Dunsany," Arizona Quarterly 19 (1963): 198.

and fantastic escape from reality, but rather as Dunsany's own *interpretation* of reality. According to Joseph Campbell, dream and myth have always served as interpreters of reality; I will demonstrate that Dunsany's stories function in much the same way that Joseph Campbell says dreams and myths function and, therefore, become mythic themselves.

That demonstration leads directly to the main argument of this thesis. The functions of mythology in Dunsany's first book of short stories, The Gods of Pegana, reveal that even in an apparently fatalistic universe, humanity has at least a partial ability to control its own destiny--an ability that grows directly out of the creative power of myth. In Time and the Gods, the follow-up to The Gods of Pegana, Dunsany takes the idea even further and states it more emphatically, revealing a humanity which to a great degree controls its petty, tyrannical gods through a kind of mythic self-empowerment.

Campbell and Dunsany both believed that the twentieth century has lost touch with the important lessons of mythology. Campbell contended that the mythology held by a person or a people reveals one of three basic world-views: 1) a complete acceptance of life in this world despite any horrible aspects it may possess; 2) a complete negation of life in this world; and 3) a negation of life in this world based on the hope of a better life in a world yet to come. By applying Campbell's myth theories to the short stories of

Lord Dunsany, one can see how the stories work as mythological parables, Dunsany's acceptance of life based on the creative power of myth.

Because Lord Dunsany and his works are currently so little known, the rest of this introduction serves as a brief biography. Chapter One summarizes the work of Joseph Campbell in order to provide a context for the study of Dunsany's stories. Chapter Two analyzes the mythological functionings of the short stories collected in The Gods of Pegana in order to outline Dunsany's introduction and early development of the myth-empowerment idea. Chapter Three applies the same kind of analysis to Dunsany's next work, Time and the Gods, in order to demonstrate Dunsany's extension and refinement of that idea.

Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, the 18th Baron Dunsany, was born on July 24, 1878, in the historical setting of County Meath, Ireland, and lived on an estate within sight of the legendary Hill of Tara.⁸ His family line, reputedly the third oldest in Irish history, can be traced to a combination of Norman and Danish roots. Dunsany's personal attributes are almost as interesting as his writing. After Eton he trained at Sandhurst and served as an officer in the

⁸ This biographical sketch of Lord Dunsany is indebted to Edward Hale Bierstadt, Dunsany the Dramatist (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1917); S. T. Joshi, The Weird Tale (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1990); and H. P. Lovecraft, Foreword, Tales of Three Hemispheres, by Lord Dunsany (Philadelphia: Owlswick Press, 1976).

5th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. When his father died in 1899, Dunsany officially became the 18th Baron Dunsany, and as a peer he always remained strictly Imperialist in his loyalties; indeed, by all accounts Dunsany behaved more British than Irish--a characteristic that won him few supporters in the Irish Literary Renaissance. Physically, he was an imposing figure, standing somewhere between six-feet, two and six-feet, four inches tall and possessing a stern countenance. He was a soldier, a sportsman, an outdoorsman, and an avid hunter, and was at least once referred to as "the best pistol shot in Ireland."⁹

The fabulous gods that populate many of Dunsany's works are not the same figures of Irish legend used by Yeats and Synge, and at least one critic has suggested that Dunsany's Norman and Danish heritage could be the ultimate source of his pointedly un-Irish myth world.¹⁰ Not until he began writing novels in 1922 did Dunsany begin to use the scenery and legends of Ireland in his work; by that time he had already published several volumes of short stories and produced a handful of plays which did not rely on any Irish myth tradition, but in which he created his own, uniquely Dunsanian tradition.

⁹ Bierstadt, 11.

¹⁰ Bierstadt, 11.

Among Dunsany's Irish contemporaries, Yeats (and others) faulted Dunsany for this lack of things Irish in his work. Several critics have mentioned, or at least hinted at, the rivalry between Dunsany and Yeats, and Dunsany's pointed exclusion from the Irish Literary Renaissance.¹¹ But one who knew both men, Oliver St. John Gogarty, indicates that Yeats's personal resentment (in fact, envy) of Dunsany's aristocracy more than any quality of Dunsany's work itself kept most of Dunsany's dramas from the Abbey Theatre and his name from the lips of his people.¹² Yeats's reluctance to praise him publicly might explain why Dunsany never achieved much recognition in Ireland and England despite the fact that he once had five plays running simultaneously on Broadway.

Most critical attention that Dunsany receives focuses on his rhetorical and beautifully flowing prose style. The general consensus is that much of this style evolved out of influences of his early childhood. At home his parents limited his reading material mostly to the Bible, Hans Christian Andersen, and Grimm's fairy tales; they forbade him to read newspapers because of their possible vulgar influence. He especially liked the style and imagery of the King James Bible, and he adopted much of it, particularly in

¹¹ See Foster, 294-97, and Gogarty, below.

¹² Oliver St. John Gogarty, "Lord Dunsany," Atlantic Monthly (March 1955), 69-70.

his earliest short stories in The Gods of Pegana (1905) and Time and the Gods (1906).

Away from home, his English schooling introduced perhaps an even greater influence: the writings of the Greek masters. He saw Homer's work as fulfilling the true function of poetry--keeping alive humanity's sense of wonder at its world. According to Dunsany himself, his inability to master Greek and thus learn directly from Homer drove him at least indirectly to the fantastic genre in which he wrote. In one of his autobiographies, Dunsany writes, "It may have been the retirement of the Greek gods from my vision after I left Eton that eventually drove me to satisfy some such longing by making gods unto myself."¹³

He wrote prolifically from 1905 until his death on October 25, 1957, publishing almost two dozen volumes of short stories, thirteen novels, and seven volumes of poetry, as well as numerous plays, essays, and lectures. Almost all of the poetry is, at best, forgettable. His novels and plays are much better; a few of the former (e.g. The Charwoman's Shadow and The King of Elfland's Daughter) and many of the latter (e.g. The Queen's Enemies and The Gods of the Mountain) deserve serious study outside the scope of this work. The short stories written after Time and the Gods deal progressively less with Pegana and more with the real world,

¹³ Lord Dunsany, Patches of Sunlight (London: Heinemann, 1938), as quoted in Joshi, 48.

especially with a whiskey-drinking teller of tall tales named Jorkens, who alone served as the focus for five volumes of short stories. One of the more telling characteristics about Dunsany and his writings is that a great deal of this work deals with the modern world's hindrance of humanity's sense of wonder. He believed that myth and literature hold the key to unlock our sense of wonder. This study, using the myth theories of Joseph Campbell and several of Dunsany's early short stories as examples, demonstrates how Dunsany created his own mythology, his own key to unlock for his readers the door of wonder.

Chapter One: Joseph Campbell and the Functions of Myth

Myth must be kept alive. The people who can keep it alive are artists of one kind or another. The function of the artist is the mythologization of the environment and the world.¹

In order to see how Dunsany's stories function mythologically, the reader must first understand how myth itself functions. Thus the first chapter of this study summarizes the seminal theories of Joseph Campbell on the function of mythology. But summarizing Joseph Campbell's work presents several problems. First, Campbell published a vast amount of material on mythology and ritual; a complete summary of all his scholarship would require far more space than this study allows.² Second, he occasionally alters his terminology from work to work, sometimes making it difficult

¹ Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, The Power Of Myth (New York: Doubleday, Inc. 1988) 4.

² In 1987, Robert A. Segal published Joseph Campbell: An Introduction (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), a good one-volume summary of Campbell's theories. The first seven chapters cover the main points of Campbell's major book-length works: The Hero With a Thousand Faces, The Masks of God, The Mythic Image, and the Historical Atlas of World Mythology. The concluding four chapters explain in broader terms Campbell's approach to the entire subject of myth. Although I do not often cite Segal directly, I found his book helpful during my research in clarifying confusing or even apparently contradictory points in Campbell's work.

to pinpoint recurrent concepts and ideas. Finally, because Campbell's publications span approximately forty years, they naturally reflect the constant refining and re-ordering of his theories; what Campbell accented in 1949 he did not necessarily argue in 1980. Therefore, this summary will outline briefly only the most important of Campbell's theories on myth and ritual--especially those that will relate more specifically to Dunsany's work--and will favor the conclusions which Campbell asserted near the end of his career.

Joseph Campbell first achieved recognition in 1949 with the publication of his influential The Hero With a Thousand Faces.³ In this volume, Campbell sets forth many of the myth theories which he expounded for the rest of his life: his notion of the psychological nature of the hero figure and the relationship between myth and dreams, for example. But Hero's greatest contribution to myth study lies in its approach--a comparative and psychoanalytical study of myth.

Comparativism

Campbell was not the first to notice the similarities among the myths and rituals of many cultures, to be sure; Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) believed all humans share certain

³ Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces, The Bollingen Series, XVII, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949). In the interest of space, I will henceforth refer to The Hero With a Thousand Faces simply as Hero.

"Elementary Ideas," and Sir James G. Frazer's The Golden Bough demonstrates his recognition of strong similarities between cultures.⁴ But by the time Campbell wrote Hero, many anthropologists questioned the validity of such comparisons; Hero had to justify Campbell's re-introduction of comparativism.

In the preface to Hero, Campbell states his goal for the work: he hopes that by giving enough simple examples of myth he can illuminate some of the truths hidden in those myths. He then identifies his approach as comparative; he will emphasize the similarities, not the differences, among the myths.⁵ Anticipating the probable objections to this emphasis, he defends his approach:

Perhaps it will be objected that in bringing out the correspondences I have overlooked the differences between the various Oriental and Occidental, modern, ancient, and primitive traditions. The same objection might be brought, however, against any textbook or chart of anatomy, where the physiological variations of race are disregarded in the interest of a basic general understanding of the human physique.⁶

⁴ Joseph Campbell, "Bios and Mythos: Prolegomena to a Science of Mythology," Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice, ed. John B. Vickery (Lincoln, Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 1966) 15-16.

⁵ Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces, The Bollingen Series, XVII (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949) vii.

⁶ Campbell, Hero, n. pag. Campbell returns to this analogy between the studies of myth and anatomy more than once in later works (see below).

Like Hero, Campbell's 1951 essay, "Bios and Mythos: Prolegomena to a Science of Mythology," seeks to familiarize its reader with Campbell's basic comparative approach to myth studies. But in "Bios and Mythos," Campbell defends that approach with greater clarity and at greater length. In "Bios and Mythos," Campbell begins his argument for comparativism by citing other "comparative anthropologists," including Edward Tylor, Frazer, and Bastian, who recognize the similarities between various myths.⁷ He especially praises Bastian's recognition of "the uniformity of mankind's 'Elementary Ideas (Elementargedanke).'"⁸ Every human shares a fundamental connection to the past; consequently, myth everywhere manifests itself in similar forms. Before Bastian, anthropologists had emphasized the differences in the myths and rituals of various cultures. But Bastian claims these differences simply represent the localized manifestation (Völkergedanken) of the Elementary Ideas, influenced by regional tradition and locale.⁹

In later works, Campbell demonstrates that Eastern languages also make this distinction between local and fundamental myth. In The Mythic Image, for example,

⁷ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 15.

⁸ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 15.

⁹ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 15. See also Campbell, The Inner Reaches of Outer Space (New York: Alfred Van der Marck Editions, 1985) 11.

Campbell explains the Indian terms "marga" and "deshi." The term "marga" literally means "path" or "way" and refers to that knowledge which transcends locale, revealing fundamental truth. "Deshi" means "of the region" and refers to the particular traits of a localized group by which they distinguish themselves from others.¹⁰ The validity of Campbell's comparative approach depends upon this distinction.

In "Bios and Mythos," Campbell blames the unpopularity of this approach in his day on "muddle-headed Emile Durkheim" and other cultural anthropologists who, in the earlier part of this century, labeled any notion of an inherent psychological identity of man as purely "mystical." Their lack of insight, claims Campbell, shows that they miss the whole point of comparative anthropology. As he did in Hero, Campbell makes his point with a biological analogy:

[Their] characteristic mistake, specifically, is that of confusing function with morphology--as though a congress of zoologists, studying the wing of a bat, flipper of the whale, foreleg of the rat, and arm of man, should not know that these organs, though shaped to differing functions, are structurally homologous.¹¹

¹⁰ Joseph Campbell, The Mythic Image (Princeton UP, 1974) 11.

¹¹ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 16. This note also refers to the previous two quotations in the text.

Durkheim and his school cannot understand the true origins of mythology because they see only its various incarnations, not its fundamental purpose.

One could logically conclude from this argument that Campbell argues for a myth study that ignores localized manifestations of myth in its search for the universal in myth; however, such a conclusion would be inaccurate. Campbell's brand of comparativism stops short of complete universalism, but in order to understand how this is so, the reader must first understand Campbell's theories on the psychological origins of myth.

The Psychological Origins of Myth

Campbell introduces his comparative approach to myth study in the preface to Hero, but Hero also marks the first appearance of the second major aspect of Campbell's myth hermeneutics. With Hero's prologue, subtitled "The Monomyth" (a term borrowed from James Joyce), Campbell distinguishes himself from earlier cultural anthropologists like Bastian and Frazer and establishes Hero as a milestone in myth studies; to the already established analysis of myth, Campbell adds the *psychoanalysis* of myth. The theories of Sigmund Freud now become important to the study of cultural anthropology.¹²

¹² Géza Róheim (1891-1953) helped introduce psychoanalysis to cultural anthropology early in the twentieth century, but despite his respected work, The Origin and Function of Culture (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease

Campbell begins his explanation of psychoanalytical cultural anthropology by pointing out the omnipresence of myth in our daily lives. Our religions and art, even our folk tales, all owe their creation in some degree to mythology.¹³ Even more than archaeology, Campbell argues, psychoanalysis like that of Freud can reveal the source of all this mythology. Using Freudian terms, Campbell explains how, as children, we acquire our first psychological conflicts (neuroses) from our environment.¹⁴ Our minds attempt to resolve these inner conflicts through the symbolic images of dreams.¹⁵ But we need help interpreting these images, and the shaman and medicine man, through their rituals and rites of passage, serve this purpose for older Monographs, 1943), widespread application of the theory did not occur until after the publication of Hero.

¹³ Campbell, Hero 3.

¹⁴ Campbell explains the origin of these conflicts, which in turn become the origin of myth, through a simplified explanation of Freudian theory. To provide background, I here produce a briefer version of this explanation: Because humans, unlike other species, are born far from prepared to survive in the world, we need protection. The mother provides this protection, so we cling to her; the first time she withholds it, we make her the object of conflicting feelings of love and hostility. The father represents our first notion of "other," someone outside the recognized unit of self-and-mother; he receives the hostility that we first applied to the mother. This early conflict, the so-called "Oedipus Complex," forms the base of all future neuroses. Campbell, Hero, 6-7.

¹⁵ The important point here is that, in Freudian theory, these images arise from *acquired*, and not *innate* stimuli. Contrast this with Campbell's application of Jungian theory below.

cultures. Modern man has the psychoanalyst; according to Campbell,

[The psychoanalyst's] role is precisely that of the Wise Old Man of the myths and fairy tales whose words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of weird adventure. He is the one who appears and points to the magic shining sword that will kill the dragon-terror, tells of the waiting bride. . . , applies healing balm to the almost fatal wounds, and finally dismisses the conqueror, back into the world of normal life. . . .¹⁶

With the help of a guide, one's personal, symbolic images form one base from which myths develop.

But Campbell does not place the origin of myth exclusively in these personal images. Later in "The Monomyth," he introduces Carl Jung's "archetypes" as another, more fundamental source of myth. But the combination of Freudian and Jungian theory establishes a conflict which Campbell does not explicitly address in Hero. Not until the publication of The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (1959), in which Campbell explains Jung's theories at greater length, does Campbell explicitly identify the theoretical conflict.

In Chapter One of Masks: Primitive, Campbell begins his elaboration on Jungian theory with an example of readily observable animal behavior. Campbell relates how a chick, barely hatched from its shell, will seek shelter from a passing hawk but not from non-predatory birds. Even a model--a symbol--of a hawk passed over the chick will elicit a

¹⁶ Campbell, Hero, 10-11.

response. Such an experiment clearly illustrates the presence of a highly specific, innate knowledge in the chick.¹⁷

Campbell argues that one cannot accurately consider the chick as the source of the stimulus response since it has as yet no acquired knowledge of hawks. Instead he places the response in whatever entity the chick has inherited, referring to this entity as "some sort of trans- or super-individual, inhabiting and moving the living creature."¹⁸ He wisely avoids pursuing the exact nature of this somewhat mystical individual.

Jung would contend, says Campbell, that one can see the same sort of innate knowledge in man. According to Jung, human unconscious responses--which would include the formation of myths--have two different sources. He names the first source the "personal unconscious." The personal unconscious is a group of images formed by personal memories that have either been forgotten or repressed; these images, like those in Freudian theory, are acquired from the environment and therefore differ among individuals.¹⁹

But Jung posits a second and more important source of unconscious response called the "collective unconscious." The collective unconscious serves as a vast reservoir of

¹⁷ Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York: Penguin Books, 1987) 32.

¹⁸ Campbell, Masks, 31-32.

¹⁹ Campbell, Masks, 31-32.

fundamental images--Jung calls them archetypes--not acquired, but innate in everyone. Campbell quotes Jung's explanation of these images:

The primary image (urtümliches Bild), which I have termed "archetype," is always collective, i.e. common to at least whole peoples or periods of history. *The chief mythological motifs of all times and races are very probably of this order;* for example, in the dreams and fantasies of neurotics of pure Negro stock I have been able to identify a series of motifs of Greek mythology.²⁰

The problem with Campbell's two-part approach in Hero now becomes evident. Obviously, Freud and Jung differ fundamentally in their respective assignments of the origin of an individual's psyche and, consequently, his mythology. Freud argues that our psyches form in the first few years of our life, molded by the influences of environment. Jung claims that we inherit the greater part of our psyches; we connect, through certain images and from the moment of our birth, with a kind of psyche of the past.

Following his explanation of Jungian theory in Chapter One of Masks: Primitive, Campbell himself identifies the conflict by reviewing Bastian's observations in the new light of this theory. The reader will recall that Bastian recognizes the repetition of certain "elementary ideas" in various cultures. Jung would certainly agree--these elementary ideas correspond with his archetypes; they represent inherited images. But Bastian also says that

²⁰ qtd. in Campbell, Masks, 32 (emphasis added).

elementary ideas appear everywhere in different forms, modified by local geographic and economic concerns. These local manifestations of the elementary ideas he calls "ethnic ideas." This half of Bastian's observation more closely resembles Freudian thinking--the environment molds the images. "Two possibilities of emphasis," writes Campbell,

are implicit in this observation of Bastian. The first we may term the psychological [Jungian] and the second the ethnological [Freudian]; and these can be taken to represent, broadly, the two contrasting points of view from which scientists, scholars, and philosophers have approached our subject.²¹

Which of these "contrasting" approaches, then, does Campbell ultimately choose? Campbell spends the rest of Chapter One of Masks: Primitive attempting to answer that question.

He first clarifies the basic theory implicit in each approach: myth and ritual either represent the unconscious manifestation of a universal system of images, or they represent the learned traditions of localized societies, influenced by geographic and economic concerns. He quotes Bastian to show Bastian's emphasis upon the archetypal over the local, then quotes scientist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown to illustrate the latter's emphasis upon the local over the archetypal. Once again he stresses that "the fundamental

²¹ Campbell, Masks, 32-33. The bracketed descriptions of Campbell's terms are mine.

contrast of the two approaches is surely clear," but he still fails to support one approach over the other.²²

Campbell then discusses the two approaches in more biological terms, returning once again to the animal kingdom for his examples. But once again, Campbell fails to resolve the conflict between the two approaches. He sees evidence of the existence of inherited psychological structures in animals called "isomorphs;" these structures determine behaviors that the animals cannot possibly have learned. But at the same time he points out the great number of animal responses that are learned, or imprinted on the animal's mind, after birth.

Finally, after much vacillation between points, Campbell makes a definitive statement on the conflict between the universal and ethnological approaches to psychology and, consequently, to myth study. Because of the importance of this statement to an understanding of Joseph Campbell's myth theories, I here quote Campbell at length:

After the work of Sigmund Freud and his school on the stages of the maturation of the human infant and the force of the imprints acquired in those stages on the responses of the individual throughout life, it will hardly be necessary to argue the relevance of the concepts of 'inner readiness' and 'imprint' to the sphere of human learning. Much of what the infant has to learn, furthermore, . . . has to do largely with the various aspects of group affiliation. There is, however, in the human sphere a factor that makes all study of instinct and innate structures

²² Campbell, Masks, 34.

extremely difficult; for, whereas even the animals most helpless at birth mature very quickly, the human infant is utterly helpless during the first dozen years of its existence and, during this period of the maturation of its character, is completely subject to the pressures and imprints of its local society. In fact, as Adolf Portmann, of Basel, has so well and frequently pointed out, precisely those three endowments of erect posture, speech, and thought, which elevate man above the animal sphere, develop only after birth, and consequently, in the structure of every individual, represent an indissoluble amalgam of innate biological and impressed traditional factors. We cannot think of one without the other.

And so, in the name of science, let us not try to do so!²³

Despite his earlier insistence that the archetypal and ethnological approaches to myth study contrast at a fundamental level, Campbell ultimately decides to accept *both* approaches. In fact, since neither approach can work on its own, Campbell applies them in an intertwined fashion, placing the origins of myth in the interdependence of the innate and acquired aspects of the psyche.²⁴

The Functions of Myth

Campbell's psychoanalytic approach to determining the origins of myth leads directly to his theories on how myth functions in one's life. Although a partial explanation of the functions of myth appears in the prologue to Hero, Campbell augments and refines this explanation in later

²³ Campbell, Masks, 36-37.

²⁴ For another explanation of the combination of approaches, see Campbell, Myths to Live By (New York: Bantam Books, 1973) 216-21.

works, and most of these later explanations are less speculative and more precise. A combination of these various examples, beginning with Part II of the 1951 essay, "Bios and Mythos," most accurately represents Campbell's theories on the matter.

In "Bios and Mythos," Campbell bases his discussion of the functions of myth more directly on Freudian theory or--to be more precise--on Géza Róheim's interpretation of Freudian theory, than on Jungian theory. This interpretation begins with a reiteration: Because of our extended dependence on our mothers as infants, humans develop irreconcilable, sexually-based internal conflicts. Unable to cope with these conflicts, the ego develops defense mechanisms to protect itself.²⁵ As Campbell explains in Hero, this process gives rise to dreams which, if interpreted properly, become our mythic images.

Having re-established this groundwork, Campbell explains how we benefit from these images. Because of our lack of independence, we attempt to structure the outside world. That structure, our society, takes the only form we know how to give it--form based on our deep-seated psychological images; in this instance, Campbell stresses the acquired, local images. Despite this emphasis, however, Campbell insists that although different regions and traditions will

²⁵ qtd. in Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 20.

slightly modify the final form that the society takes, fundamentally the structures are all similar. We create society, and in return, society provides security; through myth and ritual, we transform our mythic images into something that can protect our fragile psyches.²⁶ In this way, says Campbell, "society, as a fostering organ is . . . a kind of exterior 'second womb,' wherein the postnatal stages of man's long gestation--much longer than that of any other placental--are supported and defended."²⁷

²⁶ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 20. Campbell explains the psychological processes behind this interaction in greater detail by quoting Róheim. For a more profound Freudian analysis of this point, see Róheim, The Origin and Function of Culture (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs, 1943) 80-82.

²⁷ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 20. Campbell illustrates this point about the function of society, and therefore of myth, with one of its manifestations in literature. Because I pursue a similar approach to my analysis of Dunsany, and because it helps clarify Campbell's point, I reproduce the passage here:

"George Bernard Shaw played on this anomaly in his biological fantasy, Back to Methuselah Looking forward to the year 31,920 A.D., he showed us the birth from a huge egg of a pretty girl, who, in the twentieth century, would have been thought to be about seventeen. She had been growing within the egg for two years: the first nine months, like the nine of the present gestation period of the human embryo, recapitulated the biological evolution of man; the remaining fifteen then matured the organism, briefly but securely, to the condition of the young adult. Four years more, spent among youthful playmates in the sort of childhood that we remain in today until seventy, would terminate when her mind changed and the young woman, tiring suddenly of play, became wise and fit for the wielding of such power as today, in the hands of children, is threatening to wreck the world."

"Human adulthood is not achieved until the twenties: Shaw put it in the seventies: not a few look ahead to Purgatory. Meanwhile, society is what takes the place of the Shavian egg." Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 20-21.

Later in "Bios and Mythos," Campbell points out that the Eastern ideal has always been "to be *born* from the womb of myth, not to remain in it."²⁸ In the Indian scheme, the enlightened human understands the role of ritual and mythology but eventually moves beyond to self-dependence. However, though he repeatedly praises the East for its superior understanding of the function of mythology, Campbell insists in the vast majority of his work that myth and ritual can serve us our entire life; we need not seek to move beyond our myths.²⁹

In "Bios and Mythos," Campbell identifies only the sociological function of mythology; however, in other works he outlines other important ways in which myths function. Although he gives these functions different names in different works and alternately endows several of them with "most important function" status, Campbell ultimately identifies four basic functions of myth. Perhaps the clearest explanation of these four functions appears in Campbell's essay "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art" (1970).

In "Mythological Themes," Campbell labels the first function of mythology as the "mystical" or "metaphysical" function. In this capacity, mythology serves to reconcile

²⁸ Campbell, "Bios and Mythos," 21.

²⁹ Segal, Joseph Campbell, 116.

"consciousness with the preconditions of its own existence."³⁰ By this Campbell means that at some point, every human recognizes that he or she is part of the universal scheme of life, a scheme that often seems too huge and terrible to accept. Functioning at the mystical or metaphysical level, mythology helps one to cope with this recognition.

According to Campbell, the metaphysical function of myth helps humans form one of three basic world views. The first view represents a withdrawal from the world, a negation of the horrible things that can happen in it; this view appears most commonly in India since the time of Buddha. The second world view is an unconditional affirmation and acceptance of life, even in its most horrendous aspects; the scarification and initiation rites of some primitive tribes reflect this second world view. The third world view is that of the Levantine religions: a denial of the world as it is based on the acceptance of the world as it should be. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism all share this basic world view.

Campbell calls the second function of myth the "cosmological" function. This function provides a form or model for the universe; in this way humans can see every aspect of their world as a functioning part of what Campbell

³⁰ Joseph Campbell, "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," Myth, Dreams, and Religion, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1970) 138.

calls "a single great holy picture. . . opening back to mystery."³¹ He insists that in order for a group's mythology to be valid, its cosmological image must be consistent with the science of the place and time--he often faults the myth structure of modern religions for failing to meet this requirement.

Campbell's third function of mythology is the function he writes of in "Bios and Mythos": the formation of society. In "Mythological Themes," however, Campbell's discussion of myth's sociological function has a different emphasis. In "Bios and Mythos," Campbell refers to society as a protective second womb; in "Mythological Themes," he argues that myth creates a society that serves primarily as an unquestionable moral authority. Whether or not Campbell believes that these functions are in fact one and the same, he does not say.

In "Mythological Themes," Campbell stresses inherited, rather than acquired mythic images; the structure of the society comes from the local manifestation of the primary mythic idea. As an example, Campbell uses Creation as a primary image. The Occidental tradition supports one God, who alone created the universe and gave a privileged group the Ten Commandments by which to live. In the Indian tradition there is no one God but simply the eternal universe, growing and fading in a never-ending cycle; out of

³¹ Campbell, "Mythological Themes," 140.

this cosmology comes the social caste system. Neither system allows humankind to alter the moral order, and both systems ultimately come from the same mythic idea.³²

Campbell refers to the fourth and final function of mythology as the "psychological" function, and he says that it "lies at the root of all three [previous functions] as their base and final support."³³ Psychologically, through the subconscious, myth serves to help individuals fit into their particular society and guide them over the hurdles of life's progressive stages: the end of childhood, the formation of an individual identity, the assumption of responsibility, and eventually, death. Whereas cosmological and sociological systems change throughout time, the psychological makeup of all humans, although manifested in local forms, remains fundamentally constant.³⁴

Campbell and Lord Dunsany

This explanation of Joseph Campbell's theories provides a context for a study of Lord Dunsany's short stories. In summary, Joseph Campbell sees myth and ritual as the natural results of fundamental psychological functions in humans. The images of our inherited memories as well as impressions from our environment act on our psyches, and, in something

³² Campbell, "Mythological Themes," 140.

³³ Campbell, "Mythological Themes," 141.

³⁴ Campbell, "Mythological Themes," 141.

like self-defense, our psyches develop myths in order to cope with all this confusing and sometimes terrifying information. Myths then, says Campbell, serve four basic functions for humankind; one is a metaphysical function, another cosmological, the third sociological, and the fourth function, which serves as a foundation for the first three, is psychological.

According to Campbell, most problems that one sees in the world today stem directly from the fact that modern humanity has lost touch with its understanding of myths and, therefore, lost the guidance that they once afforded. He explains the problem to journalist Bill Moyers in The Power of Myth (1988):

Greek and Latin and biblical literature used to be part of everyone's education. Now, when these were dropped, a whole tradition of Occidental mythological information was lost. It used to be that these stories were in the minds of people. When the story is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life. It gives you perspective on what's happening to you. With the loss of that, we've really lost something because we don't have a comparable literature to take its place.³⁵

Campbell goes on to say, however, that some modern authors like James Joyce and Thomas Mann write "in terms of what might be called the mythological traditions," and their work "can be wonderfully instructive. . . . [They] were my teachers."³⁶ In "Mythological Themes," Campbell concludes

³⁵ Campbell and Moyers, 4.

³⁶ Campbell and Moyers, 4.

that the artist, especially the writer, is best equipped, through the metaphor of his or her art, to provide the kind of mythic instruction that modern humans lack.

Like Campbell, Lord Dunsany believed that the modern world had lost touch with its instructive traditions; he saw large cities and indeed anything industrial as symbolic of the growing rift between humans and their wiser, pastoral forbears, who had a closer rapport with their myths. In his 1918 essay on poetry, "Nowadays," Dunsany laments,

Yet it seems to me, as I watch the glare of our factories, or hear the roar of our towns and the sound going up from Progress upon her ravenous path, it seems to me that man has sailed out of his course and is steering by bad stars. And the terrible evil of it is this: that the further he goes, the harder it becomes for him to hear any voice that calls him back.³⁷

But Dunsany did believe in a voice that could call humanity back; like Campbell, Dunsany felt that the writer holds the key to re-educating humanity in the important lessons it has forgotten. Early in "Nowadays" Dunsany writes,

It is then [in the confusion of the modern world] that one turns to the poets. One sees the holy traditions, the cloak of Homer being passed reverently on. I hear them say that there are no poets nowadays, and I listen respectfully to that judgment whenever I hear men utter it, for it is no less awful a thing than judgment upon themselves. It means that they are all alone without an interpreter. For how can one view and understand

³⁷ Lord Dunsany, Nowadays (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1918) 3.

so old a thing as life or so new and strange a thing as this varying age, so full of machinery and politics, without the help of those rare minds that look, without reeling, upon essential things?³⁸

In fact, "Nowadays," and other of Dunsany's writings possess such an affinity of spirit with Campbell's theories that one is almost surprised that Campbell never once gives Dunsany at least a footnote.

After reading the works of Joseph Campbell and Lord Dunsany and observing this convergence of ideas, I have determined that a "mythological" approach to Dunsany's short stories yields insight into how those stories function and, in turn, into what Dunsany accomplished as a writer. Dunsany's stories, especially those in his first volume, The Gods of Pegana, function as Joseph Campbell says myths function: metaphysically, cosmologically, sociologically, and psychologically. In so doing they relate how humanity can achieve a measure of control over its world through myth. The rest of this study uses the basic elements of fiction--style, theme, characterization, etc.--to help explain how individual Dunsany short stories function mythologically. Seen in this light, Dunsany's stories appear not as "wandering fancy" or "merely exploitation of a mood,"³⁹ but as modern myths, capable of providing his interpretation of

³⁸ Dunsany, Nowadays, 11.

³⁹ Both phrases quoted here appear in George Brandon Saul, "Strange Gods and Far Places: The Short Fiction of Lord Dunsany," Arizona Quarterly 19 (1963): 201.

the "essential things" that both Campbell and Dunsany believed the modern world needs.

Chapter Two: The Mythological Functions
of The Gods of Pegana

[Dunsany's] people loom before us like a dance of animated and lovely shadows and grotesques, but we follow their adventures with excitement, and that means that in some way they are symbolic of our own spiritual adventures.¹

In 1905, Lord Dunsany published his first volume of short stories, The Gods of Pegana. The "stories," however, do not conform to any strict definition of what a short story should be. Although some of the stories in The Gods of Pegana function as independent, unified wholes, many of the stories take the form of an interdependent series of highly poetic fragments. The strange nature of these stories has often frustrated critics who cannot find a ready category for them. In his article, "Lord Dunsany--Myth Maker," Odell Shepard brings up the problem of classifying Dunsany's fiction. Shepard searches for literary analogues to the stories in The Gods of Pegana and sees Maurice de Guérin's Centaure, Poe's "Silence," and the prose-poems of Turgenev as possible forerunners of Dunsany's form, "but only in the

¹ George William Russell [], "A Maker of Mythologies," Irish Statesman, April 17, 1926. Rpt. Living Age, May 29, 1926: 464-65.

vaguest way."² Stumped for a genre, Shepard concludes, "Dunsany's prose tales are not short stories and they are not fables, but something between."³

Shepard, however, is more concerned with the stories' function than with what to call them; immediately after his inconclusive analysis of genre, Shepard makes this statement about Dunsany's stories: "The basis of their technic [sic] lies in the psychology of dreams."⁴ According to Joseph Campbell, this "psychology of dreams" leads directly to myth. Although Shepard does call Dunsany's stories modern mythology, he views them as a brand of escapism, Dunsany's way of fleeing from the unpleasant realities of the modern world. He faults Dunsany for this apparently escapist attitude, arguing (rightly, I think) that those writers "who lead us away from reality belong to an order below that of

² Odell Shepard, "Lord Dunsany--Myth Maker," Scribner's Magazine, May 1921: 595-99. A brief note on Dunsany criticism: There simply is not much secondary material on Lord Dunsany, and most of that scant collection was written during his lifetime. The most significant Dunsany studies of late are a chapter in S. T. Joshi's The Weird Tale (1990) and Darrell Schweitzer's Pathways to Elfland: The Writings of Lord Dunsany (1989). Unfortunately this latter work does not often relate specifically to this study. I have consolidated as much of the early material as possible that in any way applies to Dunsany's technique in The Gods of Pegana and Time and the Gods, including material that deals primarily with his other works (most early Dunsany criticism deals with his dramas).

³ Shepard, 597.

⁴ Shepard, 597.

those who help us to face and master life."⁵ But Dunsany's stories, especially those in The Gods of Pegana, represent not a passive escape from the real world but an active interpretation of a world where humanity can assert control over itself through the creative power of myth.

The seed of this interpretation lies in the fertile ground of Dunsany's style. In style (and partly in content), the stories in The Gods of Pegana read much like chapters from the King James Version of The Bible. Compare, for example, Genesis 2: 1-2 to the first paragraph of Dunsany's story, "Of Skarl the Drummer"--

Genesis 2: 1-2:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Dunsany:

When Mana-Yood-Sushai had made the gods and Skarl, Skarl made a drum, and began to beat upon it that he might drum for ever [sic]. Then because he was weary after the making of the gods, and because of the drumming of Skarl, did Mana-Yood-Sushai grow drowsy and fall asleep.⁶

Or compare Job 38: 1-4 to the beginning of Dunsany's story, "The Deeds of Mung"--

⁵ Shepard, 599.

⁶ Lord Dunsany, The Gods of Pegana (Boston: John W. Luce & Co., n.d.) 3. All further references to this work appear in the text.

Job 38: 1-4:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.

Dunsany:

Once, as Mung [the god of Death] went his way athwart the Earth and up and down its cities and across its plains, Mung came upon a man who was afraid when Mung said: 'I am Mung!'

And Mung said: 'Were the forty million years before thy coming intolerable to thee?'

And Mung said: 'Not less tolerable to thee shall be the forty million years to come!' (p. 20)

Other critics have already pointed out that much of Dunsany's writing displays his affinity for the literary style of the King James Bible.⁷ In fact, Dunsany's prose style attracts so much attention that analyses of Dunsany's work often speak of little else. Even Dunsany's detractors speak glowingly of his rolling rhetoric; however, they afterwards complain that they find nothing *but* rhetoric in his works. Josephine Hammond, for example, makes such a complaint while speaking of Dunsany's plays:

Notwithstanding, then, Dunsany's declaration,--'I want to write about men and women and the great forces that have been with them from their cradle up,' we had best not seek in his dramatic work for authentic character creation, for psychological insight or philosophical foresight: we had best

⁷ For an example with a response from Dunsany, see Frank Harris, "Lord Dunsany and Sidney Sime," in Contemporary Portraits: Second Series (New York: Frank Harris, 1919) 147-50.

look on his plays as excursions, primarily, into the fantastic and grotesque. So shall we be richer for fairy tales, ingeniously shaped, and so shall we be charmed with imageries, clear-cut and glowing: we shall be served with zestful fable and the fillip of a fine imagination.⁸

And in his article, "Strange Gods and Far Places: The Short Stories of Lord Dunsany," Saul believes that in Dunsany's work,

. . . there is a yielding to wandering fancy rather than constructive imagination that integrates fanciful detail toward a crucial point; too often merely exploitation of a mood concerned with the ring of a sentence and the almost sentimental use of names whose only excuse seems that of sound, though Dunsany appears frankly to have considered them the gifts of inspiration.⁹

Saul sees little more than style for style's sake in Dunsany's fiction, and therefore finds little to praise.

But in The Gods of Pegana, Dunsany's biblical style serves a greater purpose than merely to charm the reader or, as Saul seems to suggest, to charm Dunsany himself. By using a style similar to that used in relating the most famous myth of the western world, Dunsany associates his own work with that kind of mythology. As early as the Preface, Dunsany hints that The Gods of Pegana will function in the mythical realm: "There be islands in the Central Sea, whose waters are

⁸ Josephine Hammond, "Wonder and the Playwright, Lord Dunsany," The Personalist 3 (1922): 10-11.

⁹ George Brandon Saul, "Strange Gods and Far Places: The Short Fiction of Lord Dunsany," Arizona Quarterly 19 (1963): 201.

bounded by no shore and where no ships come--this [book] is the faith of their people" (n. pag.). The phrases of the Preface, which read almost like verses from the Bible, and the statement that The Gods of Pegana itself serves as a "bible" for a fictional people, foreshadow Dunsany's own creation of a world and its mythology, Pegana.

Dunsany's style in The Gods of Pegana leads the reader to view Dunsany's stories as mythology; the content of the stories, moreover, actually functions as mythology does. Much of the content, like the style, echoes similar material in the Bible (as seen above), but a reader would have to work very hard indeed to reconcile the underlying message with any Judeo-Christian doctrine. As Shaw Desmond writes in his comparative study, "Dunsany, Yeats, and Shaw: Trinity of Magic," Dunsany "reveals to men in shadowy mirrors that they have been gods, that they are yet gods in embryo, and that they can once more regain their lost godhood."¹⁰ Desmond seems only to toy with the idea, but his statement reveals an important point: Dunsany does indeed want his humanity to regain its lost godhood and by its own power--a power that he will offer through the functions of mythology.

For Saul, however, the content of Dunsany's stories satisfies as little as does the style. Saul argues that "the philosophic questions implied or uttered in this volume [The

¹⁰ Bookman 58 (1923): 260.

Gods of Pegana] are at least as old as Omar Khayyam and the earlier Greeks."¹¹ Such a statement lacks critical force, however, because it assumes that these old philosophic questions are either answered or irrelevant, neither of which is the case. By reviewing the old questions about the nature of life and humanity's place in the universal scheme, the themes and characters in The Gods of Pegana, like mythology itself, serve metaphysical, cosmological, sociological, and psychological functions, expressing Dunsany's interpretation of our own world out of touch with its myths. Because, as I have already shown, Campbell's distinctions between these functions are often fine ones, most of the stories in The Gods of Pegana fulfill more than one mythological function.

The story "Of Skarl the Drummer," for example, functions on all four levels. At the cosmological level, Skarl functions as the figure directly below Mana-Yood-Sushai, the main god of Pegana. By beating on his drum, Skarl keeps Mana asleep and maintains the universe. At the metaphysical level, Skarl himself serves as a comforting symbol of eternity and dogged persistence; though his arm "grows weary," still he beats his drum, "that the gods may do the work of the gods, and the worlds go on" (p. 4). Viewed from a sociological perspective, Skarl's tale represents understanding of and contentment with a place in the

¹¹ Saul, 198.

universal system; at the end of the worlds Skarl shall "walk forth into the void," because "the work of Skarl is over" (p. 4).

The psychological functionings of Skarl's tale prove the most interesting of all. As Campbell says, the psychological function of myth serves as the foundation for the other three functions; this holds true for "Of Skarl the Drummer" and, indeed, for most of the stories in The Gods of Pegana. At one point in the story Dunsany reveals two theories of the creation of Pegana:

Some say that the Worlds and the Suns are but the echoes of the drumming of Skarl, and others say that they be dreams that arise in the mind of Mana because of the drumming of Skarl, as one may dream whose rest is troubled by sound of song, but none knoweth . . . (p. 3).

The creation of Pegana by Mana echoes almost exactly Campbell's explanation of how myths are created: the creator (Mana) transforms unconscious images into understandable forms (the world of Pegana). When applied outside the limits of the story of Skarl and Pegana, this same passage reveals the author as Mana, transforming his own unconscious thoughts and images into his own understandable form: the stories in The Gods of Pegana.

Although "Of Skarl the Drummer" demonstrates how several or all of the functions can merge in one tale, the mythological function most easily recognized in The Gods of Pegana is the cosmological. The philosophy expressed through the cosmological content in The Gods of Pegana appears at

first glance to be wholly cynical; man and his world (no women appear in the book) are only playthings for the gods, without hope of mercy or redemption. In The Weird Tale, Joshi also notes The Gods of Pegana's apparent cynicism. As an example, he cites the untitled prologue, in which the personified powers of Fate and Chance view the universe as a "Game," although Joshi mistakenly attributes this attitude to Mana-Yood-Sushai, "the Jupiter of the gods."¹² He also notes how the little gods below Mana-Yood-Sushai hold a similar attitude toward humans: "Thousands of years ago They were in a mirthful mood. They said: 'Let Us call up a man before Us that We may laugh in Pegana'."¹³

Joshi sees this cynicism on Dunsany's part as a "repudiation of modernism," a kind of "social satire" that reflects Dunsany's condemnation of the changes in the modern world.¹⁴ According to Joshi, Pegana represents:

. . . a world where we are, to be sure, the playthings of the gods but where things are cleaner, purer, simpler, and more august than the world of workaday London.¹⁵

As far as it goes, Joshi's statement is a sound one; Dunsany's distaste for most things modern is well-

¹² Joshi, 47.

¹³ Joshi, 47.

¹⁴ Joshi, 49.

¹⁵ Joshi, 49.

chronicled.¹⁶ But the cynical cosmology of Dunsany's world functions at a deeper level than a nostalgia for lost simplicity. Dunsany establishes his harsh myth-world in The Gods of Pegana as a warning, as the foundation for an ominous example of a world not in tune with the unconscious lessons of myth. The people who eventually appear in Pegana almost invariably despair and fail, crushed under the weight of the implacable gods. Dunsany implies a parallel in the real world when people fail to connect with a mythology. The cosmology of Pegana, however, need not create a sense of despair. The failures of the people to utilize the power of their mythology serve as negative examples; the reader should interpret the cosmological messages even as the characters do not.

The first few stories in The Gods of Pegana function primarily at the cosmological level; early on in the work Dunsany begins to build a universal scheme. The untitled prologue introduces Dunsany's creation story and establishes the nature of his harsh universe:

¹⁶ Hazel Littlefield, one of Dunsany's American acquaintances, often cites Dunsany's grumblings against modernity in her unabashedly glowing biography, Lord Dunsany: King of Dreams (New York: Exposition Press, 1959). According to Littlefield, Dunsany had little but contempt for technology or indeed for anything that tends to separate humanity from the simplicity of a pastoral life. With the exception of the space observatory at Palomar, which apparently fired his imagination, Dunsany shunned most modern contrivances. (Littlefield, 46). For more on this point, see also Boyd, 498.

In the mists before the Beginning, Fate and Chance cast lots to decide whose the Game should be; and he that won strode through the mists to Mana-Yood-Sushai and said: 'Now make gods for Me, for I have won the cast and the Game is to be Mine.' Who it was that won the cast, . . . none knoweth. (n. pag.)

One of three apparently eternal figures commissions another to make it gods, so that it can play the "game" of the universe. The reader never learns whether Fate or Chance will rule this universe, but either way, the outlook for humanity is bleak, because "none knoweth." No one can decide whether he believes in fate or chance. The first few stories of The Gods of Pegana do little to improve the picture of the universe found in the untitled prologue; in fact, the universe seems to darken with the very act of its creation.

The first story in The Gods of Pegana, titled "The Gods of Pegana," reveals that sometime in the distant past the central god figure, Mana-Yood-Sushai, created other, smaller gods and then rested in Pegana. The small gods, in turn, created "all things that have been. . . , excepting only Mana-Yood-Sushai" (p. 1). The universe will end when Mana-Yood-Sushai wakes from his rest and creates "new gods and other worlds" (pp. 1-2). The figures of Fate and Chance do not reappear in the book; no character refers back to the ultimate origin of his cosmology, leaving the future of the universe in the hands of the sleeping Mana-Yood-Sushai. This already bleak cosmology of a universe doomed to disappear upon the awakening of its god becomes even more frightening

with the revelation that "none may pray to Mana-Yood-Sushai but only to the gods whom He hath made" (p. 1); humanity has no connection either with the ultimate or penultimate sources of its universe, and therefore fails to relate to its own myths. Dunsany makes it clear that without these mythological connections, humanity has no hope of controlling its own future.

The next few stories in The Gods of Pegana, including the above-mentioned "Of Skarl the Drummer," provide some details of the basic cosmology established in the first story. In "Of Skarl the Drummer," the reader learns that in addition to the small gods, Mana-Yood-Sushai created the drummer Skarl. As mentioned above, the beating of Skarl's drum, surprisingly enough, puts Mana to sleep, where he will remain until Skarl ceases his drumming. When Skarl stops drumming, Mana will wake, and the universe will end. At the sociological level, Skarl serves as a hopeful example of contentment, but at the cosmological level, Skarl represents a guideless humanity's perception of the dark universe of Pegana, unalterable and relentless, yet doomed to disappear without warning.

The next story, "Of the Making of the Worlds," slowly shifts the emphasis from the cosmological to the metaphysical function of myth. As I explain in Chapter One, the metaphysical function of mythology is closely related to the cosmological function. The cosmological function helps

humanity see the interconnectedness of the elements in the universal scheme, and the metaphysical function helps humanity cope with the often dreadful realization of its place in that scheme. Having begun to reveal a harsh scheme, Dunsany offers the humanity of his universe a way to cope with their knowledge of that scheme. However, with one or two exceptions, almost all of the people who appear later in The Gods of Pegana either do not understand or they reject the metaphysical lessons.

Nevertheless, in "Of the Making of the Worlds," Dunsany offers his characters these lessons. While Mana sleeps, the gods decide to make worlds to amuse themselves. In silence, so as not to disturb Mana's rest, they make worlds and suns and eventually the comet, "the seeker" (p. 6), to symbolize the eternal search for knowledge. The comet moves continuously through the universe but never finds whatever it is that it seeks. If properly interpreted, this piece of the creation myth should offer the people of Dunsany's world comfort through the outer, physical symbol of an inner psychological truth. Dunsany writes, "Man, when thou seest the comet, know that another seeketh besides thee nor ever findeth out" (p. 6). Here, then, Dunsany offers his alternative to despair--the recognition and acceptance of a myth.

After the comet, the gods make the Moon as a silent observer of their game, "to watch, to regard all things, and

be silent" (p. 6). Then, having made the seeker and all the other worlds in constant motion, the gods decide to create what should become another symbolic lesson for humanity:

Then said the gods: 'Let Us make one to rest. One not to move among the moving. One not to seek like the comet, nor to go round like the worlds; to rest while Mana rests.'

And They made the Star of the Abiding and set it in the North.

Man, when thou seest the Star of the Abiding to the North, know that one resteth as doth Mana-Yood-Sushai, and know that somewhere among the Worlds is rest. (pp. 6-7)

Finally, after the North Star, the gods make the Earth, "to wonder" (p. 7) at the rest.

In "Of the Making of the Worlds," Dunsany makes the mythological lessons explicit by addressing "Man" and then explaining the significance of each element of the creation myth. And by using recognizable elements from the real world--the Moon, a comet, and the North Star--Dunsany establishes the world of Pegana as metaphor; he clearly means these messages for the reader, as well as for the people of Pegana. But, as I have already said, in The Gods of Pegana, Dunsany works mainly through negative examples; most of the people (and even the gods) who appear later in the book show no understanding of these mythological lessons, and therefore live in fear and misery. The reader must learn mostly from the failures, not the successes of the characters.

"Of the Game of the Gods," the story immediately following "Of the Making of the Worlds," tells of the creation of this confused humanity. Like the stories before

it, "Of the Game of the Gods" functions often at the metaphysical and cosmological levels. Bored with the game of the worlds, one of the gods, Kib, creates animals on Earth with which to play. The other gods fear that Kib will eventually create "Men" and "endanger the Secret of the gods," (p. 9) a secret that Dunsany never explicitly reveals. Therefore, another god, Mung, sends Death to the Earth in an attempt to end Kib's dangerous game.

After a million years, however, Kib grows bored with his game and, from the animals, creates "Men." The other gods react: "Then the gods feared greatly for the Secret of the gods, and set a veil between Man and his ignorance that he might not understand" (p. 9); the gods themselves interfere with humanity's relationship to its cosmology. It is important to note Dunsany's word choice here--the gods set a veil between man and his "ignorance," not his wisdom. At this point, one can again see how all of the mythological functions have their basis in the psychological function. The gods fear not man's conscious mind but his unconscious mind--his "ignorance"--the source of dreams and the font of mythological instruction. Without a connection to their "ignorance," the people of Pegana are doomed to live lives of confusion. No cosmological system can serve, says Dunsany, if that system is cut off from its well-spring in the unconscious mind.

Another tale that begins at the cosmological level and then merges through the metaphysical and into the other levels is "Concerning Sish," subtitled, "(The Destroyer of Hours)." "Concerning Sish" establishes the relentless nature of Time, a figure which Dunsany often personifies and to which he devotes much attention in later books. In The Gods of Pegana, Time is the hound of the god Sish, and "at Sish's bidding do the hours run before him as he goeth upon his way" (p. 13). Kib, the god of Life, goes before Sish, and Mung, the god of Death, follows behind; Sish never tarries or turns back to the times that he passes. Sish and his hound continually attack all things on Earth except only Wornath-Mavai, "a garden fairer than all the gardens upon earth" (p. 13). The gods once walked in Wornath-Mavai but walk there no longer because they fear the hound Time, knowing that someday, when Mana awakes, even they will fall victim to its relentless passage.

The lost garden of Wornath-Mavai, similar in many ways to the biblical Garden of Eden, represents a fundamental cosmological and metaphysical truth: humanity and even the gods must reconcile themselves to their inability to move any way but forward in time. The gods are the first to fear time, but soon after, through a representative prophet, humanity faces the same reality:

Once did the prophet think that he discerned it,
[Wornath-Mavai] in the distance beyond the
mountains, a garden exceeding fair with flowers;
but Sish arose, and pointed with his hand, and set

his hound to pursue him, who hath followed ever since. (p. 15)

Without the connection to their myths through their unconscious minds, the people of Pegana grow in fear and confusion with almost every piece that Dunsany adds to his universal scheme.

Dunsany offers a break from the harshness of his world in one of the few stories that functions almost exclusively on the metaphysical level, "The Sayings of Limpang-Tung," subtitled, "The God of Mirth and of Melodious Minstrels." Unlike his companions in Pegana, the god Limpang-Tung offers comfort to humanity through the beauty and simplicity of nature. He "doth not understand" (p. 25) the scheme of the gods and why men must die; he urges humanity to pray against death, even though thousands of such prayers have failed in the past: "Utter thy prayer! It may accomplish where failed ten thousand thousand" (p. 25). He decides to send jests, simple pleasures, and natural beauty to help humanity accept its short span on earth, and in a passage typical of his crystalline prose, Dunsany describes Limpang-Tung's creation of a mountain wind:

In an inner mountain land where none hath come he hath carved his organ pipes out of the mountains, and there when the winds, his servants, come in from all the world he maketh the melody of Limpang-Tung. But the song, arising at night, goeth forth like a river, winding through all the world, and here and there amid the peoples of earth one heareth, and straightway all that hath voice to sing crieth aloud in music to his soul (pp. 26-7).

In other tales, smaller gods also offer comforts to humanity: Kilooloogung, the god of rising smoke; Triboogie, "the Lord of Dusk, whose children are the shadows," (p. 33); Hish, the god of night-time silence; and many others. Limpang-Tung and these other small gods try to help reconcile the people of Pegana with their place in the universe and thereby serve the metaphysical function in Dunsany's myth.

Dunsany soon makes it clear, however, that on at least one particular, Limpang-Tung leads humanity astray. A series of stories about the prophets of Pegana's world demonstrates that with a prayer against death, the metaphysical and sociological functions of myth collide. The reader will recall that Joseph Campbell sees two ways in which mythology functions sociologically: (1) it provides a protective social "womb" in which a fragile new personality may develop; and (2) it provides an unimpeachable moral authority. The stories in The Gods of Pegana function in this second sociological way, but with a slight twist. Instead of providing the unimpeachable hierarchy and authority of a local society, Dunsany establishes the unimpeachable hierarchy and authority of an entire universe. Ultimately, the hierarchy appears like this:

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      Either Fate or Chance
          |
      Mana-Yood-Sushai
          |
Sish and his hound Time (and Skarl the Drummer)
          |
      Kib and Mung, the gods of Life and Death
          |

```

the smaller gods of Pegana
|
humanity

Dunsany's stories perform the sociological function of mythology primarily by establishing this hierarchy and then reporting the sad fates of those who question it without a clear understanding of mythology to support them.

A complicated relationship between the sociological, metaphysical, and psychological functions of The Gods of Pegana appears in the series of stories that deal with the prophets of Dunsany's world. Of all the prophets that Dunsany puts forward, only the ones called Yonath and Imbaun show an understanding of the lessons that Dunsany offers; the others serve as negative examples. Yonath gives voice to his understanding in the tale "Yonath the Prophet," which, because of its importance to the interdependent mythological functions of Dunsany's work, I here quote at length:

These are the words of Yonath, the first among all prophets:

There be gods upon Pegana.

Upon a night I slept. And in my sleep Pegana came very near. And Pegana was full of gods.

I saw the gods beside me as one might see wonted things.

Only I saw not Mana-Yood-Sushai.

And in that hour, in the hour of my sleep--I knew.

And the end and the beginning of my knowing, and all of my knowing that there was, was this--that Man Knoweth Not.

Seek thou to find at night the utter edge of the darkness, or seek to find the birthplace of the rainbow where he leapeth upward from the hills, only seek not concerning the wherefore of the making of the gods. . . .

Seek not to know. Thy seeking will weary thee, and thou wilt return much worn, to rest at

last about the place from whence thou settest out
upon thy seeking. . . .

The path of my seeking, that leadeth to
seeking again, must be trodden by very many more,
when Yonath is no longer even Yonath.

Set not thy foot upon that path.

Seek not to know.

These be the Words of Yonath. (pp. 53-55)

As I have already shown, in "Of the Game of the Gods," the gods themselves interfere with humanity's relationship to its universe. The only option that leaves humanity is to embrace the situation and peacefully accept its position, however low, in the scheme. "Seek not to know," says Yonath, for he knows that humanity can never comprehend its universe and only wearies itself spiritually in the attempt. By offering a hope of comfort in the recognition of an unchangeable order, Yonath fulfills the metaphysical and sociological functions of myth simultaneously.

But Yonath and his message function at an even deeper level. His revelation comes from the images of his dreams: "And in that hour, in the hour of *my sleep*--I knew." Like Mana, he creates a myth for himself out of the images of his unconscious thoughts, and in so doing he represents the psychological function of myth. But the content of Yonath's revelation serves that function even better than its means. "Seek not to know," says Yonath, and one might just as well read the line as, "Seek not to know *consciously*." Through Yonath, Dunsany insists that conscious knowledge leads not to understanding but through confusion and eventually back to "the place from whence thou settest out upon thy seeking."

Only unconscious knowledge, such as Yonath's dream transformed into myth, can lead to a revelation such as Yonath receives. Once again in Dunsany's stories, as Campbell says of all myth, the psychological function lies as a foundation under the other three functions of mythology.

Yonath serves as the mouthpiece for Dunsany's admonition, but the prophets that follow Yonath do not display his understanding of the lesson. Through their subsequent failures, Dunsany reinforces the validity of Yonath's multi-functional statement. The tale, "Yug the Prophet," tells how after Yonath dies, "still men sought to know" (p. 56). The people find another prophet in Yug, but unlike Yonath, Yug claims "to know all things" (p. 56). Happy with the apparent wisdom of their new prophet, the people soon forget Yonath, but Dunsany quickly points out the folly of Yug's professed understanding. One day Mung, the god of Death, appears, "making the sign of Mung" (p. 56). And like all others to whom Mung makes the sign of Mung, Yug dies.

Next come the tales "Alhireth-Hotep the Prophet," in which Alhireth-Hotep claims to keep counsel with Mung, and "Kabok the Prophet," in which Kabok claims to have power over Mung. But these progressively bolder claims to knowledge and power ultimately end in the same way, with Mung making the sign of Mung to both prophets. Ignoring the lesson of Yonath and the constant reminders from Mung, the people continue

their search for conscious knowledge, and the futility of their search is emphasized each time Mung cuts down the new symbol of that search. "Seek not to know," rings Dunsany's call for unconscious knowledge each time Mung appears.

After Alhireth-Hotep and Kabok, the emphasis of the prophet stories shifts subtly from the psychological back to the sociological function of myth in "Of the Calamity that Befel Yun-Ilara by the Sea, and of the Building of the Tower of the Ending of Days." After the death of Kabok, the people seek another prophet who does not fear Mung and come upon the shepherd, Yun-Ilara. As a shepherd, Yun-Ilara represents a figure with ample opportunity to heed Yonath's warning and to live a life of quiet contentment. But instead, Yun-Ilara heeds the call of the people and builds the Tower of the Ending of Days facing the sea; every night he climbs the tower and curses Mung so that all can hear, daring Mung to come for him. Outraged by this challenge to the established hierarchy, Mung decides to punish Yun-Ilara--not by making the sign of Mung, but by leaving Yun-Ilara alone in his tower.

Many years go by, and as Yun-Ilara feels the pangs of old age, he begins to understand the rightness of the established order. When he becomes a very old man indeed, Yun-Ilara's curses against Mung turn to pleas:

'O Mung! O loveliest of the gods! O Mung, most dearly to be desired! thy gift of Death is the heritage of Man, with ease and rest and silence and returning to the Earth. Kib giveth but toil and

trouble; and Sish, he sendeth regrets with each of his hours wherewith he assails the World. . . . When the other gods forsake him a man hath only Mung.' (p. 63)

But Yun-Ilara's understanding comes too late; Mung does not relent and come for him. At the end of the tale, a heap of bones in the wreck of Yun-Ilara's tower still sends up a cry "for the mercy of Mung, if any such there be" (p. 64).

The story immediately following the tale of Yun-Ilara also functions primarily at the sociological level. "Of How the Gods Whelmed Sidith" tells how a city plagued by pestilence, famine, and the threat of war compels its High Prophet to pray for leniency from the gods. He returns from a terrifying night of prayer on a mountain-top with grim news: "'The faces of the gods are iron and Their mouths set hard. There is no hope from the gods'" (p. 68).

Unsatisfied, the people then tell the prophet that he must pray to Mana-Yood-Sushai, although they know that he is the one "to whom no man may pray" (p. 68). They watch the prophet climb the mountain and begin to pray, but he suddenly disappears, "nor was he ever seen of men again who had dared to trouble the stillness of Mana-Yood-Sushai" (p. 69). Thereafter, the people of Sidith themselves are destroyed by a warring tribe. Cut off from their creator, the people of Pegana should rely on their own unconscious knowledge to recreate the world through their myth. In this way they could,

as Desmond says, "regain their lost godhood."¹⁷ But instead, they reject this knowledge, challenge the universal hierarchy, and fail.

The most eloquent and poignant example of Dunsany's universal sociological message comes in the tale called, "Of How Imbaun Met Zodrak." For the first time since Yonath, Dunsany introduces a wise prophet, Imbaun, who accepts the "Scheme of Things" (p. 75) as how the world must be. One day, by the side of a river, Imbaun encounters the tearful old man, Zodrak, who calls himself "the fool" (p. 76). Zodrak relates the pathetic tale of how he once was a shepherd, until the gods brought him before them in Pegana in order to have something at which to laugh.

Zodrak explains how he survived their scorn and therefore demanded to be made a god himself; according to "the law of the gods" (p. 77), he had this right once they brought him to Pegana. But as a god, Zodrak attempted to change the scheme: he sent men money, love, and wisdom but also the grief that comes with them. "'And I,'" says Zodrak, "'who would make men happy, have made them sad, and I have spoiled the beautiful scheme of the gods'" (p. 78). He then asks Imbaun to forgive him, as a representative of the humanity which he has wronged. The tale ends with Imbaun's forgiveness of Zodrak and Zodrak's final, ironic apology.

¹⁷ Desmond, 260.

"And [Zodrak] answered: 'I was but a shepherd, and I could not know.' Then he was gone" (p. 79).

Zodrak's final statement once again displays the foundational nature of the psychological function by introducing it into a tale that also functions at another level (in this case, the sociological). Zodrak's apology is ironic because he misses the point; the fact that he "was but a shepherd" and "could not know" should have served in his favor. If he had been truly aware of and content with his place in the universal scheme and receptive to the images of his unconscious thought, he never would have challenged the gods.

The psychological function of Dunsany's stories often proves difficult to isolate because, as I have shown, it flows so freely through the other three mythological functions. But in the tales "Of Yoharneth-Lahai," "The River," and "The Bird of Doom and the End," the psychological function takes precedence, working over the other three functions, rather than under them. In these three tales, humanity reconciles itself to the world in which it lives, by transforming its unconscious thoughts into myth; in a sense, in these stories humanity can actually become the creators of that world.

Yoharneth-Lahai first appears in the tale "Of Yoharneth-Lahai" as the god who sends dreams to all humanity, "to the poor man and to The King" (p. 28). Those to whom Yoharneth-

Lahai sends no dreams, those who have no unconscious images with which to connect, "must endure all night the laughter of the gods, with highest mockery, in Pegana" (p. 28). Without the comfort of myth, the people of Pegana live in isolation and fear as slaves to their gods.

But at the end of the tale, "Of Yoharneth-Lahai," Dunsany offers the possibility of escape from this slavery. As he does in "Of Skarl the Drummer," Dunsany posits the idea that Pegana and its worlds are only dreams:

Whether the dreams and the fancies of Yoharneth-Lahai be false and the Things that are done in the Day be real, or the Things that are done in the Day be false and the dreams and the fancies of Yoharneth-Lahai be true, none knoweth saving only Mana-Yood-Sushai, *who hath not spoken* (p. 29).

Dunsany allows the possibility that the dreams of humanity may be more real than their "real" lives. The people can become their own gods, creating the silent Mana and their own worlds through the psychological function of myth.

This possibility turns to probability when Dunsany prophesies the end of his imaginary world in the two tales "The River" and "The Bird of Doom and the End." In these tales Dunsany tells of the "River of Silence" that flows from Pegana to the ends of the universe. On this river sails Yoharneth-Lahai in his boat--"Her timbers were olden dreams dreamed long ago, and poets' fancies made her tall, straight masts . . ." (p. 94). From here Yoharneth-Lahai does his work:

For ever on every wind float up to Pegana the hopes and the fancies of the people which have no home in the Worlds, and there Yoharneth-Lahai weaves them into dreams, to take them to the people again (p. 94).

At the end of their lives, the people of Pegana will climb aboard Yoharneth-Lahai's ship and sail beyond all of the worlds to the "Sea of Silence" (p. 95). When all of the people have gone, the gods will no longer have any purpose. Skarl will cease his drumming, Mana will wake, and the gods themselves will sail in Yoharneth-Lahai's ship to the place beyond all of the worlds. Only Mana, the dreamer, will remain to "think some other plan concerning gods and worlds" (p. 96).

The prophesied ending of Dunsany's myth world helps to clarify the structure of The Gods of Pegana and relate its primary message. Yoharneth-Lahai is like Dunsany himself, the artist who takes the dreams of the people and gives them back again in a form the people can understand. The people of Pegana themselves hold great power in this process; with the help of an interpreter (Yoharneth-Lahai), they could create their own world from their own unconscious thoughts, but as negative examples, they most often do not.

In the end, Mana represents not the true creator of the universe, but only the primal source of dreams and unconscious images. The people of Pegana hold the true power of creation in their ability to take these images and transform them into reality. The gods become echoes, with no

power over humanity except that which humanity gives them; here is the "Secret" of the gods that they sought to protect by raising "a veil between Man and his ignorance that he might not understand" (p. 9). Through his creation of Pegana, Dunsany offers the reader the same chance of self-empowerment through myth that he offers his characters. The secret of the gods, says Dunsany, is the secret of humanity.

With this revelation, the reader can see how the cosmological, metaphysical, sociological, and psychological functions of The Gods of Pegana serve on three different levels. First, they work for Dunsany himself, the artist who transforms his ideas into a form that he can understand: the imaginary pantheon of Pegana. Second, they work for the people of Pegana who, although they usually fail, are nevertheless offered a mythology that they can use. And finally they work for the reader, who can transform the images of The Gods of Pegana into an understanding of Dunsany's fears for the real world, a world increasingly unaware of the power of myth.

There are far too many tales in The Gods of Pegana (thirty-one in all) to explicate each one individually in this study. But the stories that I have discussed show how Dunsany uses the functions of mythology to create a humanity capable of overcoming its gods and controlling its own destiny. Through the unconscious, creative power of myth, says Dunsany, humanity can reveal the secret of the gods and

make its own worlds. Dunsany always denied that his tales function symbolically, but many a writer of heavy symbolism has made the same claim. And, in the end, his intention matters very little. Clearly, as says critic William Chislett, Jr.,

. . . with a whole new pantheon out of the Void, Dunsany becomes, in spite of himself, moral, and contributes to men, in spite of himself, his reading of life.¹⁸

¹⁸ William Chislett, Jr., "New Gods for Old," [Univ. of California] Chronicle XXI, 1918; rpt. in Moderns and Near-Moderns (New York: The Grafton Press, 1928) 177.

Chapter Three: Pegana Revisited--
The Extension of Dunsany's Mythic Fiction
in Time and the Gods

Lord Dunsany's work leads literature back to its sources. For literature is the unveiling of the eternal, the immutable, the fugacious. It is, in its essence, the record of a myth done into words, words selected by a master-brain, words that hold the vision in a vise of gold and glass.¹

In 1906, Dunsany returned to Pegana to develop further his myth-world in a volume of short stories, Time and the Gods. These stories are much longer than those in The Gods of Pegana and more unified; they function independently from one another in a way that the first tales do not. But most of the characteristics of The Gods of Pegana reappear in Time and the Gods: the same mythical setting, the same gods, the same biblical style of prose. And, most important, Time and the Gods displays the same mythological functionings with which Dunsany first revealed his message of mythic empowerment.

Although Dunsany reintroduces Pegana and its gods, he makes no attempt strictly to reconcile the characters'

¹ Benjamin De Casseres, "Lord Dunsany," in Forty Immortals (New York: Seven Arts, 1926) 213.

actions with their actions in The Gods of Pegana. Mana receives little attention, and in fact Dunsany invents completely different elements of Pegana's creation myth. The smaller gods create the worlds from their own thoughts. The sun is a toy ball given to Inzana, the Dawnchild, by the gods. Dunsany replaces Sish and his hound Time with the single personified figure of Time, a frightening warrior god who sometimes serves the other gods by smiting cities but casts "furtive glances at his masters" who distrust him, "because he had known the worlds or ever the gods became."²

The most significant difference between the two books, however, comes with the new emphasis in Time and the Gods on the figures of Fate and Chance. In The Gods of Pegana, Fate and Chance appear in the untitled prologue as the first movers of Pegana's universe, only to disappear for the rest of the book. In Time and the Gods Fate and Chance reappear as prime movers, "playing" the game of the universe with the gods as their chess pieces. When they finish their game, they will strike the pieces from the board, only to play the exact same game again. As one of the prophets of Pegana dreams, "Fate and Chance play but one game together with every move the same and they play it oft to while eternity away" (p. 190).

² Lord Dunsany, Time and the Gods (New York: The Modern Library, n. d.) 87. All further references to this work will appear in the text.

Some critics argue that this scheme has little to offer philosophically, because they read the careless game of Fate and Chance as fatalism on the part of Dunsany. Josephine Hammond expresses this attitude best:

Lord Dunsany is, apparently, a fatalist, although he has nothing in common with the mechanistic fatalism of our day Now modern occidental philosophy, fundamentally, is not receptive to the fatalistic attitude: it sees creation in flux, with man, not master of his circumstance, to be sure, yet not always an ignoble contender with it. . . . [Dunsany] is not likely to win the more serious triumphs for his work until he pits man at his highest against the gods, nor will he win much patience for his philosophy until he creates a daemonology wherein the gods are great enough to forgive.³

Hammond longs for a Prometheus or a Hamlet in Dunsany's world to struggle heroically with the gods.⁴ Hammond errs, however, in applying occidental criteria to Dunsany's philosophy. As I showed in Chapter One, Dunsany's philosophy has little in common with occidental traditions; by the end of The Gods of Pegana, the greatest triumph for humanity lies not in heroic contention with the gods but in self-creation of the gods. Dunsany never creates gods "great enough to forgive," because his humanity can rise above their power through the four functions of myth.

Seen in this light, Dunsany's world view as expressed in The Gods of Pegana appears not as a fatalistic one, but one of

³ Josephine Hammond, "Wonder and the Playwright, Lord Dunsany," The Personalist 3 (1922): 9.

⁴ Hammond, 9.

limited self-empowerment. In Time and the Gods, humanity's power grows even more certain and does so early on; humanity still fails often, but it only owes allegiance to Fate, Chance, and Time, the only figures that cannot be overcome. Certainly a great deal happens in the world that humanity cannot control--famine, pestilence, death. According to Dunsany, these occurrences are the results of the universal game played by Fate and Chance. However, says Dunsany, humanity does have control over how it interprets and reacts to these events. By creating and controlling a system of myth, humanity can empower itself and rise above a fatalistic dread of what the gods might do next.

Because the stories in Time and the Gods display greater development than the short, parabolic tales of The Gods of Pegana, their mythological functionings lie deeper below the surface than those of the earlier tales and prove more difficult to identify. As with the earlier tales, however, the mythological function most easily recognized in Time and the Gods is the cosmological. The first story in Time and the Gods, titled "Time and the Gods," reveals how from their dreams the gods create their own special city of marble, Sardathrion. No one walks in Sardathrion but the gods and the few special people to whom they speak. Despite their apparent creative power, the gods' high place in the cosmology becomes tenuous with the introduction of their

"swarthy servant Time" (p. 87). Eventually, Time confronts his masters:

Suddenly the swart figure of Time stood up before the gods, with both hands dripping with blood and a red sword dangling idly from his fingers, and said: "Sardathrion is gone! I have overthrown it!" (p. 87)

The gods have no power to stop Time or rebuild their fallen city. They immediately assume a much lower role in the cosmology of Pegana than that they held in The Gods of Pegana, just as humanity will eventually assume a higher one.

The story "Time and the Gods" also reintroduces the fundamental nature of the psychological function of myth. In The Gods of Pegana, Mana originally serves as the creator through dreams, later to be replaced in that function by humanity. In Time and the Gods, humanity assumes this power in the first story. After describing the gods' creation of the city of Sardathrion, the narrator intrudes into his story with this statement: "It [Sardathrion] stands a city aloof. There hath been no rumors of it--I alone have dreamed of it, and I may not be sure that my dreams are true" (p. 86). The narrator does not "appear" in any of the stories in this way again, but the statement in the introductory story of Time and the Gods that he has created the myth of Sardathrion out of his own unconscious dream-images implies that all of the stories are such psychological myth-creations. With the very first story, humanity assumes the control over the gods promised at the end of The Gods of Pegana.

Dunsany continues to develop his new cosmology, including the weaker position of the gods, in "The Coming of the Sea" and "A Legend of the Dawn." These two stories contain some of Dunsany's most clever cosmological inventions related in some of his most beautifully ringing prose. In "The Coming of the Sea," for example, in a time before Pegana's world had a sea, a new god, Slid, appears from beyond the worlds with his armies of waves and marches on the gods' green earth. After losing much of their land to Slid's armies, the gods turn to their mountain of black marble, Tintaggon, who strides to the newly formed sea to protect the rest of the land of the gods. In a passage typical of his best style, Dunsany describes one of Slid's attempts to overthrow Tintaggon:

Then Slid went backward growling and summoned together the waves of a whole sea and sent them singing full in Tintaggon's face. Then from Tintaggon's marble front the sea fell backwards crying on to a broken shore, and ripple by ripple straggled back to Slid saying: "Tintaggon stands."
(p. 94)

Although Slid eventually settles for a truce, in this new cosmology of Pegana, the weaker gods need help to defend themselves from the encroachment of Slid's armies.

In contrast to the waning power of the gods, humanity's own power waxes in Time and the Gods. In "A Legend of the Dawn," Dunsany creates the charming myth of Inzana, the Dawnchild, and her toy ball, the sun. Each morning she tosses her ball into the sky creating day, and at the end of

each day the ball disappears. Sometimes the mountains steal it; sometimes it falls into the sea; sometimes the Eclipse hides it from the world. Each time Inzana loses her ball, the doting gods interfere to return it to her. Once, the personified Night steals it. The gods make stars for torches and find the sun "far away under the world near to the lair of Night" (p. 104). But at the very end of this otherwise lighthearted tale, Dunsany introduces an element that threatens the gods and lifts humanity to a position of power over them.

In the final two paragraphs of "A Legend of the Dawn," Dunsany explains how one day Night will steal the sun, and the gods will not find it again:

And the hound, the thunder, shall chase the Eclipse and all the gods go seeking with Their stars, but never find the ball. And men, no longer having light of the golden ball, shall pray to the gods no more, who, having no worship, shall be no more the gods.

These things be hidden even from the gods. (p. 105)

The human narrator possesses knowledge beyond even that of the gods and thereby rises above them in the universal scheme. The actual content of his knowledge reaffirms humanity's superior position through the psychological function of myth: humanity creates the gods through its worship and will destroy them when it withholds it. Although the gods do send pestilence and famine to end the lives of humanity, in that ability they represent little more than the

servants of Time (supposedly their own servant), a figure above both humanity and the gods.

This impotence of the gods despite their ability to send death appears again in the very next story, "The Vengeance of Men." In this story, the people of Harza live prosperously as farmers, partly because of their mythologization of the world: "There they . . . builded fables out of their sorrows till all men smiled in Harza and children laughed" (p. 106). But the gods decide, "Earth is no place for laughter," (p. 107) and send their creature the Pestilence to kill the people of Harza. The gods ignore the people's prayers for mercy. Eventually, the High Prophet of Harza cries out against the gods,

There is an END that waiteth for the gods
And men shall gain harbour from the mocking of the
gods at last in the warm moist earth, but to the
gods shall no ceasing ever come from being the
Things that were the gods. (p. 109)

In a rage, the gods send the Pestilence to kill the High Prophet.

But the vengeance of men has already been exacted. The gods do not know if indeed such an end awaits them, and they kill the one man who could have told them. The vengeance of men is the inspiration of fear and uncertainty in the gods. In the cosmology of Time and the Gods, humanity once again appears above the influence of the gods; the gods (or Fate and Chance) can kill the body, but the spirit finds rest. At the metaphysical level, "The Vengeance of Men" offers a

promise of comfort at the end of life not available to the gods, but to humanity only.

The metaphysical function of myth often proves difficult to isolate in Time and the Gods except in the general sense that humanity can take comfort in its cosmological superiority to the gods through the creative power of myth. But the metaphysical function stands out clearly through the negative example of the people of the Three Islands in "For the Honour of the Gods." At first, the people of the Three Islands live contented lives because they have no gods; they play "like children at the feet of Chance" (p. 147) and know nothing about war. But sailors come to the islands and tell the people that they can be even happier with gods they can worship and for whom they can fight. Some of the islanders go to the land of the sailors and see the gods controlling the people as the islanders control their cattle. They return to the Three Islands meaning to reject the gods, but three gods following the ships of the islanders symbolically sneak onto the islands, a different god to each island, and lead the people into destructive wars.

The people could have remained happy in their ignorance or with a system of their own creation that they could control. Instead, they seek something outside their experience. By relating the islanders' original state of contentment and by warning of the dangers of allowing myth to

control rather than interpret that state, "For the Honour of the Gods" performs the metaphysical function of myth.

The sociological function of myth, the function that establishes an unalterable order, appears throughout Time and the Gods much as the metaphysical function does--in a general way. All of the characters who attempt to alter the universal order suffer for it. The two most specific examples of the sociological function appear in "When the Gods Slept" and "The Land of Time."

In "When the Gods Slept" three "Yozis," or "spirits of ill" (p. 112), slip into Pegana while the gods sleep. They acquire the same power as the gods by reading an unrevealed inscription on the gods' secret stone, then travel to earth seeking people who will worship them as gods. But all of the people that the Yozis approach already have a servicable myth system and show little interest in the Yozis: a group of fisher-folk worships the thunder; a "city of song" (p. 114) worships a nearby mountain, Agrodaun; a village of farmers worships the years that have been, and another group worships the years that will be. All of these people wisely avoid altering the established order in which they happily live and send the Yozis on their way.

Increasingly angered by the series of rebuffs from humanity, the Yozis finally arrive at an island of baboons. The Yozis offer the baboons manhood in exchange for worship, and transform the baboons into twisted subhumans reminiscent

of Swift's Yahoos. At the end of the story, however, the Yozis pay the price for their tampering with the universal order:

And the lords of malice, hatred and madness sailed back to their island in the sea and sat upon the shore as gods sit with right hand uplifted; and at evening foul prayers from the baboons gathered about them and infested the rocks.

But in Pegana the gods awoke with a start.
(pp. 118-19)

The unspoken denouement, with its ominous implications for the Yozis, powerfully performs the sociological function of myth. The people maintain myth systems based on their locale and their way of life; by remaining within these systems, they live happily and have no need for the Yozis. But the Yozis challenge the order by stealing the power of the gods and altering the baboons; therefore, they face some unspecified, but presumably unpleasant doom from the gods.

In "The Land of Time," a human king makes a mistake similar to that of the Yozis, and, like the Yozis, pays the price for his error. Karnith Zo, King of Alatta, musters his army to search for and attack Time, the enemy of the gods and the world. After a march of years, the army finally discovers the tower where Time resides and attacks. But Time assails the king and his army with years and sends them away defeated old men. When they finally return to Alatta, they discover it much changed:

And then they knew that while they searched for Time, Time had gone forth against their city and leaguered it with the years, and had taken it while

they were far away and enslaved their women and children with the yoke of age. (p. 177)

Instead of incorporating the unalterable nature of Time into his conception of the world, the king challenges it, and in his failure, he and his people pay a heavy price. Like the stories of the prophets in The Gods of Pegana, "The Land of Time" performs the sociological function of myth through a negative example. It is important to note, however, that humanity here fails in the face of Time, one of the three inscrutable powers, not one of the lesser gods that humanity has already overcome.

The psychological function of myth in Time and the Gods, as it does in The Gods of Pegana, appears throughout most of the tales as a foundation for the other three functions. Because Dunsany's main theme is the creative and supportive power of myth, one can find few tales in these two volumes of short stories that do not, at least in some small way, fulfill the psychological function. Several stories in Time and the Gods, however, function *primarily* at the psychological level and therefore relate better than most the growing stature of humanity in Time and the Gods: "The Sorrow of Search," "The Secret of the Gods," "The South Wind," and "The Cave of Kai."

In "The Sorrow of Search," King Khanazar asks his master prophet to tell him "somewhat concerning the gods" (p. 130). The stories that the prophet tells return to Yonath's message in The Gods of Pegana: "Seek not to know" with the conscious

mind. The prophet first tells the king how the road to "Knowing" is lined with many temples, each with priests that call to travellers on the road, "This is the End" (p. 131). At the true end of the long road, however, lies an empty chasm with one small god who cries, "I know not" (p. 133).

The prophet's second story tells of another prophet, Shaun, who spends his whole life trying to find the true gods. Each time he sees the figures of gods in the distance, he travels to that place and worships the gods he finds. However, whenever he stops to worship the new gods, he sees still greater gods in the distance, controlling the ones he worships at the time. Eventually, all of Shaun's followers weary of the search, and Shaun himself comes at the end of his life to the same gods that he first left for new gods in the distance.

Both of the stories relate the ultimate futility of trying to comprehend the world with the conscious mind. The prophet and the king show an understanding of this truth at the end of "The Sorrow of Search":

Then said the King: "It is well that the sorrow of search cometh only to the wise, for the wise are very few." Also the King said: "Tell me this thing, O prophet. Who are the true gods?" The master prophet answered: "Let the King command." (p. 137)

The king can create his own gods, says the prophet, as long as the creation comes not from outside himself, like Shaun's conscious search for knowledge, but from within, from an interpretation of his own unconscious images. The god at the

end of the road to Knowing is small and knows not, because the seeker seeks a ready-made god with his conscious mind; he does not form a vital god through the creative power of myth.

"The Secret of the Gods" tells of the encounter, whether fated or by chance, between Zyni Moë, the small snake, and Uldoon the prophet. In his old age, Uldoon hears the gods whispering together in the sky above the desert. They mourn for one of their own, Morning Zai, saying, "Oh, Morning Zai, oh, oldest of the gods, the faith of thee is gone, and yesterday for the last time thy name was spoken upon earth" (p. 162). Uldoon thereby learns the secret of the gods--the same secret that appears in The Gods of Pegana: humanity creates its own gods, and if it chooses humanity can destroy those gods as well simply by withdrawing its belief. However, Uldoon never gets to relate the secret to his people. As Uldoon returns to his home, the snake Zyni Moë, sent either by Fate or Chance, rises up and kills him. In direct contrast to the serpent of Eden, Zyni Moë serves as the protector of secret knowledge; once all of humanity knows the secret of the gods, Fate and Chance will no longer have a game to play with those gods. The gods, however display all the signs of just having a close call; they had not the power to send Zyni Moë themselves--he came either from Fate or Chance.

The third tale that functions primarily at the psychological level is "The South Wind." After the death of

Uldoon, another prophet, Ord, either by chance or through fate, learns the secret of the gods. One night he sees the gods in the stars:

But as he gave Them worship, he saw the hand of a player, enormous over Their heads, stretched out to make his move. Then Ord, the prophet, knew. Had he been silent it might have still been well with Ord, but Ord went about the world crying out to all men, "There is a power over the gods." (p. 164)

The gods enact a bewildering progression of punishments on Ord for learning their secret; they eventually take from him his sight, his hearing, his memory, and all knowledge of themselves. They finally transform Ord into the South Wind, sending him "to roam the seas for ever and not have rest" (p. 167).

But even after all of this, the gods do not ultimately control Ord or humanity. At the end of the story, Dunsany explains that one day the South Wind will conquer the North, "and come where the Secret of the gods is graven upon the pole" (p. 167). This rediscovery of the secret of the gods will raise humanity up through the knowledge of its own creative power, "and from the board of playing Fate or Chance (who knoweth which shall win?) shall sweep the gods away" (p. 167).

"The Cave of Kai" is the final story that functions primarily on the psychological level, and the most significant to an understanding of what Dunsany felt he was doing by creating his myth-world of Pegana. In this story King Khanazar wishes to "find certain of the hours that have

been, and sundry days that were" (p. 124). A prophet of the mountains tells the king that these past times "lie in a cave afar from here . . . guarded from the gods and men" (p. 125) by a figure called Kai. The implacable Kai, however, refuses to let the king recover any bit of the glory of his past days from the cave.

At this point, the story functions only at the sociological level. The king attempts to force a change in the established order, and his unavoidable failure causes him to despair. But Dunsany offers the king an opportunity to overcome Kai, an opportunity whose means lie in the creative, psychological function of myth. A harper appears in the king's hall and tells the king,

I have a golden harp; and to its strings have clung
like dust some seconds out of the forgotten hours
and little happenings of the days that were. (p.
127)

The harper mythologizes the deeds of the king, thereby rescuing his life from the cave of Kai and defeating even Time:

But Kai, as he waited with his claws to gather in the last days of Khanazar that they might loom enormous in his cave, still found them not, and only gathered in some meaner deeds and the days and hours of lesser men, and was vexed by the shadow of a harper that stood between him and the world. (p. 129)

Throughout much of his work Dunsany equates singers and their songs with poets and their poetry. In "The Cave of Kai," the harper represents the artist, more specifically the literary artist, and his or her ability to lift humanity over

the power of the gods by mythologizing the world. Beyond the level of this one story, Dunsany serves as the harper, mythologizing his ideas to relate his message of mythic self-empowerment to the reader.

Most of the stories in Time and the Gods can stand on their own, unlike the more fragmented tales in The Gods of Pegana. Their function becomes clearest, however, when viewed as a logical extension of the mythological theme begun in that first volume. The Gods of Pegana establishes a harsh, challenging universe and then relates the difficulties of a humanity living isolated from myth in that universe. However, Dunsany offers his characters hope--a hope rooted in the creative psychological function of myth. In Time and the Gods, humanity begins to realize this hope, gaining control over their gods and their own destinies.

Conclusion

When the worlds began, the Secret of the gods lay written clear over the whole earth, but the feet of many prophets have trampled it out.¹

The difficulty of placing Dunsany and his work in a literary context may partially explain the dearth of serious criticism of his work. He does not seem to fit with his contemporaries in the Irish Literary Renaissance. An aristocratic soldier with a strong sense of loyalty to the English crown--a veteran of the Boer War and an author of fantasy who seldom uses Ireland or Irish themes in his work--such a man hardly seems to fit into any category that could include Yeats and Synge. And yet this study reveals that, at least with Yeats, Dunsany has much in common. Yeats began with the ancient myths of Ireland such as that of the hero Cuchulain, adopted more contemporary Irish heroes like Parnell, and eventually worked them all into his mystical system of Time and the coming of a new millenium. Dunsany began from scratch, creating his own myth-world, independent of Irish traditions. But despite the outer trappings, the works of both authors function in fundamentally similar ways:

¹ Lord Dunsany, "The Secret of the Gods," The Book of Wonder (New York: Boni and Liveright (Modern Library), 1918) 162.

by mythologizing the world, they express the authors' views of the world and humanity's place in it.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Joseph Campbell argues that a mythology reveals and supports one of three basic world-views. Campbell calls these views, (1) the "yea," or complete acceptance of the world, despite its harsh nature; (2) the "nay," or negation of the harsh nature of the world; and (3) the "nay with a contingent yea," the negation of this world based on the potential for a better one.² The progression in The Gods of Pegana and Time and the Gods from a chaotic universe into one in which humanity raises itself above the influence of its gods through the creative power of myth resounds with Dunsany's "yea." Dunsany offers his characters only one world, and he does not pretend that the world is an idyllic place. By playing their game, the agencies of Fate and Chance perpetuate suffering on the people of Pegana; the people cannot alter that fact. However, by creating and embracing a mythological explanation of the world that includes the acts of Fate and Chance, the people of Pegana need not remain the helpless and hopeless objects of those acts.

One obstacle to placing Dunsany into a literary context is the failure to recognize that although Dunsany's first tales did not appear until 1905, this message of a universal

² "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," Myth, Dreams, and Religion, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1970) 137.

"yea" is essentially a Romantic one. The psychological function of myth, the transformation of unconscious images into a means of understanding, corresponds closely with Wordsworth's "Imagination" in its ability to subconsciously connect the individual with the outside world. In Wordsworth's Prelude for example, the speaker's experience of a divine, natural mind at Mt. Snowden emanates from the relationship between his imagination and the world around him. As I have shown, in The Gods of Pegana and Time and the Gods, Dunsany posits the same sort of relationship, only he places its origins in the psychological faculty of myth-creation. In both cases, the individual can achieve a kind of self-divinity, an important component in the Romantic ideal.

Dunsany by no means stopped writing short stories after the publication of The Gods of Pegana and Time and the Gods; in fact, he barely paused. Although he gradually phased out the stories that deal with Pegana, he never abandoned the Romantic theme of his work. In 1908 he published a new set of tales, The Sword of Welleran and Other Stories, followed closely by A Dreamer's Tales (1910), The Book of Wonder (1912), and Selections From the Writings of Lord Dunsany (1912). In all, twenty-three volumes of Dunsany's short stories have been published, five of them posthumously, and the short stories themselves represent only a part of Dunsany's startlingly prolific literary output. The sheer

volume of Dunsany's canon offers another probable reason for Dunsany's current obscurity. So many stories, plays, novels, and poems by one author cannot all merit serious study, and it seems that many critics, faced with a formidable collection that includes much of Dunsany's more mediocre work, have thrown out the good along with the bad. But, as I have shown, at least two volumes of Dunsany's short stories provide rich material for study, and indeed much of his work merits more serious critical consideration than it has yet received.

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