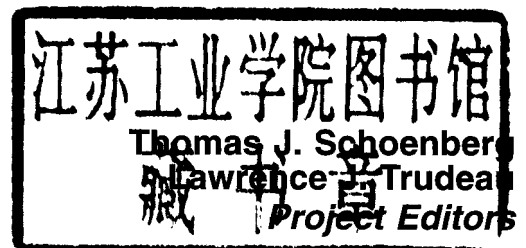


Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 164

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 164

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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Thomson Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

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A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

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- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
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Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Thomson Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *TCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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J. M. Barrie

1860-1937

(Full name James Matthew Barrie) Scottish playwright, novelist, short story writer, journalist, and biographer.

The following entry provides an overview of Barrie's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *TCLC*, Volume 2.

INTRODUCTION

Although he wrote more than forty plays and dozens of short stories, novels, and magazine articles, Barrie is best known today for a single creation: the tale of Peter Pan, which he told in various forms in stories, novels, and most notably the play *Peter Pan* (1904). The play has been staged throughout the Western world, particularly in Britain and America, where it has been nearly continuously performed since its first production. Part fantasy, fairy tale, adventure story, and pantomime, *Peter Pan* has been described as a modern myth in its archetypal treatment of childhood innocence, separation, and death, and Barrie has been compared to Lewis Carroll and Hans Christian Andersen for his creation of one of the most popular children's works ever written.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

James Matthew Barrie was born May 9, 1860, in Kirriemuir, Scotland, the third son and seventh surviving child of Margaret Ogilvy and David Barrie, a weaver. Barrie's mother was a delicate woman who had an immense influence on her children's lives, especially James's. Though the Barrie family lived in modest circumstances, they were not impoverished, as was later suggested by Barrie in his autobiographical writings. In fact, the family managed to make enough money to send their sons to private schools and to college. Barrie's earliest years were uneventful. However, when he was six years old his elder brother David died in an ice skating accident. David's death had a debilitating effect on Barrie's mother, who thereafter became a near-invalid. As recounted in his biography of his mother, *Margaret Ogilvy* (1896), Barrie assumed the persona of his dead brother in order to comfort her and become the center of her affections. Critics have repeatedly linked the theme of "youth frozen in time" in Barrie's works, especially in *Peter Pan*, to David's untimely death and Barrie's attempt to become the lost son in his mother's eyes.



At the age of thirteen Barrie attended Dumfries Academy to receive a formal education. By his own account, he enjoyed the five years he spent at the academy, making friends quickly and easily, and finding at the school a welcome outlet for his love of adventure and play-acting. While at Dumfries, Barrie became interested in the theater, attending local productions as often as possible. When he left the school in 1878, he returned home determined to become a writer. His parents, however, had plans for their son to become a minister, the occupation his brother David was to have pursued. With help from his elder siblings, Barrie reached a compromise with his parents: he would attend Edinburgh University and study literature. Unlike his time at Dumfries, Barrie's years at Edinburgh were uncomfortable. He became painfully shy and intensely self-conscious over his height (he was five feet tall). Despite having difficulties with his studies, Barrie graduated from Edinburgh University with an M.A. in 1882, at the age of twenty-one.

After leaving Edinburgh, Barrie took a job as a writer for the *Nottingham Journal*, in January 1883. The position was short-lived, however, as the paper's owners decided it was less expensive to buy syndicated articles than to pay for its own writers. Back home in Kirriemuir, Barrie began to write and submit dozens of articles to a number of London periodicals. One piece, based on his mother's tales of her childhood in Kirriemuir, was published in the *St. James Gazette* in 1884. The publisher urged Barrie to submit more articles on "that Scotch thing," and the stylized, humorous sketches were popular with readers. A collection of the pieces, *Auld Licht Idylls*, was issued in 1888. (The title refers to the Auld Lichts, or "old lights," a strict religious sect in Kirriemuir to which Barrie's grandfather belonged.) The success of *Auld Licht Idylls* led to the publication of two sequels, the collection of sketches *A Window in Thrums* (1889) and the novel *The Little Minister* (1891), all three of which came to be called the Thrums books, so named after the fictional Scottish town in which all are set. With the success of the Thrums books, Barrie moved permanently to London to pursue his career as a writer.

During the next fifteen years, Barrie wrote more than twenty stories, novels, and plays, including *When a Man's Single* (1888), *Walker, London* (1892), *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), and *The Little White Bird* (1902). Although not all of his works were successes, either critically or financially, Barrie's literary reputation was established by the time he wrote *Peter Pan* in 1904. As Barrie's literary fame was rising, three events occurred that had a significant impact on his life and work. The first was his marriage to a young actress named Mary Ansell in 1894. The marriage was a failure; the couple remained childless, and Barrie spent less and less time with his wife after his career as a writer was established. Even so, Mary served as the model for a number of Barrie's heroines, and for many years he gave her name to characters in his books and plays. The two were eventually divorced in 1909. The second event was the death of Barrie's mother in 1895. Within a year of her passing, Barrie wrote and published his biography and tribute, *Margaret Ogilvy*, which became an instant success, though some reviewers found the emotionally charged and overly sentimental memoir distasteful. Even after writing the memoir, Barrie continued to demonstrate the powerful influence of his mother's life and death in many of his later works. The final event was Barrie's chance meeting and eventual friendship with the young sons of Arthur and Sylvia Llewelyn Davies. There were three boys—George, Jack, and Peter—at the time of their first meeting; two others—Michael and Nicholas—were born after. During his frequent walks in Kensington Gardens, Barrie would keep company with the boys despite the disapproval of their nursemaid, and would entertain them with stories of adventure and fantasy. During the summers the boys

would join Barrie and his wife at Black Lake Cottage, their vacation home. Their games together and storytelling provided Barrie with the spark that led to *Peter Pan*.

The last three decades of Barrie's life were filled with continued literary success and even greater public recognition, as well as personal setbacks. In 1911 he published the novel *Peter and Wendy*, an adaptation of *Peter Pan*, to positive reviews and a receptive audience. In fact, the novel version of the Peter Pan story for a time supplanted the play in terms of popularity. Barrie received a number of public honors during this period in his life: he was elected rector of Saint Andrews in 1919 and chancellor of Edinburgh in 1930; he received honorary doctorate degrees from Oxford University in 1926 and Cambridge University in 1930; he was bestowed with a baronetcy by King George V in 1913; and he was presented with the Order of Merit in 1922. But these years were also filled with emotional hardships. Barrie saw his popularity decline after World War I; two of the Davies children—to whom he served as legal guardian after the deaths of their parents—died; several of his literary friends also passed on; after 1920, he could write only sporadically; and he spent his last years in poor health and deeply depressed. Barrie died on June 19, 1937, in London.

MAJOR WORKS

Peter Pan and its adaptation as a novel, *Peter and Wendy*, stand apart in the Barrie cannon in their successful treatment of themes found throughout his works, such as childhood innocence, the island as a retreat from society, separation, the fantastic, and the need for social order. Barrie first told the story of children who can fly and who leave their parents for a magical world in the privately printed *The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island* (1901), a photographic record of the fantasy games Barrie and the Davies boys played at their summer vacation cottage. He initially developed the central Peter Pan story in *The Little White Bird*. In this novel, Captain W, a lonely bachelor, acts the role of an anonymous benefactor to an impoverished young couple and ultimately befriends their young son, David, with whom he goes for walks in Kensington Gardens. In the course of their friendship, Captain W tells David a story about a baby—named Peter Pan—who flies out of his nursery to return to the island of the birds. Eventually, Peter learns that he isn't a bird but a baby and immediately loses his ability to fly. The novel also includes an image that would recur in *Peter Pan*, in which Peter returns to his nursery to be reunited with his mother and family, only to find that the nursery window is barred and a new baby has taken his place.

Barrie continued to think about the Peter Pan story after he finished *The Little White Bird* and began to add further adventures, characters, and scenes to the original

tales. By the time he finished *Peter Pan*, Barrie had combined his childhood love of adventure, his memories of the Davies boys, his ambivalence about Edwardian domestic life, and his desire to create a modern myth of childhood into something new and original. As many critics have noted, nothing like *Peter Pan* had ever been seen on the British stage. Audiences of Barrie's plays were accustomed to his humorous realism and sentimentality, but they were entirely unprepared for such extensive fantasy: a nursery supervised by a Newfoundland dog, an enchanted lagoon, pirates and Indians, the magic of flight, and a glowing fairy named Tinker Bell. The play was an immediate success.

The fantasy world and childhood themes in *Peter Pan* often hide Barrie's serious concerns. Although many of his works repeatedly affirm the need for social conventions, especially marriage, Wendy's role as mother to the Lost Boys is rife with ambiguities over the domestic place of women in British society. The adult male figures in Barrie's story are depicted as childish and vindictive, while maintaining the veneer of gentlemen. The themes of death and separation are omnipresent in the story. And Peter Pan himself is anything but child-like and charming: he lives completely in the present, is cruel and selfish, and often leads the children into dangerous situations without concern for their well-being. Many critics note the nightmarish qualities of the story. *Peter Pan* and *Peter and Wendy* are in many ways works for adults, which makes it even more remarkable that the Peter Pan story would become a children's classic, a paradox noted by many commentators.

While *Peter Pan* is by far the most widely read, most frequently performed, and most discussed of all Barrie's works, there are several others that critics argue demonstrate the best qualities of Barrie's craft as a writer. These include the Thrums books, the play *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), and the novel *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* (1932). The stories collected in the first two Thrums books—*Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums*—and the novel *The Little Minister* all deal with the pathos and daily lives of the ministers, weavers, farmers, and wives who inhabit the idealized Scottish village of Thrums. The stories in the first two works share common characteristics and themes: the narrators are typically unobtrusive yet observant schoolmasters or ministers; the village and its inhabitants are presented as a microcosm of Scottish rural life; and the various complications of the characters are all resolved by the ideals of love, devotion, and lasting support for one another. The stories also reaffirm the importance of social conventions, especially marriage, in controlling unhealthy behavior and maintaining happiness and order. This is particularly true in *The Little Minister*, which portrays the excessive and destructive behavior of Lady Barbara, who disguises herself as the captivating gypsy Babbie. Social order, disrupted by Babbie's actions, is

restored through marriage, as the heroine ultimately marries the minister Gavin Dishart. The theme of marriage as the proper corrective to wayward or destructive energies is one found often in Barrie's work.

The Admirable Crichton deals with the need for, and inevitability of, class distinction, which is defended by the play's title character. Crichton, the epitome of the gentleman's gentleman, disagrees with his employer's attempt to eliminate class distinctions. Crichton considers these ideas as violations of nature, which in his view governs the establishment of class structure. Crichton's vision is put to the test when both he and his employer, Lord Loam, are among a group shipwrecked on a remote island. Without the support of society, the butler becomes the "governor" on the island, since he has the survival skills that the other, aristocratic, characters lack. In the end, Crichton leads the survivors off the island and willingly returns to his former rank as Lord Loam's butler. The play demonstrates that the superior man is not necessarily the one typically held up by society; it is, as Harry M. Geduld has observed, the person who "knows his place in society and respects the limitations imposed on him by class barriers."

Written late in his life, at a time when Barrie himself believed that his career as a writer had ended, *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* is frequently praised by critics as Barrie's best work of fiction. It is considered one of his few fictional pieces that displays a thematic treatment of adult romantic love and successfully weaves a supernatural element and fantasy into the story's plot. The story, told through the diary of a young minister named Adam Yestreen, depicts the minister's battle with a beautiful spirit, Julie Logan, whom he meets while snowbound on a winter's night. The two picnic in a small ruin and ultimately kiss, at which point Julie abruptly and rather comically declares, "I am a Papist." Yestreen is thereupon released from his lover's spell. The story concludes when, twenty-five years later, the minister revisits the place of his former encounter and, to his surprise, finds the picnic basket he and Julie Logan shared, though he long ago convinced himself that the events that night were the product of his imagination.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

More than sixty years after his death, modern critics often marvel at how far the reputation of Barrie, once the most popular, acclaimed, and financially successful writer of his time, has declined. During most of his lifetime, Barrie was esteemed by both the British public and literary critics. He was friends with many of the leading authors of the age and praised by Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Hardy, and other noted writers. His

plays attracted the best actors and actresses, engaged the most respected directors and production staff, and were staged in the top theaters of London. Although Barrie's display of personal emotions and his reliance on sentimentality disturbed some British theater-goers and critics, he was more often lauded for his deft characterizations, his clever dialogue, his ironic sense of humor, and his craft as a dramatist.

After the horrors of World War I, Barrie's popularity fell considerably. The mawkishness, predictability, and childlike innocence of his works were out of fashion in an age contemplating the violence of war and the alienation of the artist. Many saw Barrie solely as the author of *Peter Pan* and dismissed him as a children's writer unworthy of serious consideration. The popularity of Freudian theory and psychoanalytic criticism led commentators to find disturbing qualities in Barrie's works. Freudian analysts found unresolved Oedipal longings in his fixation on his mother and in the depictions of mother figures in his stories and plays. He was often disparaged for his inability to deal with adult emotions and themes, a fact that was always linked to his dependence on his mother and his need to remain a child in her eyes in order to experience her love. Barrie was also labeled a pedophile because of the dominance of boys in both his writing and his life. Much of this criticism was based on the uncomfortably close relationship of Captain W and the boy David in the novel *The Little White Bird*. One scene in particular, in which the Captain helps undress David for bed, was identified as proof of Barrie's obsessive love of children.

Since the 1980s critics have generally tried to move away from interpretations based on Barrie's personal life and have instead focused on his skill as a writer, the role of fantasy in his stories and plays, and the overt or subtextual commentary in his works on the social conventions of his age. In 1987 Leonee Ormond signaled this change with the publication of her reassessment of Barrie's life and writings. What has since emerged is a more balanced view of Barrie's art. Whereas previous critics saw in the author's dependence on sentimentality a repetitive pandering to the taste of his public at best, or an inability to confront serious themes at worst, recent scholars have maintained that Barrie was actually "interrogating the concept of sentimentalism itself," as stated by Andrew Nash in his analysis of the two "Tommy" novels. A similar view of Barrie's use of fantasy and the fantastic in his works has been put forth, especially by such critics as Lynette Hunter, Sarah Gilead, and Ann Yeoman. Rather than being dismissed as an artless proponent of the social conventions of late Victorian and Edwardian society, such as the domestic role of women, the cult of childhood innocence, and the separation of the classes, Barrie is now more often seen as questioning or showing ambivalence toward these conventions. This is especially

the case with *Peter Pan*, which critics now interpret as Barrie's condemnation—rather than celebration—of perpetual childhood. Many find a central tension in the story in Wendy's role as "mother" to the Lost Boys and her precarious stature as both child and sexually aware adolescent. At the same time, scholars continue to recognize shortcomings in Barrie's handling of serious themes such as death, childhood separation, class, and marriage, noting, like earlier critics, his inability to express emotions directly and fully explore the human ramifications of his themes.

Despite such limitations, *Peter Pan* continues to fascinate both adults and children. Carl Markgraf has located the enduring appeal of Barrie's works in his ability to make us "not only think, but feel." In Markgraf's view, Barrie's best works "take us out of our world into a world of his creation. We return having been moved, as well as moved to thought, by his experience. I can think of no greater praise for any playwright."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Auld Licht Idylls* (short stories) 1888
- Better Dead* (novel) 1888
- **When a Man's Single: A Tale of Literary Life* (novel) 1888
- A Window in Thrums* (short stories) 1889
- The Little Minister* (novel) 1891
- Richard Savage* [with H. B. Marriott Watson] (play) 1891
- Walker, London* (play) 1892
- Margaret Ogilvy. By Her Son* (biography) 1896
- †*Sentimental Tommy: The Story of His Boyhood* (novel) 1896
- ‡*The Little Minister* (play) 1897
- §*Tommy and Grizel* (novel) 1900
- Quality Street* (play) 1901
- The Admirable Crichton* (play) 1902
- The Little White Bird; or, Adventures in Kensington Garden* (novel) 1902
- Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (play) 1904
- Alice Sit-by-the-Fire: A Page from a Daughter's Diary* (play) 1905
- Pantaloons; or, A Plea for an Ancient Family* (play) 1905
- What Every Woman Knows* (play) 1908
- The Twelve-Pound Look* (play) 1910
- ||*Peter and Wendy* (novel) 1911
- Der Tag; or, The Tragic Man* (play) 1914
- A Kiss for Cinderella* (play) 1916
- Dear Brutus* (play) 1917
- The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* (play) 1917

Mary Rose (play) 1920

The Plays of J. M. Barrie (plays) 1928; revised edition, 1942

The Works of J. M. Barrie. 16 vols. (novels, sketches, biography, and plays) 1929-40

Farewell, Miss Julie Logan: A Wintry Tale (novel) 1932

The Boy David (play) 1936

The Letters of J. M. Barrie [edited by Viola Meynell] (letters) 1942

*This novel first appeared serially in *The British Weekly*, 1887-88.

†This novel first appeared serially in *Scribner's Magazine*, 1896.

‡This play is an adaptation of the novel by the same name.

§This novel first appeared serially in *Scribner's Magazine*, 1900.

||This novel is an adaptation of the play *Peter Pan*.

CRITICISM

Lynette Hunter (essay date March 1980)

SOURCE: Hunter, Lynette. "J. M. Barrie's Islands of Fantasy." *Modern Drama* 23, no. 1 (March 1980): 65-74.

[In the following essay, Hunter examines why Barrie shifted from writing novels to composing plays after 1902, claiming that the author became disillusioned with fiction as a form of artistic communication and came to regard drama as the best medium for expressing his growing condemnation of fantasy literature.]

I

James Barrie's plays offer a consistency of approach to ideas about artistic communication that has been seriously neglected. The neglect partly results from a separation between the criticism of his novels and that of his plays, which obscures the development of theme, structure and imagery from the one medium to the other. The criticism of the drama itself has suffered from an avoidance of the published scripts. There has been little if any attention paid to the commentary of the plays which provides a function similar to that of the narrator in the novels, and is invaluable in understanding the author's ironic perspective. The product of the dramatic criticism has been an enormously diversified assessment of Barrie, leaving an impression of a man of dilettante interests rather than complexity.¹ But if we examine the plays as generated from the novels, we find in their author not only a more thoughtful and mature literary figure, but also one who is placed firmly among early twentieth century concerns about communication and art.

On examination, the similarity between the later novels and early plays of the period 1890 to 1902 is so close² that it poses the interesting question: why did Barrie change his medium to drama alone after 1902? It could not have been solely for financial reasons, because his novels were selling well;³ and while he had written four very mediocre plays by 1902, only the first, *Walker, London*, a light farce, had more than a respectable run. I would suggest that the change in medium was due to a change in the author's understanding of art and what he saw as the artist's responsibilities. Barrie's early critical work of the late 1880's indicates that he had a strong belief in the possibility of absolute communication through words.⁴ But by the time he was writing *Tommy and Grizel* in 1900, he had personally discarded this belief, or developed it into a discussion of the fantasist who is a specific kind of artist defined by his belief in absolute personal communication. He is a man who thinks that he can create perfect alternative worlds, and that by initiating them from actual experience he can generate trust in them from his audience. Once created, the worlds are controlled absolutely by the fantasist who builds defenses against the intrusion of reality by providing detailed accounts of language, customs, and a way of life that needs no reference to an external standard. Both the creation and control of these worlds demand a passive audience accepting and believing rather than involved and experiencing.

In *Tommy and Grizel* Barrie follows up the implications of these totally self-sufficient worlds. It is interesting that the one chapter explicitly demonstrating the process of Tommy's fantasizing corresponds exactly to Walter Pater's description of image-making in the last chapter of *The Renaissance*,⁵ and significantly, in *Sentimental Tommy* Barrie connects the fantasy process with what he saw as the "art for art's sake" movement led by Pater. His point is that if art is totally self-sufficient, its responsibility is to itself, and its morality becomes relative. Barrie points out on many occasions that while this kind of irresponsibility to others is acceptable in a child who is mainly unconscious of the process, it is not so in a man consciously producing a piece of art.⁶ Both novels by Barrie also contain many instances of the ambivalent and dangerous nature of fantasy. The ambivalence stems from the fact that fantasy is something to escape to, and escape can be effective only if one becomes unconscious of the limits of the story. Yet if one is to control the story, one cannot become entirely unconscious of its existence. Tommy himself is killed when he follows his fantasy into an extreme situation which he cannot control. The danger of fantasy is that its final realization ends in madness or death.

The "Tommy" stories provide an obvious study of Barrie's early beliefs about the powers of a writer through the central character. Yet he also examines his own motives for writing about Tommy through the narrator of

each work, and the tone becomes increasingly cynical and bitter as he approaches the year 1900. In *Tommy and Grizel* the narrator interrupts a sarcastic comment on Tommy's obituaries to ask himself why he even wrote about such a despicable character. He concludes that although Tommy failed to conquer his selfishness and egoism, at least he tried. Barrie wishes not just to condemn fantasy, but also to demonstrate the essential battle with it if man is to avoid self-delusion.

To achieve the fantasy worlds in his novels Barrie uses a four-part structure intrinsically connected to the tone of the narrator. The first section creates trust in the narrator, who in the second presents a situation that arises from actual events. This leads to the third part, which produces the central fantasy, usually the main character's personal interpretation of the situation, presented as the only reality. The final part of each book places in a perspective the interpretation of the central fantasy. In earlier work such as *The Little Minister*, Barrie allows the fantasy to be reinforced, but in the later work, the narrator ironically removes all the bases for belief in the interpretation built up by the central character.

The Little White Bird is an exception to this structural pattern and anticipates the later three-part structure of Barrie's plays. Here the author also fuses the roles of narrator and fantasist. The narrator is the ironic voice conscious of reality, yet the character side of him is the fantasist trying to escape responsibilities. The first part of the book becomes a series of episodes with the narrator constantly exposing his delusions and then creating new desires. There is a central fantasy, but it is here isolated, recognized as fantasy, not brought into real life. The fantasy itself reflects this condition, for it presents Peter Pan as the very young child, an unconscious fantasist. The conditions for his survival are complete separation from human beings, and isolation beyond his control not only in a park but on a real island in a river. It should be noted that the increasing isolation in which Barrie places the physical and mental islands of his work indicates his growing awareness of the dangers of fantasy. The final part of the book shows the narrator slowly and painfully trying to get rid of the lady Romance, who makes a sentimental fool of him in the first part, and to accept the reality of a real woman, Mary.

II

Before moving on to the plays which succeed *The Little White Bird*, it is important to note the relationship of Barrie's ideas to the comments on fantasy made by other major contemporary authors. Barrie's attitude to fantasy distinguished the pure fantasy of the child and an equation of adult fantasy with sentimentalism in both "sentimental" Tommy and the sentimental narrator of *The Little White Bird*. Behind this definition we can see the immensely influential figure of Meredith. In

Meredith's *The Egoist*, the central character, like Tommy, is a supreme fantasist creating a fantasy of self-limited perfection in his home and life. The related essay, *An Essay on Comedy* . . . , explicitly examines the egoist as sentimentalist.⁷ The influence of Meredith can also be found in the work of most of Barrie's contemporaries.⁸ But the closest to Barrie is D. H. Lawrence. He speaks of fantasy as a circle of self-consciousness evading the "real being of men. . . ." He too notes that when fantasy becomes conscious, it becomes egoistical and sentimental,¹⁰ and sentimentalism is linked with an adult wish to regain the fantasy of childhood, which Lawrence condemns as "disgusting."¹¹

For all these critics, the big point is the questionable use of personal authority over reality through fantasy, and the demand of fantasists for a passive audience to evade reality. All also perceive a need for some external authority, social, political or religious. Significantly, the most comprehensive modern study of fantasy, Colin Manlove's *Modern Fantasy*, concludes by saying that "the only basis in our reality . . . became the creator and not his audience." Further, the fantasist's self-involvement leads to sentimentality and escapism for himself and a "benign determinism" towards his audience.¹² It is the concept of human authority and control taken to its extreme that makes possible the isolated fantasies of potential perfection. It is interesting that the dominant image of an island in Barrie's works, which he himself notes in the dedication of *Peter Pan* (1928), is present in many other works of fantasy.¹³ Islands are important because it is insularity that removes the invented world from actuality. But fantasy's potential perfection is only potential, for it is an unavoidable situation that "No man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe. . . ."¹⁴ It is the assumption of perfection that the fantasist makes when he creates his worlds; and it is the danger in this assumption about which Barrie and other critics were worried.

Between 1892 and 1902 there is a marked decline in Barrie's satisfaction with the novel as a mode. The amount of dialogue increases enormously until *The Little White Bird* with its narrator/character, which has some later chapters virtually entirely spoken.¹⁵ Here also the chapter structures and thematically consistent units of the previous novels break up to produce an episodic, scene-like progression. It is important that this growing disenchantment with the novel is coincident with Barrie's condemnation of fantasy writing. The structure of drama is the practical solution to his technical need for more dialogue and scenic development of plot. But the questions remain: why does he develop more towards a dramatic technique, and how does the mode provide a medium more suitable for his change in attitude towards the artist's responsibilities in communication?

One obvious difference between novelistic and dramatic modes is the relationship of the audience to the work of art. The novel is intensely individual, usually functioning on a one-to-one, reader-to-book, response. The control that the author can exercise over that response is therefore immense. Theatre, as George Steiner comments, provides immediate social implications not found in the novel.¹⁶ The very fact that one sits in an audience not only creates a greater mental distance between the art and the spectator, but also partially conditions one's response to the surrounding public response. Further, theatre is based on illusion. The spectator actively chooses at some point to accept this convention, and at any given moment the suspension of disbelief may be stopped. T. S. Eliot makes an interesting distinction between the actively involved audience in the theatre as opposed to the more passive audience of film. In a broad generalization he notes that the intent of film is to create "the illusion that we are observing the actual event. . . ."¹⁷ Many novels have a similar intent, and certainly those which are based on fantasy, yet the manifest illusion of the theatre is far less conducive to the realizing of fantasy.

Barrie tried to stabilize the presence of fantasy in his novels either by isolating it or by treating it ironically. In drama he found that the implicit separation between the spectator and the play controlled and pointed out the inescapable limits of the story more successfully than novelistic convention. Technically, the increased use of dialogue and episodic development in *The Little White Bird* cuts down on descriptive interpretation that can be used to control response. In the drama he still can and does exercise an editorial role through his extensive commentary; yet this does not intrude upon the play as the audience sees it. But fundamentally, Barrie recognizes the positive role of illusion in the theatre. As he comments in the bitter, autobiographical allegory *Pantaloone*: "It is well known . . . that actors in general are not the same off the stage as on; . . . they dress for their parts, speak words written for them which they do not necessarily believe. . . ."¹⁸ It is the public and conscious knowledge of the illusory nature of theatre that Barrie needs in coming to terms with his new sense of artistic responsibility.

III

The role of the narrator is instrumental in understanding Barrie's perspective on fantasy and his attitude to his art. One can only, like the narrator/character of *The Little White Bird*, face the delusion, expose it and experience reality, and then fall into another. Just so the role of the commentator is necessary to an understanding of the plays. Yet here the invisibility of the commentator in the work as theatre is the safeguard Barrie seeks, for his personal control is one step away, transformed and interpreted.

Quality Street, the first of Barrie's really successful plays, has many aspects of the earlier work, but points to his later style and thematic content. The play has a four-act structure, and a central fantasy: Brown's desire for Phoebe to become a girl again. But when he is faced with this possibility in the third act, he is dissatisfied. In the final act the commentator hints that Brown's new vision of Phoebe may yet become fantasy again, for he refuses to accept that she will grow older. But this potential delusion is not emphasized. The audience is allowed to entertain its possible reality.

Just as *The Little White Bird* indicates a shift to a three-part structure and a clearer isolation of the island of fantasy, so *The Admirable Crichton*, although in four acts, shifts to three main parts: London society, the island, and London society. After this play only one of Barrie's full-length dramas is in four acts; the others clearly reserve the central act for fantasy. *The Admirable Crichton* also anticipates another development. Both London society and the island society exist only as personal interpretations of social rules; they appear arbitrary and fantastic. What is interesting is that the transitional periods between societies provide the characters with opportunities to find out about themselves, just as the narrator in *The Little White Bird* did between fantasies. But in *The Admirable Crichton*, only Crichton and Mary even realize other aspects of themselves, and they have not the strength to act upon them.

The movement from fantasy to fantasy, with the possibility of discovering one's self in between and even changing, becomes a central theme of all Barrie's plays. The dedication to *Peter Pan* speaks of people usually passing without change from room to room, but concedes that one may change "through effort of will, which is a brave affair . . ." (492). Yet as Barrie continues to become more aware of the potential influence of words in art, his attitude to the role of the man who makes this movement possible, the fantasist, gradually shifts its perspective.

Peter Pan, as the boy "who would not grow up," not the boy who did not grow up, is the conscious fantasist, no longer a child yet determined to stay within his invented world. The commentator explicitly notes that Never Land is Peter's island; he has made it.¹⁹ The creation of a complete personal world is the first of Barrie's conditions of fantasy. The second, absolute control over the actions and events, is also fulfilled. Peter controls not only the events but also their interpretations. At the end of each day when Wendy asks him what he has been doing, Peter tells her his version; but she is "never quite sure . . . ; indeed the only one who is sure about anything on the island is PETER" (549). She becomes a passive audience "too guarded by this time to ask . . ." (538) for any truth.