Realistic Devices in Sir James Matthew Barrie's Dramatic Fantasies

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REALISTIC DEVICES IN SIR JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE'S
DRAMATIC FANTASIES

by

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of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
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LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to determine the nature and function of the technique of dramatic fantasy developed by Sir James Matthew Barrie, with particular reference to three of his best known dramatic fantasies. It is believed that such a study will be of value because the technique of dramatic fantasy was first developed by Barrie and because it is found to such an extent in his plays. Barrie scholars have made only passing references to the use of fantasy in his plays and indeed there is but little material on fantasy in the works of other authors.

In the preparation of the study it was found that there were many obstacles to be met with in writing about Barrie. The several biographies of the playwright give but little information about many of the facts of his life and throw little light on his aloof and complex personality. Too often there is no more profound and revealing description of the man than that he is whimsical and charming.

Perhaps because Sir James was a financially successful playwright, many critics have been in the habit of dealing with his plays from a theatrical rather than from a literary point of
view. Scenery, acting, and boxoffice appeal are the matters discussed in most of the reviews. The interest in Barrie as good theater and the comparatively recent date of his death (1937) possibly account for the paucity of literary criticism and scholarship on the subject. Perhaps the recent successful revivals of Barrie's plays on the American stage may stimulate scholarly interest in him. At present, however, the lack of material on Barrie imposes a serious limitation on those who wish to study his dramatic works.

Within these limitations, however, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the understanding of the technique of fantasy which is so central a part of James Matthew Barrie's dramatic output.
CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY AND DEFINITION OF FANTASY

Fantasy has long been considered a literary device employed in the embellishment of children's stories. The unrestricted imaginative power of children makes this technique aptly suited to give color and scope to tales which need not have a logical explanation. Fantasy or make-believe never limits itself to any possibility of fact; therefore it is usually regarded as a technique employed in stories the sole purpose of which is to entertain and to go no further than the amusement of the moment. Fantasy in literature as a technique per se and not as one of many devices in a work need not be limited to the creation of fairy tales nor to the embellishment of particular scenes centering around dreams or the supernatural. It is possible to use this technique as a method for the presentation of more serious material, the purpose of which goes beyond that of mere entertainment. Sir James Matthew Barrie did just this—he took the device of fantasy from its original position as children's literature and employed it in the creation of dramatic works the purpose and scope
of which exceeded those of juvenile stories. Since the realistic aspect of Barrie's work is so often overlooked or completely ignored, it remains for those concerned to delve into the very interesting problem of determining how and why Barrie uses realism in his dramatic fantasies. It will be shown that in his plays Sir James Matthew Barrie combined realism and fantasy.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to show that James Matthew Barrie employed the dramatic technique of surrounding his characters in fantasy for the purpose of making them the vehicle of ironical commentary on things as they are. The plays to be examined in the study of this problem will be three of Barrie's better known fantasy plays, Dear Brutus, A Kiss for Cinderella, and Peter Pan, which last will be contrasted with Barrie's realistic play, The Will. In this study we hope to show that Sir James formulated a precise dramatic method for using the technique of fantasy so that he was able to comment realistically on the basic verities without becoming bitterly ironical. When the author of these dramatic fantasies did not use fantasy his works were very often just that—barren and ironical to the point of being cynical.

It is important that this problem be considered in detail because the work of J.M. Barrie has long been considered romantic, when actually it was realistic. It is not the subject matter that makes a story either romantic or realistic; it is rather the author's treatment. The same subject may be treated
by one author romantically and by another realistically. The
distinction is one of method; the romantic writer uses the deductive method, whereas the realistic writer uses the inductive method. Romantic writers in general have an affinity for certain subject matters such as the past and the faraway, whereas realistic writers tend to deal with more prosaic material. The extremely successful manner in which a romantic treatment has been used by J. M. Barrie has very often completely obscured the purpose of his work and diminished its significance. At a dinner party at which Barrie was asked to speak he affirmed this point of view by saying,

Your word for me would probably be 'fantastic.' I was quite prepared to hear it from your chairman, because I felt he could not be so shabby as to say 'whimsical', and that he might say 'elusive'. If you knew how depressed these terms have often made me . . . . Few have tried to be more simple and direct. I have also always thought that I was rather realistic. It is a terrible thing if one is to have no sense at all about his work.1

In the consideration of any subject in which general terms are involved, it is necessary to define, to qualify, and to trace the origin of these terms. For the purposes of this study it will be unnecessary to enter into a lengthy discussion of the words romanticism and realism. It will be sufficient to indicate that romanticism is an attitude which prefers to regard things as

they ought to be, realism, an attitude which tries to see things as they are.

The definition of fantasy poses a problem, for the many connotations of the term make the true definition a limited one in relation to its actual use. The word itself has two spellings, fantasy and phantasy. According to Webster, fantasy may be:

(a) an act or function of forming images or representations, whether in direct perception or in memory; also, an image or impression derived through sensations; or
(b) a fictive creation, whether conceived, as in the mind, or expressed, as in a work of art; esp., an ingenious or fantastical design or invention, as, a fantasy of fine tracings.2

Although the second spelling of the term is often used interchangeably with the first, it is merely an obsolete spelling of fantasy. A distinction must be made between fantasy and creative imagination: fantasy is a creation of a semblance of life on no law save that of whim; creative imagination, on the other hand, is the recreation of a semblance of life according to definite laws.

It is to be gathered, then, that according to the literal definition of the term fantasy, the author who attempts to use fantasy in a literary piece will, in order to conform to the definition of the term, create from his own imagination images or representations of people and places. It will also be necessary

that this term be applied to a work of fiction, because fantasy demands from its very nature that it deal only with the fictitious. However, it is a mistake to think of fantasy only in terms of a set and strict function. Indeed, the opposite is true. Fantasy is a technique that can be manipulated just as the author sees fit, since so much of the success of this form of literature depends upon the innovations which the author can and does supply from his own imagination.

As a rule fantasy has been employed in the formulation of fairy tales, because in these the author may create images and places with little if any restriction upon the form of the technique itself. Although the writer may choose to present either romantic or realistic material, if fantasy is used it will be imperative that the method be one of make-believe. In summarizing the literal definition of fantasy, one comes to the conclusion that this term may be applied to a technique which may be used either as a method or as a complete form of its own. The only limitations it sets upon the author are that it must present images or representations of real people or places, which need not conform to the laws of probability.

It will be necessary, before embarking upon the study of Barrie's use of this technique, to trace the history of
fantasy. Up to the time of Barrie fantasy in literature was not to be seen as an independent technique by means of which an author could completely embody his entire subject matter. Fantasy could be found in literature only as an accompaniment to other devices. For the purposes of this study, only a few examples need be given. An attempt at fantasy could be found principally in works dealing with the supernatural, as in Beowulf, with the monster Grendel, in Hamlet, with the ghost of Hamlet's father, or in A Midsummer Night's Dream, with its fairies. The fantastic elements in these were not intended to develop an individual technique of fantasy but were rather used to produce a scene or two of light-hearted make-believe, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, or to provide an awe-inspiring and even frightening effect, such as that engendered by the dragon and sea cave in Beowulf.

In the early attempts at the novel, especially in the Gothic novel, many elements of fantasy were present. Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) was perhaps the first to incorporate the supernatural into its background. In this novel and in others such as The Italian, The Mysteries of Udolpho, and The Romance of the Forest, all by Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, one witnesses the characteristic element of suspense as constantly upheld through the novelists' use of the technique of fantasy. This type

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3 This section is generally indebted to Albert C. Baugh, A Literary History of England, New York, 1948.
of writing abounded in the use of inexplicable cries, weird
groans, hidden chambers, and secret passages. Here it might be
well to note that occasionally some of these novelists tried to
give the seeming supernatural a natural cause.

In the so-called books of imaginary travels, such as
Rasselas and Gulliver's Travels, the same supernatural elements
are used, but whereas the subject matter of these works is imagi-
nary the style need not be fantastic in the least.

When fantasy is used in the presentation of the super-
natural, such as ghosts, visions, and dreams, the fantasy lies in
the author's conception of representations for human beings or
places. These representations are not confined to any particular
form, theme, or method, but the people or situations are formed
from the author's own imagination. Until the time of Barrie,
however, this very limited use of these fantastic people or situa-
tions prevented them from becoming too important a part of any
work, so that fantasy was merely one of many devices used in the
creation of the work and could not stand apart as a technique
through which an entire work might be created. The popularity
of fantasy in both plays and novels was perhaps an indication
that had it been developed more fully at an earlier date it might
have achieved as much success as it did in the hands of Barrie.

It may be interesting to examine the various elements
of fantasy used by some English writers before Barrie.
Table I summarizes this information.

Many men have tried to provide an explanation of the nature of fantasy and the imagination. One of the most eminent of these was Edgar Allan Poe, whose criticism is still of value because he made use of specific principles in judging a work. Of fantasy he made the observation that when a writer presents the combination of two or more ideas which are not necessarily realistic but which satisfy one as being true or natural, then this combination can be termed imaginative. If the writer presents the combination of two or more ideas which startle by their very novelty, then this combination can be termed fantastic. Poe then surmises that a work of fantasy must contain within its basic structure congruity and naturalness.5

Poe apparently realized that there are no established conventions in fantasy and the real difficulty in fantasy is that no one idea of an author need be consistent with the idea of another author, or that no one idea need apply to two works. But it is absolutely necessary that an author be consistent in the creation of fantasy within and throughout one work. It is this consistency which gives substance to the technique, which renders

4 Table I, 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>Monsters, sea caves</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allegory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Miracle and</td>
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<td>Miraculous events</td>
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<td>Mystery Plays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Midsummer Night's Dream</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Macbeth</td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
<td>1564-1616</td>
<td>Fairies</td>
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<td>Johnson</td>
<td>1759</td>
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<tr>
<td>Novel</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Gothic)</td>
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<td>Magic</td>
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<td>The Mysteries of Udolpho</td>
<td>Radcliffe</td>
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the reader capable of "that willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith." Without this consistency, the use of fantasy would give a work the aspect of an incoherent dream. A. E. Ward states that, "In a world of fantasy normal human beings are out of the picture! . . . All that can be asked is that the people within the author's created universe, shall look as though they belong there." 7

Since this thesis is attempting to explain Barrie's use of fantasy, it is necessary to point out that fantasy as a technique is one of two things, (a) an expression of mere imaginative pleasure, or (b) a vehicle for ironical commentary on things as they are. Both types endeavor to create a mood of constant pleasure. But, whereas the first of these is often superficial in its aim, the second can achieve some degree of profundity.

In the consideration of each type it is well to note that the first of the two, often referred to as "nonsense writing," is, however, a highly technical form of conscious humor which may contain a plot, climax, and even rhyme, Langford Reed states that:

'Nonsense' is the apotheosis of the preposterous. Its conscious humour is based either upon absurd and incongruous action on the part of its principal characters,

6 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria.

upon the paradoxical and eccentric use of words and phrases, of the precise meaning of which their adopter has the most accurate conception, or upon a coined vocabulary of which the words, although ludicrous to the eye and ear, are essentially onomatopoetic. It may be parodic and even highly ironic, but it is never satiric and very rarely contains a moral. 8

Lewis Carroll can be said to be the master par excellence of this method, and it was he who elevated the writing of nonsense to a literary art.

The limitations of this type of fantasy stem from its basic purpose. Since its sole intent is imaginative pleasure through make-believe for its own sake, it can never penetrate beyond the surface of quickly escaping pleasure.

Carroll's nonsense writing may even be termed a highly technical form of conscious and responsible humor. He is able to achieve this purpose by speculating about what would happen if suddenly our fundamental assumptions about the universe were to change completely.

There are thus in Dodgson's best work not merely wit and grace, a personal accent in prose and verse, but an intellectual structure and a psychological imagination which gives it dignity and depth. 9

Lewis Carroll achieved the pinnacle of refinement in this technique of fantasy in the writing of Alice in Wonderland.

8 Langford Reed, The Life of Lewis Carroll, London, 1932, 118.

The second use of fantasy is the one employed by Sir James Matthew Barrie. It remained for him to establish its form as an independent literary technique, but in the formation of the technique Sir James was careful to set its limits. Without his having done this, fantasy might not have attained an independent form. While most of his later work is characterized by a fantastic spirit of make-believe, he so arranges this method that it becomes the vehicle for ironical commentary on things as they are. His is a simple demonstrative method, using an aloof attitude. By making his fantasy contain ironical comments on the verities of life, Barrie is able to bridge the gap between the world of make-believe and our own existence. He is, however, always very careful—he merely touches lightly for a time upon the emotions and never attempts to startle his audience or to move them very deeply. The limitation of this method is obvious: the effect of a dramatic fantasy leaves one as quickly and easily as it came. Thus, unless Barrie's audience is conscious of the author's purpose, they will leave the theater with the impression of extreme lightness. But had not Barrie made use of fantasy to robe his ideas, his work would have been a cynical commentary on life, showing only a vague hope for mankind. E. Brown states of Barrie that,

By his realistic treatment of the imaginative and his poetic interpretation of the purely objective, he satisfies at one and the same time the human, conscious longing which can be reasonably accounted for, and the
superhuman subconscious craving for which there is only mystical explanation.  

At no time does Barrie close his eyes to the unpleasant realities of life, but rather he chooses to portray these realities in a more pleasant light. Barrie is one of the few modern playwrights who have been able to make the startling discovery that a real artist can make virtue as interesting as vice.

Barrie made it a particular point to be natural at all times in his play. In the stage instructions to Peter Pan, the author informs the actors that, "All the characters, whether grown-ups or babes, must wear a child's outlook on life as their only important adornment." It would seem that perhaps Barrie chose children as his leading characters so frequently because of the greater simplicity and directness and clarity of the child's outlook on life.

Barrie was endeavoring to point out to his audience that the great difference between a realistic and a romantic author is the author's attitude toward his own material. It is apparent, then, that in order to understand Barrie it will be necessary to distinguish between his method and his subject-matter. As James A. Roy comments,

10 E. Brown, "Mr. Barrie's Dramatic and Social Outlook," The Living Age, XXXI, June 16, 1905, 668.

It is easy to say the obvious about Barrie. It is the obvious in him that had made him the most popular dramatist of his time. It is his skill in fitting the obvious into his dramatic work that has earned the respect of those who understand the architecture of a well-made play, and can appreciate good craftsmanship in the theatre. Having dealt with the outward excellence of Barrie's work, they imagine that they have said all that is to be said about him. Because they can see only the obvious, they affect to despise him as a thinker. If they are uneasily conscious that there is something in his work that has eluded them, they try to satisfy themselves by calling him 'whimsical' and 'quaint'. Anyone, they say, can understand Barrie. Even a child could understand him. There they give themselves away, for it is not everyone who retains the imagination of a child. Too many fail to appreciate that there is, in the best of Barrie's work, what Hazlitt points out in Lamb's, a 'marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling,' and 'instruction deep and lovely of his subject.'

It has been the literary tragedy of J. M. Barrie that he is so grossly misunderstood and so little appreciated for his true merit. The reader of his plays is often tempted to wonder why it is that so many people have failed to see Barrie as something more than the whimsical, charming playwright of light, semi-fairy tale plays. His critics have not been able to go beyond the surface of his dramas and detect that they are the work of a man who had a tremendously keen and subtle insight into the characters of men, even those of the most simple rustic folk whom he loved so well. If these critics had been able to penetrate beyond the obvious, they would have discovered a truly profound thinker, a man who was far from satisfied with the conditions of the world.

12 James Matthew Barrie, 190-191.
as he saw them. They would have found a man who was much too clever and much too kind to have forced his ironical view to the attention of his audience and who rather chose the simple method of making all that he wrote so delightful and refreshing that even a child could readily enjoy it. But it is this very simplicity that has been the pitfall of so many eminent critics who profess to understand Barrie’s work. Their greatest error has been their failure to distinguish between Barrie’s realistic material and his method of fantasy. The fantasy which he so well employed in his plays has completely obscured for many people the fact that his themes were so realistic that without a light manner of presentation his work would have been completely cynical.

Since many of Barrie’s contemporaries considered him a romantic writer, a number of them thought his plays were refined fairy tales. L. Wilkinson believed that Barrie was absurd and that all his work was merely the product of a mind toying with fancy.

There are no standards of literary judgement applicable to Barrie. It is impossible to write, either, that his world is more delightful than the real world or that his world is unpleasantly sweet and sickly---His plots are preposterous.13

13 Twentieth Century Literature, 121-122.
To many such critics as Wilkinson, Barrie's work appeared romantic and whimsical. At times, however, some writers seemed to fathom that fundamentally Barrie had a message and that his dislike of being called whimsical or fanciful was founded on the fact that he was basically realistic. Barrie knew full well that many of his audience would never realize the fact that he was trying to do more than merely to present a delightful tale filled with wonder and make-believe. He was endeavoring to comment upon or point out some aspect of life, which was often unflattering to humanity, but, and this is the important thing to remember, he was commenting on things as he saw them and not on things as he would have liked to see them. He chose to be subtle in his presentation— that is what made him so different. Barrie chose to use a treatment for his subject matter that was so completely disarming in its unworldly manner of fantasy that the method very nearly succeeded in completely obscuring the subject matter.

It can be said, then, that Sir James, in going beyond the usual procedure in using fantasy in his plays, has set up a definite system of fantasy in literature, one which may well be copied by many future writers. It has been previously stated that his purpose in employing this dramatic technique in his plays was to make the characters the vehicles for his own ironical commentary on things as they are. The problem now remains of limiting and pointing out the particular method of fantasy which
Sir James made use of.

We shall now endeavor to show that, from all the earlier examples of fantasy in literature and from all the varying shades of meaning of the term fantasy, Barrie selected the basic definition of the term, which is the creation of fictitious images which conform to no set standards but which are really an image of the author's mind. These images, once created, are consistently used throughout a particular piece so as to produce a unified work of art. Barrie made use of these fantastic images in literary works the themes and purposes of which were profound and meaningful. The combination of significant thought and make-believe people and places was made possible only by Barrie's keen mind and subtle wit.

From all the definitions which have been examined and considered, we have selected the following as most applicable to fantasy as seen in the dramatic works of James Matthew Barrie, particularly in the plays Dear Brutus, A Kiss for Cinderella, and Peter Pan. Fantasy is the power of conceiving mental representations of human beings or places, which are not confined to any particular form, theme, or method. The author, as it were, creates these people, places, and situations from his own imagination, without being limited by standard literary conventions.

From the above definition of fantasy one can readily see that these creations acquire their illusion of lifelikeness, not because they conform to any particular human model, but
rather because of the fact that they are consistent with the author's imaginative world. Because of this inner necessity, he then forms a method or technique of his own.

It would be a serious oversight, however, if one did not note that the greatest weakness of Barrie's technique is its very lightness. It becomes almost an impossibility to receive the message which is expressed through fantasy without forgetting it a few seconds later. Perhaps this very lightness has made Barrie's use of fantasy so attractive to a large variety of people. Again, the light-hearted airiness of the technique has made Barrie's audience willing to return again and again to view his plays. Nevertheless, the comparative obscurity of the thought must be regarded as an artistic defect in the work of Barrie.

In this chapter we have attempted to discuss the nature of fantasy and to give a brief survey of the fantastic elements in English literature before Barrie. It has been established that Barrie had a serious purpose and used realistic subject matter, and it is this that distinguishes his work from that of such "nonsense" writers as Lewis Carroll. We have seen that Barrie's lightness of treatment has obscured the seriousness of his themes for most critics, who regard him as merely whimsical and quaint. However, it seems undeniable that the pleasant surface of his work has tended to distract his audience from its deeper meaning.
From the general discussion of the nature and history of fantasy and from what has been shown of Barrie's methods and purposes in his fantastic works, it has been possible to evolve a definition of fantasy as practiced by James Matthew Barrie. The following chapters will examine in detail three of Barrie's plays to show how he applied to the writing of his dramas this fantastic technique which he was the first to formulate.
CHAPTER II

THE APPLICATION OF BARRIE’S FANTASY

TO DEAR BRUTUS

A brief summary of the play Dear Brutus is given in order to facilitate the discussion of this play in connection with Barrie's technique of fantasy.

CHARACTERS IN DEAR BRUTUS

Lob The spirit of mischief who forgot to die at the time of Elizabeth's Merry England.

Mr. Dearth The artist who has learned to drown his sorrows in the decanter bottle—he is perhaps Sir James' tragic hero in the play.

Matey Lob's dishonest butler.

Purdie A successful lawyer who has chosen his wife unwisely and consequently has become a philanderer.

Mr. Coade A sweet elderly gentleman who has been contemplating a lifelong work of writing a history of the feudal system—a project never started.

Alice Dearth A lady of fierce desires.

Joanna A spirited young woman in search of love.

Mabel Purdie The soft and pleading type of woman.
Mrs. Goade  A "nice" elderly woman with a kind heart and a kinder disposition.

Lady Caroline  The aristocrat.

Margaret  The make-believe daughter of Dearth.

PLOT SUMMARY OF DEAR BRUTUS

Dear Brutus is a tragi-comedy of daily life in which Barrie introduces ten people to one another in the home of a Mr. Lob, who is part man and part eternal mischief spirit. These people have all been invited to visit Lob's home with the stipulation that they come for Midsummer Eve. They are baffled by the invitation, since none of them know Lob and apparently none of them have anything in common.

Early in the evening of Midsummer Eve the five ladies prompt the butler, Matey, to tell them why they have been invited. Reluctantly Matey informs them that every Midsummer's Eve Lob sends various people into a magic wood, from which they never return. All those whom he has invited for this year's visit have one thing in common—they all desire a second chance at life, because each of them believes that if he were given an opportunity to relive his life he would have chosen the better way and consequently have been a better or more successful individual. Matey warns them not to go in search of the wood.

As the play progresses, Barrie reveals what it is that each character would have different. Matey believes that he
would have been an honest man had he chosen to accept the clerkship in the City instead of becoming a butler. Lady Caroline, the aristocrat of refined tastes, insinuates that she cannot choose an opportunity that would not be entirely proper—her extreme independence poses a problem for Lob. Mr. and Mrs. Coade are the elderly couple who lend a sentimental air to the play. Barrie informs the actors that Mrs. Coade is the nicest of all the women in the play and adds that she has no vice which time has not smoothed out. One gathers that she does not choose to have a second chance. This is not, however, the case with her husband. Mr. Coade is a kindly gentleman who has long been telling himself that some day he will finish his book on the feudal system, but of course he has never even started the work. Mr. and Mrs. Dearth are the couple who find themselves unhappily married because Mrs. Dearth believes she should have chosen her other suitor and because of this her artist husband has become an excessive drinker. Mr. and Mrs. Purdie are the philandering husband and the neglected wife—only because they have made a wrong choice in their selection of mates. Then there is Joanna Trout, who is constantly bestowing her affection upon other women's husbands—only because she really cares for them and is certain that she can make them better and happier.

In spite of Matey's warnings, everyone goes on Midsummer's Eve in search of the magic wood. Only Mrs. Coade and Lob
remain behind. Mrs. Coade has nothing she would like changed, and Lob, one is informed, can see as much from his closed lids as mortals can with their two eyes open.

As the characters step into the garden a wood magically appears, and each of the characters forgets who he is. Everyone is given and takes the second chance, but they all remain basically the same.

Mr. Coade as a poor man is the same happy-go-lucky idler he was when he was rich. Matey, though he has accepted the clerkship in the City and is rich, is as dishonest as ever. The haughty Lady Caroline is seen married to the former butler, who manages to dominate her in the most undignified manner. Mrs. Purdie and Joanna Trout have exchanged places and now Mr. Purdie is convinced that Joanna was the wrong person for his affections. Mrs. Dearth has married the suitor she had rejected and now finds herself in dire poverty and extremely unhappy. Only Dearth seems to have found himself better off in the magic wood, for here he has been given a daughter who seems to fill so much of his life. He no longer appears a waster and is very happy, but in the end he deserts his daughter to go in pursuit of his former wife.

As the characters return into the house they all realize that Lob's magic wood has given them a second chance, but no one has changed. Though circumstances have been different, their characters have remained the same. Only Dearth took the second chance and profited by it. He seems to be the tragic character
of the play, "for perhaps fate had played him a bad hand. Soon all the others will forget the lesson Lob has tried to point out and will again resume their wishful thinking.

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves, that we are underlings."¹

In this chapter we shall attempt to survey the application of Barrie's technique of fantasy to Dear Brutus, first of the three plays to be considered in this study.

**Dear Brutus** is a tragi-comedy of daily life, through which Barrie endeavors to show his audience the result of that second chance at life which so many desire in order to prove to the world and themselves that different circumstances would have changed their lives. James A. Roy comments on this theme as follows.

Perhaps the gist of the philosophy of **Dear Brutus** is that chance matters comparatively little in this life, and that character is everything. Character is fate. If we wish to change, we must mould and develop character; we must strive earnestly after the best things. To depend on chance is to lean against the wind. A happy accident may alter our circumstances, it cannot change our character, cannot bring us happiness. The play presents the doctrine of the second chance.²

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² James Matthew Barrie, 212.
Barrie states this philosophy explicitly in a passage in the play.

Purdie. (His mind still illumined. In my present state of depression—which won't last—I feel there is something in me that will make me go on being the same ass, however many chances I get. I haven't the stuff in me to take warning. My whole being is corroded. Shakespeare knew what he was talking about—"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

Joanna. For 'dear Brutus' we are to read 'dear audience', I suppose?

Purdie. You have it.

Joanna. Meaning that we have the power to shape ourselves?

Purdie. We have the power right enough.

Joanna. But isn't that rather splendid?

Purdie. For those who have the grit in them, yes. And they are not the dismal chappies; they are the ones with the thin bright faces. 3

Thus the theme of the play is markedly realistic. Barrie selects a fantastic man and a fantastic situation to embody this idea.

Once the situation has been presented one may observe the very systematic application of Sir James's fantastic method in Dear Brutus. Barrie's ability to create mental representations of human beings which are not confined to any particular form or method gives to this play the air of a fairy tale, but his creation of mental representations of places or situations which also

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are not confined to any particular form, theme, or method imparts to the structure of Dear Brutus its strongest atmosphere of fantasy. Yet the subject matter of the play is so strongly realistic that had it not been for this use of fantasy Dear Brutus would have been one of the most cynical products of Barrie's dramatic career. We have indicated the primary steps in the composition of Barrie's fantasy plays. We shall now endeavor to show just how these two steps were applied to Dear Brutus.

In Dear Brutus Barrie's creation of Lob is his only really fantastic representation of a human being. All the other characters in the play are plausible, real personages, but in Lob Barrie has created a fantasy so complete that it needs no other supporting character. It is, then, upon Lob that Barrie makes his first strong step toward building an atmosphere of make-believe. Here is the mischievous creature of no age and no abode who is at times almost brutal in his portrayal of fun. Lob loves only the flowers and the product of his insistent mischief making. This little man seems to belong to another age and another time when fairies were accepted by the human mind as real beings.

The conversation between Matey and Lady Caroline gives an indication of this odd quality of Barrie's leading man.

Lady Caroline. You amuse one to an extent. Was he ever married?

Matey. (Too lightly). He has quite forgotten, my lady. (reflecting) How long ago is it since Merry England?
Lady Caroline. Why do you ask?

Mabel. In Queen Elizabeth's time, wasn't it?

Matey. He says he is all that is left of Merry England! that little man.

Mabel. (who has brothers). Lob? I think there is a famous cricketer called Lob.

Mrs. Coade. Wasn't there a Lob in Shakespeare? No, of course I am thinking of Robin Goodfellow.

Lady Caroline. The names are so alike.

Joanna. Robin Goodfellow was Puck.

Mrs. Coade. (with natural elation). That is what was in my head. Lob was another name for Puck.

Joanna. Well, he is certainly rather like what Puck might have grown into if he had forgotten to die. And, by the way, I remember now he does call his flowers by the old Elizabethan names.4

It is Lob, with all his knowledge of human weakness and folly, who suggests that his guests go in search of the magic wood. Only Lob knows that all his guests would be better off if they remained confident of their supposed goodness—perhaps all but Dearth.

Lob, as it were, becomes within the play the instigator or perhaps the creator of the magic land into which Barrie is always so fond of moving his characters. In Dear Brutus he places his characters in this magic wood in order to give them a stronger

4 Ibid., Act I, 1002.
part in this fantasy creation. Here one views a land with two magical attributes—the first of these is that it appears but once a year, and the second is that it can impart to all who search and enter into it a second chance at life. A. E. Morgan, commenting on this situation, states:

The desire to escape from the world of finite reality to the world of infinite attainment is inherent in human nature. What else are many dreams, we are told, but a fulfilment in the realm of unlimited possibility of the strivings and yearnings which can never come to fruition on the plane of actual living. To satisfy this need is one of the great functions of art.

The play assumes the possibility of a dual existence. One of these is the present, in which man lives out his allotted time with torment, fear, and anxiety, but the other existence is one in which time plays no part. In the latter state man has been transferred into a world that escapes death and sorrow and passes on to eternity—this is James Matthew Barrie's world of fantasy.

It is important to remember that to Barrie the real things in life are the eternal verities and not the discussion of some topical issue. He aims at and reaches the crux of reality in nature in every play. Barrie reveals to his audience in Dear Brutus that every one of his characters has a conscience which haunts him, and that every one of his characters has secrets in

5 Tendencies of Modern English Drama, 250.
In Act I, Joanna, the hypocrite, has discovered that Alice is not the lady she pretends to be.

Alice. (drawling). I thought I heard you say 'That hateful Dearth woman is coming butting in where she is not wanted.'

Joanna. You certainly have good ears.

Alice. (drawling). Yes, they have always been rather admired.

Joanna. (snooping). By the painters for whom you sat when you were an artist's model?

Alice. (measuring her). So that has leaked out, has it?

The second step which Sir James uses in the creation of his fantasies is the creation of a magic land. In Dear Brutus one might consider it the strongest element of fantasy, because the characters, all of whom but Lob are ordinary people, are caught within its web. In this world of his own making, Barrie is appealing not to the reason of his audience but to their emotions. Although he is a realist he does not attempt to awaken them violently to a realization of things as they are. He is content to ruffle the feelings lightly without causing an emotional turmoil. As Frank Swinnerton points out,

These plays are not the work of a man who is well content with the world as it is; but they are the work of a man who demurely presents his ideas in the form of

6 Ibid., 1015.
parables. They are not the work of a man with abounding energy, such as Shaw, but one who sits quietly in his chimney-corner turning over the disillusions of a lifetime and giving them this wry little twist to make them tolerable to himself. The same ideas, treated grimly or exuberantly, might be more impressive, but they would not be more profound. They would only seem more actual.

Throughout the play, though Barrie makes a conscious effort to create a fantastic background for realistic material, he is ever careful not to be incongruous or inconsistent. From beginning to end Lob is always the spirit of mischief, and the wood remains true to its promises throughout the play. This quality gives to Dear Brutus its final stroke of artistic unity, which is apparent when we see that the author consistently shows the characters and situations to be artistically his own and used with the purpose of presenting the absurdity of the philosophy of the second chance.

Barrie is able to show his realistic views in an aura of romanticism because he has the great power of segregating the basic elements in human nature from the subtle entanglements of a particular culture and civilization without causing a violent emotional upheaval. By enveloping his characters with a childlike simplicity Barrie beguiles the audience into believing that this is the work of a man who sees the rainbow. His style is as light and delicate as the feelings of a child, which accounts for the

7 The Georgian Scene, New York, 1934, 117.
fact that much of his work is misunderstood and rated as merely whimsical.

By his realistic treatment of the imagination and his poetic interpretation of the purely objective, he satisfies at one and the same time the human, conscious longing which can be reasonably accounted for and the superhuman subconscious craving for which there is only a mystical explanation. 8

This chapter has attempted to show Barrie's use of fantasy in the composition of Dear Brutus, first of the three plays which we shall examine to determine his technique in fantasy. It has been found that the theme of the play—that character, not circumstances, determines happiness—is realistic. By the use of the one fantastic character, Lob, and of the fantastic situation inherent in the expedition of some very ordinary individuals into a magic wood, Barrie brings out this theme and yet maintains an atmosphere of make-believe which is sustained by the consistency of his treatment of the unreal elements. Thus in Dear Brutus fantasy is Barrie's method of bringing home to his audience his shrewd and realistic appraisal of human character.

8 E. Brown, "Mr. Barrie's Dramatic and Social Outlook," 668.
CHAPTER III

THE APPLICATION OF BARRIE'S FANTASY

TO A KISS FOR CINDERELLA

A synopsis of A Kiss for Cinderella will perhaps enrich the discussion of the play and aid in clarifying Sir James' method of fantasy.

CHARACTERS IN A KISS FOR CINDERELLA

Cinderella  The little cleaning girl who had a refinement of voice and manner brought about by "reading of fairy tales and the thinking of noble thoughts."

David  The good-natured, none-too-bright policeman who becomes Cinderella's Prince Charming.

Mr. Bodie  A sixty-three year old successful artist with a heart of gold.

Venus  The statue which personifies Cinderella's ideal of womanhood.

Marie-Thérèse The French orphan
Gladys The English orphan
Gretchen The German orphan
Delphine The Belgian orphan
Godmother ()
Lord Mayor ()
King and Queen ()
Prince (All characters from Cinderella's dream
Lord Times ()
Penguin ()
Ladies of the Court ()

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Of the three fantasy plays discussed in this thesis, A Kiss for Cinderella is the one which has the least fantasy in its make-up. The fantasy in this play is in the mind of the leading lady, Cinderella.

The play takes place in London during World War I. Cinderella is the cleaning woman for Mr. Bodie, an artist who in jest has nicknamed the young girl Cinderella. While working in his studio Cinderella becomes fascinated by a statue of Venus which the artist has sculptured. The statue becomes to her the epitome of beauty and perfection, which the little waif feels will never be her lot. Very quickly Cinderella discovers that she has one advantage over Venus--her pretty feet. She does not, however, worry too much about her rival in stone. Cinderella is soon revealed as leading a double life--unknown to anyone she has taken over the care of four war orphans as her contribution to the war effort. For this purpose she has been stealing wooden boards from her employer in order to make beds for the orphans.
David, the policeman in Mr. Bodie's neighborhood, complains to the artist that his windows are not boarded against the light from his studio, and Mr. Bodie jestingly tells David that he suspects Cinderella is up to something in connection with the enemy. David then visits her home and discovers the secret children and also learns that the children really believe she is the Cinderella of fairy tale fame. That night was to have been the one in which the fairy godmother comes to take Cinderella to the ball. So after David has left her home and the children have been put to sleep, Cinderella sits outside on her door step to await her marvelous fate. Half frozen, she falls asleep in the snow and dreams that she is attending the Prince's ball. In this dream Barrie makes full use of his ability to portray a fantastic scene. When Cinderella awakens she finds herself in a rest home, where she soon discovers herself to be a real mortal with a real name and not a character from a fairy tale. But her Prince Charming turns out to be the policeman himself, and as a final touch she receives a pair of slippers from him as an engagement gift.

In this chapter we will survey Sir James M. Barrie's use of fantasy in the second of the three plays examined in this study, A Kiss for Cinderella. It will be shown that Barrie has made more restricted use of his technique of dramatic fantasy in A Kiss for Cinderella than in either Dear Brutus or Peter Pan. However, in this play as well as in all of his other fantasy works
he follows the systematic Barrie pattern of fantasy.

In the play *A Kiss for Cinderella* the first thing Sir James does is to create a mental representation of a human being which is not confined to any particular form, theme, or method but which is consistent throughout the particular work. The author in this play creates the fantasy of character by presenting a poor cleaning girl as a make-believe Cinderella. Barrie has her become a fairy tale personage quite by accident--she simply took her employer's suggestion of being Cinderella because she was so certain that everyone had noticed her small feet. All through the play this leading lady carries the illusion of her status without the least difficulty. Unknown to anyone she was harboring four war orphans, and as might be expected these children were quite ready to accept her as the real Cinderella. Perhaps because she wanted to believe the fantasy built around herself as Cinderella or perhaps because she did not want to disappoint her four waifs, she never wavered from her firm belief that her fate would be no less than that of the original Cinderella.

At length Cinderella uttered the observation that it might have been her hope in the future that helped her create this illusion of fantasy about herself.

*Cinderella.* (who in the course of a troubled life has acquired much miscellaneous information). In the Workhouse you always get an egg to your tea the day before you die. (She whispers). I know now I'm not the real Cinderella.

*Bodie.* (Taking her hand). How did you find out?
Cinderella. (Gravely). It's come to me. The more I eat the clearer I see things. I think it was just an idea of mine; being lonely-like I needed to have something to hang on to.¹

It is well to note that Cinderella is not Barrie's usual type of fantasy character. Everything about her natural personality is very ordinary. She is not a Lob or a Peter Pan, who cannot come within the usual limitations and bonds of humanity. Rather she is a normal human being who has allowed herself to believe that she is not just a poor cockney girl but that she is a lady waiting to be rescued. It is, therefore, in her own mind that all this fantasy exists. She is so consistent in her belief that she is Cinderella, that the illusion of fantasy is carried from her to the other characters in the play. All the other personages in the play are quite real and matter of fact. Often Barrie points up the realities of existence by pointing out little instances here and there which would strike one as being cynical did the author not quickly leave the point to dwell upon something else. Such a scene is the one between Danny and the Probationer in the hospital. The Probationer in reality is a member of the aristocracy.

Probationer. Oh Dear! I'll often enjoy myself less, Danny.

Danny. Daniel Duggan will sometimes think of this day, when you are in your presentation gown and he is

on your roof, looking for that there leakage.

Probationer. Oh, Danny, don't tell me that when I meet you with your bag of tools I'll be a beast. Surely there will be at least a smile of friendship between us in memory of the old days.

Danny. I wonder! That's up to you, my lady. (But he will be wiser if he arranges that it is to be up to himself). 2

Barrie points out in this instance that the rigidity of social standards will often come between persons who might ordinarily be friends. There is a touch of cynicism about the observation, but as usual Sir James merely alludes to it gently, for it would be against his dramatic manner if he allowed himself to disturb the emotions of his audience.

Barrie then goes on to sustain the illusion of fantasy with which he has surrounded one character, Cinderella, by creating a special world for the fantastic characterization. This is his second step—he creates mental representations for places and situations which are not confined to any particular form, theme, or method. In this play, in which fantasy has been restrained and limited, he supplies the situation in a dream. Here Cinderella fabricates her own version of luxury, adventure, and Prince Charming, in fact her notion of the ideal world. The audience might quite often view it as a feverish dream which is often rather commonplace but never incoherent. James Barrie

2 Ibid., 937.
tells us that Cinderella has made everything with her own hands—everything "from the cloths to the ices." Apparently she could not restrain her use of glittering gold, for it appeared in connection with every person or object. Cinderella, with the touch of a real artist, builds each situation up to a point which will center around her inevitable success with Prince Charming. Her final success comes, of course, when she is able to win over Venus for the love of her prince. The dream ends with her escape from the ballroom and the lost slipper being found by the prince.

All this would have been in a limited sense a mere pleasant tale had Sir James not been careful to impart to it a touch of artistry by weaving into its entire fabric an ever subtle ironic comment upon life. This final step of his fantasy technique, which is basically nothing more than the fabrication of people, places, and situations from his own imagination for the explicit purpose of ironically commenting upon things as they are, is executed in such a manner that it will never greatly disturb the emotions of the audience. Barrie allows his technique to make them aware of some truth, but it must not be allowed to penetrate fiercely, because then the entire technique of dramatic fantasy would have destroyed itself and its effects also.

A. E. Morgan states that:

Drama, like all art, is essentially a means of liberating the human spirit. It is possible, as the greatest dramatists have shown, to effect this liberation without sacrificing truth. This is the achievement
of the greatest art. The smaller artist turns his back on life or at least regards it with only a sidelong glance and creates a world which is not merely fictitious, but which more or less contravenes the eternal verities.  

Barrie chooses to liberate the spirit by completely disguising his realistic material with an extremely romantic method. It is important to note this, because it is through the failure of so many to make this observation that Sir James has unjustly been considered merely whimsical and quaint.

As far as *A Kiss for Cinderella* is concerned, one might venture to state that the gist of the underlying philosophy is not too apparent but that Barrie, with his usual subtle strokes, was commenting upon the strength of an individual's hope in life. The power man has for self-deception—and the value of such illusion—receive here an ironical commentary which reminds one of the spirit of *The Wild Duck*. To a sophisticated thinker the outcome of Cinderella's dream of life was perhaps shallow, but Barrie does not forget to let us know that it was satisfactory to her. As is usual with this author, he ends the play on a realistic note—that Cinderella is dying.

*A Kiss for Cinderella*, then, contains less of the fantastic than do the other two plays examined in this study. The

3 A. E. Morgan, *Tendencies in Modern English Drama*, 249.
fantasy is limited not only to one character, but to that character's concept of herself. The reader does not immediately accept the cleaning girl as Cinderella, but her own belief in her destiny, by its strength, is carried over to other persons in the play and in some sense to the reader. The other characters—and the situations, unlike those of Peter Pan and Dear Brutus—are perfectly ordinary, although Cinderella adapts them to her own ideas. Barrie is not so much concerned with a theme in this play as with an ironical if kindly commentary on the power of man's hopes and illusions about himself and his fate. A Kiss for Cinderella, then, shows the application of Barrie's technique of dramatic fantasy to the portrayal of character, which serves to emphasize the realism of his observation of ordinary situations and the workings of men's minds.
CHAPTER IV

THE APPLICATION OF BARRIE'S FANTASY

TO PETER PAN AS CONTRASTED WITH

THE WILL

The plays Peter Pan and The Will are here summarized in order to clarify the discussion and comparison of the two works in reference to Barrie's use of dramatic fantasy.

CHARACTERS IN PETER PAN

Peter Pan  The boy who wouldn't grow up.
Wendy      The mother of the lost boys.
Captain Jas Hook  The dreadful pirate who seeks to destroy Peter Pan.
Snee         Another fierce pirate.
John, Michael  Wendy's brothers, who join the host of lost boys in the Never Land.
Nana         A Newfoundland dog who has been trained to become a nurse for the Darling children.
Mr. and Mrs. Darling  The parents of Wendy, John, and Michael.
First and Second Twin (Tuotlea (Slightly (Tink (Curly (Tiger Lily (Nibs (Mermaids (Crocodiles

Host of Pirates

SUMMARY OF THE PLOT OF PETER PAN

Peter Pan is a fantasy which portrays the adventures which three children have when they manage to escape through their nursery window. These children were the offspring of a middle class English couple. One night the parents were to dine out, but the children's nurse, a trained Great Dane, was not permitted to remain in the nursery. This was a very foolish move on the part of the parents because, as Mrs. Darling, the mother, explained to her husband, she had seen a strange boy in the nursery--she believed he would come back again because he had forgotten his shadow.

The night the parents are out the three children, Wendy, John, and Michael, awaken to find the strange boy in their room. Wendy discovers that this boy is Peter Pan, who lives "second to the right and then straight on till morning" in the land of lost boys. Peter Pan manages to persuade the children to join him in this Never Never Land with the promise that Wendy will be the mother of all the lost boys. To get them to this magical land he
teaches the children to fly.

Upon arrival in Peter's land of lost boys the three children discover a host of other lost boys, dozens of mischievous fairies, beautiful mermaids, exotic crocodiles, and a crew of pirates headed by the notorious Captain Jas Hook. With all these adventurous elements of life around them the children proceed to have a glorious time in Peter Pan's wonderland. They learn to fight Indians, play with fairies, live in trees, and battle with the notorious pirates, whom they, with Peter's help, of course manage to destroy.

In the end all three children decide to return home, but Wendy promises Peter that she will return to see him every spring to do his cleaning for him.

CHARACTERS IN THE WILL

Mr. Phillip Ross  A young, struggling, and idealistic couple who in later years become warped by material wealth.

Mrs. Emily Ross

Mr. Devizes  A middle-aged successful lawyer, stolid and precise.

Robert Devizes  The younger lawyer who follows in his father's footsteps.

Surtes  A middle-aged clerk who is suddenly faced with the prospect of death.

Sennet  A brisk clerk.

Creed  Another clerk.
SUMMARY OF THE PLOT OF THE WILL

In this play Sir James uses no fantasy whatsoever, and it is here that one can readily see how barren his work can be if it is void of the usual Barrie technique of fantasy.

At the start of the play a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ross, have gone to the business office of Devize, Devize, and Devize, attorneys at law, for the purpose of drawing up the will of Mr. Ross. Both the young people find this a trying situation, and their concern for one another is rather touching. It seems that Mr. Ross has two maiden cousins whom Mrs. Ross insists upon remembering even though the young couple's own means are so slight.

In the next scene the young couple have advanced into middle age and have become quite wealthy. They are no longer concerned with the welfare of others but rather with their own individual desires. Both husband and wife have become mercenary and they regard their material wealth as supreme to everything. They mention their two children, of whom they seem to be rather fond, principally because they are becoming stepping stones to further riches and fame. Gone, however, is the solicitous care of Mr. Ross for his wife, and gone is her love for him. In the place of love and care, greed and selfishness have arisen.

The last scene is again in the lawyer's office, and one learns that Mrs. Ross has died and that Mr. Ross has recently been knighted. Unfortunately one does not see a contented man-
rather Mr. Ross has become a disillusioned person whose children have failed him and who has found that his fame and fortune have become rather shallow objects in his life. He had gone to the lawyer's office in order to change his will once more, but he leaves without doing so when he discovers that the reason he is a failure is really the lack of strength in his own character.

It is believed that the play *Peter Pan*, most popular of Barrie's dramas, was written as a nursery tale to amuse four children. However, this play is much more than a mere fairy tale designed exclusively for the pleasure of children. Rather, it is a profound and subtle commentary on humanity itself. Certainly *Peter Pan*, like *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Rose and the Ring* of Thackeray, has been the delight of countless children, but it too contains much that will engage the adult mind. Sir James Matthew Barrie has made more extensive use of his technique of dramatic fantasy in *Peter Pan* than in any of his other plays. In this work he is concerned with revealing mankind's desire to remain in perpetual childhood. As is customary with him in his works of fantasy, Barrie revolves this play around make-believe characters in a make-believe world for the purpose of airing an ironical comment on life. The strength and force of delivery in *Peter Pan* is better appreciated when it is compared to one of Barrie's plays in which fantasy has not been employed. In this chapter we shall endeavor to explicate Barrie's technique of dramatic fantasy as
seen in the play *Peter Pan* and at the same time shall contrast it with his realistic and cynical work *The Will*.

In *Peter Pan* the playwright begins to create a world of fantasy by presenting the majority of the personages in the play as fantastically unreal. This is the author's first step, to create mental representations of human beings which are not confined to any particular form, theme, or method. In *Peter Pan* Barrie exploits this method to its utmost. All the characters in the play are plunged into an atmosphere of fantasy with the exception of the mother and father, but even they are presented as willing to accept all situations which cannot be explained by natural laws. An example of this is Mrs. Darling's acceptance of a boy flying through the window and losing his shadow. Similarly Mr. Darling is willing to commute to work in a dog kennel because he has made a rash judgment.

All of the other characters go much further than these two do, however. The leading fantastic character is, of course, Peter Pan himself, who is the personification of the eternal boy. Here is the boy who refuses to grow up, and yet there is something about him of the man that might have been.

Sir James reveals that Peter,

... is ever so old, but he is really always the same age, so that does not matter in the least. His age is one week, and though he was born so long ago he has never had a birthday, nor is there the slightest chance of his ever having one. The reason is that he escaped from being a human when he was seven days old; he
escaped by the window and flew back to the Kensington Garden.  

Peter lives in a sensitive world where cares and reality hardly seem to exist for him, but he is at times conscious that there is another real world. Peter is, however, having too much fun in his own world to wish to face realities. His world, in which pirates, crocodiles, fairies, and mermaids live, is to him exactly what he desires of life, so he chooses to remain where they thrive. Everything else that does not conform to his way of thinking is automatically disregarded. In the last act of the play this is what is happening to Wendy as she is growing up.  

Peter. Good-by, Wendy.  

Wendy. I'll tell mother all about the spring cleaning and the house.  

Peter. (who sometimes forgets that she has been there before). You do like the house.  

Wendy. Of course it is small. But most people of our size wouldn't have a house at all. (She should not have mentioned size, for he has already expressed displeasure at her growth. Another thing, one he has scarcely noticed, though it disturbs her, is that she does not see him quite so clearly now as she used to do). When you come for me next year, Peter—-you will come, won't you?  

Peter is always consistent in his desire to be exactly as he is, so that he is a little boy who is never thoughtful but

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always rather selfish. Little Wendy soon discovers that, although Peter is courteous to her most of the time, it is because he seems to sense her superiority. The playwright reveals this trait of Peter's at the outset.

Peter. Wendy, look, look! oh the cleverness of me!

Wendy. You conceit! of course I did nothing!

Peter. You did a little.

Wendy. (wounded). A little! If I am no use I can at least withdraw.
(With one haughty leap she is again in bed with the sheet over her face. Popping onto the end of the bed, the artful one appeals.)

Peter. Wendy, don't withdraw. I can't help crowing, Wendy, when I'm pleased with myself. Wendy, one girl is worth more than twenty boys. 3

Perhaps Barrie was endeavoring to mock the human vanity which is so easily detectable in mankind in general. On the other hand, he may have been playing the gallant to the women in his audience.

It is believed by most critics that Peter Pan was to have represented humanity itself--always childish and constantly making the same mistakes and yet remaining unchanged. It is this quality of folly that makes Peter so human, yet so lovable, because he is part of every man's nature.

The character of Wendy is a contrast to Peter's selfish, aloof, and braggart nature. Wendy is the thoughtful, warm, and

3 Ibid., Act I, 516.
generous little girl, who, young as she is, already is very motherly toward everyone around her. Sir James portrays her as a very wise little girl, because already she is able to detect the human weaknesses of the little boys around her. She too is able to live in this enchanted "Never-Never Land," but with the difference that she realizes that it is only temporary and make-believe.

First twin. And we are your children.

Wendy. (affecting surprise). Oh?

Omnes. (kneeling with outstretched arms). Wendy, lady, be our mother! (now that they know it is pretend they acclaim her greedily.)

Wendy. (not to make herself too cheap). Ought I? Of course it is frightfully fascinating; but you see I am only a little girl; I have no real experience.

Omnes. That doesn’t matter. What we need is just a nice motherly person.

Wendy. Oh dear, I feel that is just exactly what I am.

Although Wendy may be the most humanly lovable personage in Peter Pan, the character of Captain Hook is the most fascinating. He seems to be the personification of evil and adventure all in one. He is brutal, but interesting with his constant desire for revenge. Yet there is as much fantasy woven around Captain Hook as there is around Peter himself, with a good many heroic gestures added. He is no doubt the blackest of all the characters

in the play, but Sir James does not accuse him of having anything but courage about him. He is the man who hates all childhood, perhaps because he is envious of the constant joy and hope of children.

Sir James reveals this characteristic motive of hatred in Captain Hook in a soliloquy in Act V of the play. Hook is leaning against the mast while he proclaims,

_How still the night is; nothing sounds alive._
_Now is the hour when children in their homes are a-bed; their lips bright-browned with the good-night chocolate, and their tongues drowsily searching for belated crumbs housed insecurely on their shining cheeks. Compare with them the children on this boat about to walk the plank._ Split my infinitives, but 'tis my hour of triumph!

_Captain Hook proclaims that there is something grand in the idea of a holocaust of children, but in the end it is the same Captain Hook who dies with a heroic gesture of bravery, facing his destroyer, who is his other old enemy, the crocodile. Peter has succeeded in killing him in the Never-Land, but he has not been able to conquer his spirit of relentlessness._

_All the other host of characters in Peter Pan, such as the crocodiles, the fairies, and the lost boys, add a great deal of enchantment to the play without having too much bearing on the plot. Their function is to embellish the atmosphere of the_
On the other hand, the drama *The Will*, written in 1913, contains only characters who are as realistically true to life as any ever presented on the stage. The audience is able to watch Mr. and Mrs. Ross, the principal characters, progress from a lovable and kind young couple to the materialistic and egotistical individuals they become in middle age. Mrs. Ross's solicitude for her husband withers and turns into utter greed, and her husband's thoughtfulness is swallowed up by his warped valuation of wealth. Yet Barrie cannot be accused of having created two monsters--on the contrary these two people are quite human and plausible, but something has been allowed to alter their natures. There is nothing very much in the way of external action in the play—rather Barrie has the action originate from within. He points out that the characters of men are as subject to disease and decay as their bodies.

Surtees. Not to my knowledge, sir; but he says it was there all the same, always in me, a black spot, not so big as a pin's head, but waiting to be spread and destroy me in the fulness of time. All the rest of me sound as a bell. (That is the voice that Surtes had been hearing).

Mr. Devizes. (helpless). It seems damnable unfair.

Surtees. I don't know, sir. He says there's a spot of that kind in pretty nigh all of us, and if we
don't look out it does for us in the end. 6

It was absolutely necessary that Barrie make it clear that every human being is capable of being corrupted because of some intrinsic flaw in his character that is often unnoticed for years. It was also necessary for him to make that a strong point because of his basic belief that man does not really change in any of the fundamental points of character. Since The Will is absolutely devoid of any element of fantasy, one detects Barrie's outlook on life shorn of all its adornments. The result is a pessimistic and cynical commentary on life. Even the lawyer is portrayed as a flippant, unreliable young man in the opening of the play, but with the passing of the years he becomes stolid and unforgiving of the shortcomings of others. Only the father, the elder lawyer, is portrayed as the understanding man of law.

One cannot help but notice that the characters in Peter Pan have more appeal than those in The Will. These latter personages are more transparent and not nearly so challenging as a Wendy or a Captain Hook. It seems only plausible, then, that fantasy adds to the attractiveness of Sir James' creations. It is because they are challenging that his fantastic characters are so fascinating. These creatures of fantasy are conceived with more

richness and ambiguity than are his realistic creations, and it is thus that his fantastic works achieve a higher artistic level.

Barrie's fantasy characters are so intensely successful because he was capable of creating a world of fantasy in which these make-believe personages were able to act in accordance with the personalities which Barrie had conceived for them. In Peter Pan he makes this the Never-Land, where go only boys who are not clever enough to know that they must never fall out of their prams. Here is a land into which Peter alone can bring the children who do not want to become men. Barrie describes this land in the introduction to the second act of Peter Pan.

What you see is the Never Land. You have often half seen it before, or even three-quarter, after night-lights were lit, and you might then have beached your coracle on it if you had not always at the great moment fallen asleep. I dare say you have chucked things on to it, the things you can't find in the morning. In the daytime you think the Never Land is only make-believe, and so it is to the likes of you, but this is the Never Land come true. It is an open-air scene, a forest with a beautiful lagoon beyond but not really far away, for the Never Land is very compact, not large and sprawling with tedious distances between one adventure and another, but nicely crammed.

In this magical land little boys live happily in trees, with mischievous fairies floating about them at all times, but they too have real dangers about them. The danger is principally in the form of a band of pirates headed by Captain Jas Hook.

---

Peter Pan, Act II, 523-4.
himself.

In this Never Land all kinds of things are possible. Sir James is careful to attribute a great deal of importance to this land, because thus he can reveal the Utopia of all the boys in the world who do not wish to grow up. Everything is scaled to the level of wishful daydreams—a child's retreat for man when reality is too unkind. Yet all the varied aspects of life are to be found there.

Exactly the opposite is true of the situation in The Will. Here the environment surrounding the characters is one of stark realism. There is absolutely nothing of the fanciful in the play. The stage directions are as definite and realistic as the work itself.

It may be, and no doubt will be, the minute reproduction of some actual office, with all the characteristic appurtenances thereof, every blot of ink in its proper place, but for the purpose in hand any bare room would do as well.

This is a play in which Barrie completely abandons his usual technique of dramatic fantasy. Everything must be exactly as it would be in actual life. It is in this type of drama that Barrie's realistic outlook is apparent at all times. Here one is able to recognize the force of his purpose, which is ironical commentary on things as they are, and here he does not use fantasy to lighten the crushing blow of his comments.

8 *The Will*, 811.
In *Peter Pan* Barrie has gathered together the strangest
group of personages ever to assemble on a stage. They are so
much the product of the author's own imagination that their very
originality has placed them on a level with the Cinderellas and
King Coles of the fairy tale world. The characters conform to no
particular laws except those established by Barrie himself. Never-
theless, these characters are always consistent in their make-bel-
ieve personalities. Peter never grows up, the fairies are never
predictable, Captain Hook is never kind, and the crocodiles never
lose their exotic charm. In this way Barrie has been able to
create personages whom the audience can accept for the moment, at
least, as quite plausible. Basically these characters have the
motives of real people. Their function is to serve as vehicles
for Barrie's commentary on various aspects of life. Created
though they are from Barrie's own imagination, the characters in
*Peter Pan* are closely related to people in the everyday world.

The characters in *Peter Pan* have as much verisimilitude
as those in *The Will*. The difference seems to be that the fan-
tastic creations, Peter, Wendy, and Captain Hook, have consider-
ably more complexity than do the realistically portrayed indivi-
duals in *The Will*. Barrie has shown much more subtlety and shad-
ing of character in the former play, whereas he has made the
people in *The Will* comparatively simple and transparent, and con-
sequently less interesting.

In this chapter we have examined the application of Sir
James Matthew Barrie's technique of dramatic fantasy to his best-known play, *Peter Pan*. In this work he has created make-believe characters and situations in order to show man's desire for perpetual childhood. *Peter Pan* has been contrasted with Barrie's realistic play of character, *The Will*, in which no element of fantasy appears. The fantastic personages of *Peter Pan* have been shown to be much more subtly and interestingly drawn than are the realistically portrayed figures in *The Will*. Thus it would seem that Barrie was able to create dramas of a higher artistic level when he made use of his technique of dramatic fantasy than when he confined himself to realism.
CONCLUSION

This study has been an endeavor to examine the nature and function of the technique of dramatic fantasy developed by Sir James Matthew Barrie and to show that he employed make-believe methods for the purpose of presenting a realistic commentary on life. The plays analyzed were three of Barrie's better known fantasies, Dear Brutus, A Kiss for Cinderella, and Peter Pan, and the realistic play The Will was contrasted to Peter Pan.

The first chapter contained a discussion of the nature of fantasy and a brief survey of the fantastic elements in English literature before Barrie. It was established that Barrie had a serious purpose and used realistic subject matter, and it was these two factors which distinguished his work from that of such "nonsense" writers as Lewis Carroll, who spun their fantasies merely to entertain. Barrie's lightness of treatment was shown to have obscured the seriousness of his themes for most critics, and it did seem that the pleasant surface of his work had tended to distract his audience from its deeper meaning. From the analysis of the history of fantasy and from what had been shown of Barrie's methods and purposes in his fantastic works, we were able to evolve a definition of Barrie's fantasy as the power of
conceiving mental representations of human beings or places, which  
are not confined to any particular form, theme, or method. It was  
found that it was necessary, however, for these representations to  
be completely consistent within a particular work.  

The analysis of three of Barrie's fantasies showed him  
to have applied this technique of dramatic fantasy with care and  
skill in each instance. The number of fantastic creations is  
greatest in Peter Pan, and least in A Kiss for Cinderella, but in  
each work the persons and situations which are outside of the laws  
of nature are consistently shown as being in accord with the laws  
created for them by the author. In each play there is a lightness  
of tone, and yet Barrie's shrewd, ironical observations on human  
nature are apparent. The richness and complexity of the characters  
become more apparent when those in Peter Pan are contrasted with  
the realistically portrayed individuals in The Will. An examina-  
tion of the latter play shows that Barrie was able to function on  
a much higher artistic level when he was using his technique of  
dramatic fantasy than when he wrote in the realistic vein.  

In this thesis, then, we have attempted to discover the  
nature of J. M. Barrie's technique of dramatic fantasy and to  
examine its application in three of his plays. The study has been  
of interest because of the fact that, although countless authors  
before Barrie made use of fantastic elements, he was the first to  
develop this fantastic technique and to use it upon realistic
subject-matter. Beyond this, Barrie's technique of fantasy is interesting because a knowledge of it can help our understanding of the methods and objectives of a number of modern writers of fantasies.
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TABLE II

BARRIE'S USE OF FANTASY IN CHARACTERIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>Supernatural Powers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Pan</td>
<td>Extraordinary (completely imaginary)</td>
<td>Odd</td>
<td>Mischievous</td>
<td>Very unusual—ability to fly, ageless, immortal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lob</td>
<td>Extraordinary (partially imaginary)</td>
<td>Odd</td>
<td>Mischievous (cruel and thoughtless)</td>
<td>Unusual—ageless, immortal, unnatural foresight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain Jas Hook</td>
<td>Extraordinary (imaginary in a limited sense)</td>
<td>Strikingly evil</td>
<td>Strong, evil, domineering, persistent</td>
<td>Little, if any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Rose</td>
<td>Imaginary only in reference to herself</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Unnatural (possesses eternal youth)</td>
<td>Different—cannot grow old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinderella</td>
<td>Natural—fantasy only in the form of a dream</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The thesis submitted by Catherine Giovannetti Zachar has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.