

PETER PAN

J. M. BARRIE

*With an Introduction and Notes
by Amy Billone*

Illustrated by F. D. Bedford

GEORGE STADE
CONSULTING EDITORIAL DIRECTOR


BARNES & NOBLE CLASSICS
NEW YORK

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FROM THE PAGES OF *PETER PAN*

All children, except one, grow up.

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“You see, children know such a lot now, they soon don’t believe in fairies, and every time a child says ‘I don’t believe in fairies,’ there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead.”

(page 29)

“Wake up,” she cried, “Peter Pan has come and he is to teach us to fly.”

(page 32)

In the midst of them, the blackest and largest jewel in that dark setting, reclined James Hook, or as he wrote himself, Jas. Hook, of whom it is said he was the only man that the Sea-Cook feared. He lay in his ease in a rough chariot drawn and propelled by his men, and instead of a right hand he had the iron hook with which ever and anon he encouraged them to increase their pace.

(page 52)

“I want their captain, Peter Pan. ’Twas he cut off my arm.” He brandished the hook threateningly. “I’ve waited long to shake his hand with this. Oh, I’ll tear him!”

(page 56)

Then all went on their knees, and holding out their arms cried, “O Wendy lady, be our mother.”

(page 68)

“If you believe,” he shouted to them, “clap your hands; don’t let Tink die.”

(page 118)

Then he sought to close and give the quietus with his iron hook, which all this time had been pawing the air; but Peter doubled under it and, lunging fiercely, pierced him in the ribs. At sight of his own blood, whose peculiar colour, you remember, was offensive to him, the sword fell from Hook’s hand and he was at Peter’s mercy.

(page 135)

“The last thing he ever said to me was, ‘Just always be waiting for me, and then some night you will hear me crowing.’”

(page 154)



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J. M. BARRIE

James Matthew Barrie was born on May 9, 1860, in Kirriemuir, Scotland, the ninth child and third and youngest son of David Barrie, a handloom weaver, and Margaret Ogilvy, who, following Scottish tradition, kept her maiden name among friends and family. In January 1867, when Barrie was six years old, his older brother David died in a skating accident on the eve of his fourteenth birthday, an event that haunted Barrie for the rest of his life.

Barrie's love of the theater bloomed at Dumfries Academy, which he attended for five years beginning at age thirteen. He earned his master of arts degree in English literature from Edinburgh University in 1882. The next year he became leader-writer and sub-editor for the *Nottingham Journal*. In 1885 he moved to London, where he worked as a free-lance journalist; he self-published his first novel, *Better Dead*, two years later. With his second book, a collection of sketches titled *Auld Lickeys Idylls* (1888), he achieved recognition as a writer, and his reputation increased with the publication the same year of the novel *When a Man's Single*. In 1889 his *A Window in Thrums* appeared, and in 1891 he published the popular novel *The Little Minister*.

Barrie had his first commercial theatrical success with *Walker, London* (1892). Two years later he married Mary Ansell, an actress who had performed one of the play's leading roles. In 1896 two of Barrie's works were published: the novel *Sentimental Tommy* (its sequel, *Tommy and Grizel*, appeared in 1900), and *Margaret Ogilvy*, a memoir of his mother. Barrie first met George and Sylvia Llewelyn Davies and their sons George and Jack in 1897. The author's play-acting with the boys was the principal source of material for his play *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*.

Barrie's 1902 novel *The Little White Bird* contains an early version of *Peter Pan* and describes Peter's life as a baby. Over the course of the next nine years, Barrie refined *Peter Pan* in various stage productions and publications. The play version of the story opened at the Duke of York's Theatre on December 27, 1904. Two years later, Barrie extracted six chapters from *The Little White Bird* that he published as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, and in 1911 he published the novel *Peter and Wendy*. Longer than *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, this book is now known simply as *Peter Pan*.

Barrie and his wife divorced in 1909. He never remarried, but the next year he acquired a family when Sylvia, the mother of the Llewelyn Davies boys, died (her husband had died in 1907) and Barrie adopted her sons (there were now five boys). In 1915 George, the oldest boy, was killed in World War I during an advance on the Germans. The same year Charles Frohman, Barrie's producer, went down on the passenger ship the *Lusitania* when a German torpedo hit it. Nevertheless, the next six years were fairly productive for Barrie as a writer and happy for him as a father, until Michael, the fourth of the brothers, drowned while swimming in a millpond with a friend. Barrie never recovered from Michael's death, which effectively brought his creative output to a halt.

In addition to the play *Peter Pan*, Barrie had a string of hits in the theater: the theatrical version of *The Little Minister* (1897), *Quality Street* and *The Admirable Crichton* (both 1902), and *What Every Woman Knows* (1908). *A Kiss for Cinderella* opened in 1916 and was often revived in London around Christmastime. Two fantasy plays followed: In *Dear Brutus* (1917), a group of people encounter their alternate destinies when they enter a magic forest, and in *Mary Rose* (1920), a woman dies young and returns to her family years later as a ghost, unable to recognize her now aged son. Barrie's last play, *The Boy David*, opened in 1936 and was not successful. On June 19, 1937, J. M. Barrie died. He was

buried with his family in Kirriemuir cemetery.

THE WORLD OF J. M. BARRIE AND PETER PAN

- 1860** James Matthew Barrie is born on May 9 in Kirriemuir, Scotland. The third son of seven surviving children, James shares two rooms with his entire family. The cottage also houses the handloom tools with which his father, David, earns a living. The countryside surrounding Kirriemuir features breathtaking glens and stark mountains, and lush vegetation, lochs, and castles abound; the setting will influence Barrie's later writings.
- 1865** Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is published.
- 1867** Barrie's brother David is killed in a skating accident. Margaret Ogilvy, Barrie's mother, never recovers from the loss of her second son, and the death will haunt James for the rest of his life.
- 1868** James leaves home to live with his brother Alexander and attend Glasgow Academy, where Alexander teaches classics.
- 1871** When Alexander leaves Glasgow, James moves with the rest of the family to the town of Forfar, where he enrolls in Forfar Academy. Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* is published.
- 1872** George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is published.
- 1873** James again moves in with his brother to attend Dumfries Academy in Dumfries, in southwestern Scotland; Alexander is the inspector of schools for the district. James will study at the academy for five years. Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* is published.
- 1878** Barrie enters Edinburgh University, supported financially by Alexander, who lectures there. While a student he becomes a part-time professional journalist, reviewing literature for the *Edinburgh Courant* and music for the *Dumfries Herald*.
- 1879** Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* premieres.
- 1882** Barrie receives his master of arts degree.
- 1883** He is selected as leader-writer and sub-editor for the *Nottingham Journal*. Every week he writes five leaders (opinion columns on political and other public affairs that average 1,200 words), signing them "Hippomenes" and "A Modern Peripatetic." Soon he is contributing book reviews, literary columns, stories, and even a one-act farce; he will stay with the paper for two years. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is published.
- 1885** Back in Kirriemuir after losing his *Journal job*, Barrie writes and submits articles to London newspapers. When several are accepted, he moves to London to further his writing career.

- 1986** Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.
-
- 1887** Barrie self-publishes his first novel, *Better Dead. A Study in Scarlet*, Arthur Conan Doyle's debut Sherlock Holmes story, is published.
- 1888** Barrie publishes *Auld Licht Idylls*, a collection of sketches that had appeared in London newspapers beginning in 1885. With this book he is recognized as a writer, and his reputation grows with the publication of the novel *When a Man's Single* at the end of the year. Jack the Ripper terrorizes London's East End.
- 1889** With the publication of the novel *A Window in Thrums*, Barrie's fame as a writer is firmly established.
- 1891** His play *Richard Savage*, written with H. B. Marriott Watson, is presented in a special charity matinee at the Criterion Theatre in London. Barrie also publishes the successful novel *The Little Minister*. On May 30 his one-act play *Ibsen's Ghost* (a humorous sequel to *Hedda Gabler*) opens and runs for twenty-seven performances. Barrie begins keeping extensive notebooks of his ideas for stories. Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* are published.
- 1892** On February 25 Barrie's play *Walker, London* opens at Toole's Theatre in London; it is Barrie's first commercial success in the theater. The cast includes Mary Ansell, his future wife.
- 1894** On June 25 Barrie's play *The Professor's Love Story* opens at the Comedy Theatre in London; it also opens in New York, the first of his plays to be produced there. On July 9 he marries Mary Ansell, but the marriage is unhappy from the start; Barrie proves to be an indifferent, perhaps impotent, husband. "Boys can't love" is his explanation. Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* is published.
- 1895** Barrie's unmarried sister, Jane Ann, dies on September 1; three days later his mother dies. H. G. Wells publishes *The Time Machine*.
- 1896** Barrie's dotting memoir of his mother, *Margaret Ogilvy*, is published, revealing the intensity of his attachment to her and providing a record of her major, complex influence on his private and creative life. *Sentimental Tommy*, his semiautobiographical novel about a child who role-plays to the point of losing his identity, is published. While visiting the United States, Barrie first meets Charles Frohman, who will later produce several of his theatrical ventures, including *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*.
- 1897** Barrie meets the Llewelyn Davies family. The five sons of George and Sylvia Llewelyn Davies will be the inspiration for *Peter Pan*. The theatrical version of Barrie's novel *The Little Minister* premieres in New York on September 27 and opens in London shortly after. A much-needed hit for Barrie, it is revived several times and tours widely. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is published.

- 1900** Barrie publishes his novel *Tommy and Grizel* (a sequel to *Sentimental Tommy*), in which his hero attempts to embrace reality but fails to return the love of Grizel, whose life he destroys—a direct reflection of Barrie’s marital unhappiness. Barrie’s play *The Wedding Guest* premieres at the Garrick Theatre in London on September 27. Sigmund Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* is published.
- 1901** Queen Victoria dies.
- 1902** Barrie publishes his novel *The Little White Bird*, which contains an early version of *Peter Pan*. His play *Quality Street* opens at the Vaudeville Theatre in London on September 17, after premiering in New York. *The Admirable Crichton*, a play that probes the validity of the British class structure, is performed at the Duke of York’s Theatre in London on November 4. A. E. W. Mason’s *The Four Feathers* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* are published.
- 1903** Barrie’s play *Little Mary* is performed at the Wyndham’s Theatre in London on September 24.
- 1904** *Peter Pan* debuts at the Duke of York’s Theatre on December 27; its enormous success brings Barrie considerable wealth and fame.
- 1905** *Alice Sit-By-the-Fire* opens at the Duke of York’s Theatre. Written as a fallback for producer Frohman in case *Peter Pan* had flopped, it is not nearly as popular. George Bernard Shaw’s *Major Barbara* debuts.
- 1906** Barrie publishes *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*—six selfcontained chapters about Peter Pan as a baby, reproduced from his 1902 novel *The Little White Bird*. To prevent children from thinking they need only wish and jump out the window in order to fly, Barrie adds fairy dust to the Peter Pan story as the necessary ingredient for becoming airborne.
- 1907** Arthur Llewelyn Davies dies of cancer of the jaw after a year of debilitating illness. Barrie begins supporting Arthur’s widow, Sylvia, and her children.
- 1908** Barrie’s play *What Every Woman Knows*, based on the idea that women are intellectually superior to men, opens at the Duke of York’s Theatre on December 19. An epilogue to *Peter Pan*, called “When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought,” is added to the final show of the season, though it will not be performed again in Barrie’s lifetime; now recognized as an integral part of the *Peter Pan* story, it provokes such applause that Barrie takes a rare curtain call. Barrie campaigns against theatrical censorship. Friendships with such writers as George Bernard Shaw and John Galsworthy fill his social calendar. He becomes a founding member of the Dramatist’s Club in London. Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* is published.
- 1909** Mary divorces Barrie to be with her lover, writer Gilbert

Cannan. Barrie will never remarry. Edinburgh University awards him an honorary degree.
On April 6 Robert E. Peary reaches the North Pole.

- 1910** Sylvia Llewelyn Davies dies of cancer. Barrie adopts her children —the youngest, Nico, is seven years old and the oldest, George, is seventeen. E. M. Forster's *Howards End* is published.
- 1911** Barrie publishes the novel *Peter and Wendy*, which elaborates the story about the baby Peter Pan in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*; the novel is now known as Peter Pan.
- 1912** The Titanic hits an iceberg and sinks on its maiden voyage, killing 1,500 people.
- 1913** Barrie is made a baronet. His plays *The Adored One* and *The Will* open as a double bill on September 4 at the Duke of York's Theatre.
- 1914** World War I begins. Barrie travels to the United States. James Joyce's *Dubliners* is published. Shaw's *Pygmalion* premieres in London.
- 1915** George Llewelyn Davies, the family's oldest son, is killed in battle on the Western Front in Flanders. Charles Frohman, Barrie's patron and producer, is one of 1,201 deaths on the *Lusitania*, the British passenger liner torpedoed by a German submarine. Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* is published.
- 1916** Barrie's play *A Kiss for Cinderella* opens on March 16 at the Wyndham's Theatre. The film *The Real Thing at Last*, his parody of American movies using *Macbeth* as a vehicle, opens. The English translation of C. G. Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (which appeared in German in 1912) is published.
- 1917** *Dear Brutus*, Barrie's play about a group of characters who enter a magic wood and are given the chance to turn back time and reshape their lives, debuts on October 17 at the Wyndham's Theatre. After one of the greatest adventures of all time, Ernest Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica is rescued. T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* is published.
- 1919** Barrie becomes rector of St. Andrews University.
- 1920** His play *Mary Rose* is first performed on April 22 at the Haymarket Theatre in London. The play, which deals with aging, youth, death, and memory, enjoys enormous popularity among an audience of theatergoers who are mourning a generation largely wiped out by World War I.
- 1921** Barrie's favorite adopted son, Michael, drowns in a millpond at Oxford; his death may be a suicide. *Shall We Join the Ladies?* opens on May 27 in celebration of the opening of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.
- 1922** Barrie is awarded the Order of Merit. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Joyce's *Ulysses* are published.

- ~~1924~~ ~~A silent film of Peter Pan appears; Barrie has written a scenario for a film, but his version is not used.~~
- 1927 Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is published. Charles Lindbergh flies across the Atlantic Ocean alone.
- 1928 *Peter Pan* is published as a single volume and in *The Plays of J. M. Barrie*; it carries Barrie's dedication to the five Davies boys. Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* is published.
- 1929 Barrie gives all rights to and royalties from *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children. Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* is published.
- 1930 Barrie receives an honorary degree from Cambridge University and is appointed chancellor of Edinburgh University. W. H. Auden's *Poems* is published.
- 1936 *The Boy David*, Barrie's last dramatic work and his only play to premiere in his native Scotland, opens at the King's Theatre in Edinburgh on November 21 and in London three weeks later. The piece reflects aspects of his own life, including the untimely death of his brother David; it is not a success.
- 1937 On June 19 J. M. Barrie dies. He is buried beside his family in Kirriemuir cemetery.

INTRODUCTION

At six years old, James Matthew Barrie believed he was his mother's last hope. Inconsolable after the sudden death of her son David, who had fractured his skull in a skating accident, Barrie's mother fell ill with grief. In his memoir about his mother, *Margaret Ogilvy*, Barrie recalls how his sister Jane Arris came to him "with a very anxious face and wringing her hands" and told him to go quickly to his mother "and say to her that she still had another boy" (Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy*, see p. 12; see "Further Reading"). Barrie went that day and for many days afterward to his mother's bed, where, through jokes and antics, he strove to make her laugh. He even kept a record of her laughs on a piece of paper. The first time he slipped the laugh chart into her doctor's hand, it showed that his mother had laughed five times. When the doctor saw the chart, he laughed so hard that the young Barrie exclaimed, "I wish that was one of hers!" (p. 14). The doctor took sympathy on him and suggested he show the chart to his mother, at which point she would laugh again and the five laughs would increase to six. Barrie writes, "I did as he bade me, and not only did she laugh then but again when I put the laugh down, so that though it was really one laugh with a tear in the middle I counted it as two" (p. 15).

Barrie's sister said that in addition to making his mother laugh he needed to encourage her to talk about her dead son. While Barrie couldn't see how this would make her "the merry mother she used to be" (p. 15), he was advised that if he could not do it, "nobody could," which made him "eager to begin." At first, he often was jealous of his mother's "fond memories" and would interrupt them with the cry "Do you mind nothing about me?" But this resentment did not last. Instead, Barrie countered his jealousy by trying to become so like his dead brother that his mother would not see the difference. He asked Margaret many artful questions about David, and he practiced imitating him in secret. For example, his mother told him that David had "such a cheery way of whistling ... with his legs apart and his hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers" (p.16) and that it always brightened her workday. One day, after Barrie had learned his brother's whistle (which took much practice), he disguised himself in a suit of David's dark gray clothes and slipped into his mother's room. With his legs stretched wide apart, and his hands plunged deep into his knickerbockers, he began to whistle.

No matter what Barrie's successes were in coaxing his mother to laugh, he could not make her "forget the bit of her that was dead" (p. 19). Often she fell asleep speaking to David. Even while she slept, her lips moved and she smiled as if the dead boy had come back to her. Sometimes when she woke, he vanished so suddenly that she would rise bewildered, saying slowly, "My David's dead!" (p. 19). Perhaps David "remained long enough to whisper why he must leave her now, and then she lay silent with filmy eyes." Just as his mother was perpetually haunted by her dead son, Barrie himself became preoccupied by a ghost child who kept returning to him from the other side of the grave. Most famously, this ghost appears in the shape of Peter Pan—a boy who materializes from the world of children's dreams.

The combination of laughter and tears, or the effort to make his audience laugh in the face of tragedy, distinguishes all of J. M. Barrie's writing. We encounter the most flawless example of this mixture of humor and heartbreak in *Peter Pan*—the story of a never-aging boy who takes other children

fantastic adventures and is eventually abandoned by them. “All Barrie’s life,” wrote Roger Lancelyn Green, “led up to the creation of Peter Pan, and everything that he had written so far contained hints foreshadowings of what was to come” (J. M Barrie, p. 34).

The idea behind *Peter Pan* first appeared in *Tommy and Grizel*, a novel that Barrie published in 1900 as a sequel to *Sentimental Tommy*, which had come out in 1896. In *Tommy and Grizel*, the main character, Tommy, contemplates writing a story about a boy who hates the idea of growing up. Like the character in his story, Tommy cannot make the passage from childhood to adulthood; he is doomed to love his wife, Grizel, in exactly the same way that he loves his sister Elspeth. Peter Pan first appears by name in a strange novel, *The Little White Bird*, that Barrie published in 1902. Written for adults, the book is narrated by Captain W—, a middle-aged bachelor and member of the Junior Officers’ Club. Like Barrie, he has a St. Bernard dog named Porthos. As the narrative develops, Captain W—invents and then kills off a son in order to become close to a little boy named David. Six chapters of the book consist of a story that the Captain and David create together: the tale of Peter Pan’s birth and his escapades with the birds and fairies in Kensington Gardens. Peter is much younger in this novel than in later stories—in spirit, he is only one week old. In 1906 Barrie extracted the six chapters about Peter, and they were published, accompanied by Arthur Rackham’s illustrations, under the title *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*.

Appearing the same year as *The Little White Bird*, Barrie’s play *The Admirable Crichton* opened in 1902. Drama scholar Harry Geduld calls *The Admirable Crichton* Barrie’s “comedic masterpiece” (See *James Barrie*, p. 120). In it, a wealthy family and its servants are stranded on a “wrecked island” where the rules of power reverse, only to restore themselves completely when the group is rescued at the end. *The Admirable Crichton* resembles *Peter Pan* in that it begins realistically, converts into fantasy with the shipwreck, and returns to normalcy in the concluding scenes. On the island the butler (Crichton) becomes the group’s leader, and Lady Mary, the aristocratic daughter of his employer, falls passionately in love with him. Two years later, she is about to marry him—and then the marooned group is discovered. In act 4, Lady Mary loses all interest in Crichton when the power relations reverse a second time. While the play is a comedy, it is also poignant, for the natural and truthful love that the characters feel on the island proves impossible to sustain in real life.

Written just before *Peter Pan*, Barrie’s play *Little Mary* was first performed in 1903. *Little Mary* tells the story of a girl named Moira (Wendy’s full name in *Peter Pan* is Wendy Moira Angela Darling) who is able to cure illnesses with the aid of an invisible medium called Little Mary. Moira becomes known throughout society as the Stormy Petrel, the name of a species of seabird that is used for someone who appears at the onset of trouble. The play is quite entertaining until Moira’s strategy is last revealed at the end of the final act—she has simply changed her patients’ diets, for her grandfather had proved that we are what we eat. (Such a twist was fitting in that “Little Mary” was Moira’s pet name for “stomach.”) Because of the play’s unfortunate climax, *Little Mary* was mocked by reviewers and satirized in comic strips, although it ran for 207 performances. It may have done better if, like *Peter Pan*, it had permitted the existence of a certain degree of magic. It was not until the following year that Barrie more than made up for *Little Mary* with *Peter Pan*; or, *The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*, which was first performed at the Duke of York’s Theatre in 1904.

The story of Peter Pan developed in the company of the five sons of Arthur and Sylvia Llewellyn

Davies: George, Jack, Peter, Michael, and Nicholas (Nico). Barrie first met this family in 1897. At the time, he was married to Mary Ansell, an actress who had played one of the girls in his 1892 play *Walker, London*. Their marriage of three years was an unhappy one, troubled by Barrie's like impotence and his consequent lack of interest in sex. Although both adored children, the marriage remained childless. One day while walking his dog, Barrie met four-year-old George Llewelyn Davies and George's younger brother Jack. George and Jack took an interest in Barrie's dog, and Barrie began meeting the children every day in Kensington Gardens.

Barrie's involvement with the family grew intimate—he began to visit the Davies home for tea and for dinner. After he met their baby brother, Peter, Barrie began to weave Peter's name into the stories he made up and performed for George and Jack. In one of these stories, all babies are birds before they turn into human beings; Peter was a child who had not completely stopped being a bird and therefore could still fly. Peter Llewelyn Davies's failure to demonstrate his flying ability compelled Barrie to invent a fictional version of him—Peter Pan.

As the Davies boys grew older, Barrie converted his early tales about Peter, in which Peter was only one week old and played with the birds and fairies in Kensington Gardens, into stories about pirates and fantasy islands. Michael Llewelyn Davies was born in 1900—the first child in the family whom Barrie knew from birth. In 1901 the Davies family summered in Surrey a short distance away from their house on the Black Lake that the Barries had purchased the previous year. Barrie played with the boys all that summer, and their fantasy games supplied material for a book called *The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island* (another early version of *Peter Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island* (another early version of Peter Pan). The book—supposedly written by four-year-old Peter Llewelyn Davies (even though it was purportedly “published” by J. M. Barrie)—consisted of a preface and thirty-six captioned photographs. Barrie put together two copies of the manuscript, one of which he gave to Arthur Llewelyn Davies, who promptly lost it. At Christmas that same year, a visit to the theater with the Davies boys to see *Bluebell in Fairyland* gave Barrie the idea that he might write his own play for children.

On November 23, 1903, the day before the birth of Nicholas Llewelyn Davies, Barrie began to work seriously on the play that would later become *Peter Pan*. At first, it was simply called “Anon. A Play.” Barrie finished the first draft of the Peter Pan play on March 1, 1904, but he was worried that his American producer, Charles Frohman, would not like it. *Peter Pan* was an incredibly expensive show to put on, requiring massive sets and a cast of more than fifty, including a dog, a fairy, a crocodile, an eagle, wolves, pirates, and redskins, and at least four cast members would be required to fly. It was also unclear what sort of audience Barrie had in mind for the play—it seemed to be oriented toward children, but the dialogue was quite sophisticated. The first version of the play combined harlequins and columbines (from the old pantomime tradition) with pirates and redskins, and it curiously blended outrageous farce with grave sentimentality. Barrie first showed his play to Beerbohm Tree, one of the most famous actors and directors of the period. Tree's intricate and luxurious productions at His Majesty's Theatre had won him a substantial reputation for excessiveness, and Barrie thought he might be willing to put on *Peter Pan* if Frohman rejected it. However, Tree did not at all approve of the play; he wrote the following assessment and sent it to Frohman:

Barrie has gone out of his mind.... I am sorry to say it, but you ought to know it. He's just read me a play. He is going to read it to you, so I am warning you. I know I have not gone woozy in my mind, because I have tested myself since hearing the play; but Barrie must be mad (quoted in *Maude Adams: An Intimate Portrait*, p. 90).

Tree's reaction intimidated Barrie, who prepared another, much more realistic drama, *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*, hoping it would give him negotiating power. When he met with Frohman in April 1904, Barrie gave him two works—*Peter Pan*, which he had retitled *The Great White Father*, and *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*. He told Frohman he was sure the former would not be a commercial success, but it was a dream-child of his, and he was so eager to see it on stage that he would provide a second play to make up for the losses the first would incur. While Frohman thought *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire* was rather entertaining, he loved everything about *The Great White Father* (except for the title). Barrie had assumed *Peter Pan* would be played by a boy. But Frohman suggested that Peter should be played by an American actress Maude Adams, who at the time was thirty-three years old. After all, *Peter Pan* was the star role. If Peter were to be played by a boy, the ages of the Lost Boys would have to be scaled down, and in England actors under fourteen years old could not perform after 9 P.M. Even though Maude Adams was not available until the following summer, Frohman was so anxious to see the play produced that he directed his London manager, William Lestocq, to go ahead at once with a West End production that would open in time for Christmas.

Once rehearsals for *Peter Pan* began at the Duke of York's in late October 1904, an aura of secrecy began to surround the play. Few cast members knew the play's title or story—most were given only those pages pertinent to their parts. Frohman's decision to have Maude Adams play Peter in America meant that a woman should also fill the role in the London production. Thirty-seven-year-old Nina Boucicault seemed a suitable choice—she had just played Moira in *Little Mary*, and her brother Dion Boucicault was directing *Peter Pan*. For the part of Wendy, Barrie chose Hilda Trevelyan (who had replaced Nina Boucicault as Moira in a touring production of *Little Mary*). And he hired George Kirby's Flying Ballet Company to devise the flying apparatus. Kirby invented a revolutionary new harness to allow for difficult flight movements, requiring extraordinary skill on the part of the actors, who had to endure an exhausting two weeks of training. The coat of Barrie's Newfoundland dog Luath (a replacement for his Saint Bernard, Porthos) was reproduced for the actor playing Nana, and the Darling boys' clothes were duplicated for those of the Darling children and the Lost Boys.

The night before the play was to open, an automatic lift broke down, ruining much of the scenery. Consequently, the opening had to be postponed from December 22 to December 27. Because of other problems, Barrie had to cut the final twenty-two pages of the script; he rewrote what was at that point the fifth modified conclusion. By opening night, everyone expected a minor catastrophe. When Peter endeavors to save Tinker Bell's life, he shouts to the audience, "Do you believe in fairies? If you believe, wave your handkerchiefs and clap your hands!" Because Barrie was convinced that the play would be a disaster and that this line would be greeted with silence from the stylish adult audience, he had arranged with the musical director to have the orchestra put down their instruments and clap. As it turned out, when Nina Boucicault asked if anyone believed in fairies, the audience applauded so enthusiastically that she burst into tears. The first night ended with many curtain calls and rave reviews. Even Beerbohm Tree's half-brother, Max Beerbohm, complimented Barrie in the *Saturday Review*: "Mr. Barrie is not that rare creature, a man of genius. He is something even more rare—a child who, by some divine grace, can express through an artistic medium the childishness that is in him" (quoted in Birkin, *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, pp. 117-118).

In its stage history, *Peter Pan* displays a good deal of gender fluidity. Theatrical cross-dressing

originates in the traditions of pantomime, where gender swapping is essential—actresses typically portray the leading young male heroes in these shows, and men often play the parts of women. Traditionally, in *Peter Pan* the same actor would play both Mr. Darling and Captain Hook, although originally Barrie asked that Hook be played by a woman—the same woman, in fact, who played Mr. Darling. And, of course, the show has a long history of casting women in the role of Peter. As described above, Nina Boucicault created the title role in London, and Maude Adams was Peter in New York. With rare exceptions, women would continue to act the part of Peter for almost fifty years. In the 1954 musical production of the play (which was later filmed for television and broadcast several times between 1955 and 1973), Mary Martin played Peter. Two major Broadway revivals starred Sandy Duncan, in the late 1970s, and gymnast Cathy Rigby, in the 1990s.

In 1938 an American production cast a male, Leslie C. Gorall, as Peter Pan, and in 1952 a German production put a male in the role. The English did not break their cross-dressing tradition until 1980 when Trevor Nunn and John Caird produced their version of *Peter Pan* at the Barbican Theatre in London.

Although elements of Peter Pan's story appeared in Barrie's *Tommy and Grizel* and *The Little White Bird*, Barrie did not officially write his novel about Peter Pan until 1911, when he published *Peter and Wendy*. (The original copyright expired in 1987, and the novel is now known by the title *Peter Pan*.) In terms of plot, it closely resembles the play. One exception is an epilogue to the play, which Barrie called "An Afterthought," where we are given a glimpse into the future, when Wendy is married and the mother of a little girl. This postscript was performed only once in Barrie's lifetime (on February 22, 1908)—he insisted that it remain a one-night-only addition. However, he included the scene about the future in the novel, where it appears as chapter XVII, "When Wendy Grew Up." "An Afterthought" in its original form was first published as part of the play in 1957, twenty years after Barrie's death.

Unlike characters in most other children's literature, Peter Pan has achieved mythological status. Even though many people have not read Barrie's novel or play, Peter Pan is now as well known as Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty. Why is *Peter Pan* such a memorable drama? The story may be so compelling partly because of its attentiveness to reversibility. Childhood and adulthood, birth and death, boys and girls, dreams and waking life all persistently change places in the story. But they change places in such a way that they reinforce rather than dismantle the oppositions that confuse and distress us. Children do become adults; birth leads to death; boys and girls cannot effortlessly change roles; dreams remain distinct from waking life. Time moves ferociously forward. Even though *Peter Pan* is the story of a boy who never grows older, the narrative proves that everyone else must age. The first sentence of the novel tells us so: "All children, except one, grow up" (p. 7). While the legend tempts us with achingly desirable unions, it is about the difficulty (if not the impossibility) of fusing disparate worlds: life and death, dreams and reality, masculinity and femininity, childhood and adulthood. Through lively comedy, *Peter Pan* brilliantly masks the underlying sadness that threatens to pull the story apart.

The heartbreaking undercurrents in *Peter Pan* become evident when we consider the mirroring between fantasy and reality that took place in J. M. Barrie's life. Like Peter Pan, Barrie remained a ghostly outsider. He wanted children of his own but instead found himself staring in at the Llewellyn Davies family, with whom he shared no blood relationship. Peter Pan convinces the Darling children

to fly away with him in an attempt to take them from their parents and make them his; Barrie inadvertently achieved the same result with the Davies boys. In 1907 Arthur Llewelyn Davies, the father, died of cancer of the jaw. In 1909 James and Mary Barrie were divorced because of her affair with Gilbert Cannan. And in 1910 Sylvia Llewelyn Davies died of cancer. Barrie was left with five boys—age seven to seventeen—all of whom were now orphans left to his care.

What was J. M. Barrie's relationship with the Davies brothers? There are certainly passages in some of Barrie's novels that read, a century after their publication, as suspiciously attentive to the attractiveness of little boys. Barrie's involvement with the Davies boys was unusually close—more intense, perhaps, than typical relationships between parents and their natural offspring. However, Nicholas Llewelyn Davies swore to Barrie's biographer Andrew Birkin that Barrie never showed one hint of homosexuality or pedophilia toward him or his brothers. Critics have for the most part concluded that Barrie was entirely sexless. Nevertheless, he loved the Davies brothers obsessively. We might even go so far as to say that he was in love with at least two of them, George and Michael. As Barrie himself wrote in *Margaret Ogilvy*, "The fierce joy of loving too much, it is a terrible thing" (206). Years later, Barrie wrote to George Llewelyn Davies, then twenty-one years old and fighting in World War I:

I do seem to be sadder today than ever, and more and more wishing you were a girl of 21 instead of a boy, so that I could say the things to you that are now always in my heart. For four years I have been waiting for you to become 21 & a little more, so that we could get closer & closer each other, without any words needed (quoted in Birkin, p. 228).

Shortly after receiving Barrie's letter, George was killed in Flanders. This event was probably the most traumatic experience Barrie had endured since his brother's death. But the worst was still to come. On May 19, 1921, Michael Llewelyn Davies, the fourth of the boys, was drowned while swimming in Oxford with his best friend, Rupert Buxton, who also drowned. Like George, Michael died when he was twenty-one. Rumors circulated that the deaths of Michael and his friend Rupert were intentional, the result of a mutual suicide pact.

Barrie never recovered from Michael's death. His secretary, Lady Cynthia Asquith, wrote that he looked like a man in a nightmare. He became suicidal and grew quite ill with grief. "All the world is different to me now. Michael was pretty much my world" (letter to Elizabeth Lucas, December 1921, quoted in Birkin, p. 295). He explained in his notebook that he dreamed Michael came back to him not knowing he had drowned, and that Barrie kept this knowledge from him. The two lived together for another year quite ordinarily though strangely close to each other. Little by little Michael realized what was going to happen to him. Even though Barrie tried to prevent him from swimming, both knew what was sure to happen. Barrie accompanied Michael to the dangerous pool, holding his hand, and when they reached the deadly place, Michael said "good-bye" to Barrie and went into the water and sank. Barrie interrupts his account of the dream with new insight into the import of *Peter Pan*: "It is only if, long after writing *P Pan*, its true meaning came back to me, desperate attempt to grow up but can't." Although Barrie lived for another sixteen years, he was never able to write successfully after Michael died. The author passed away before the final scene of this tragedy, for Peter Llewelyn Davies, too, eventually took his own life; in 1960 he jumped beneath an underground train in London.

As much as Barrie associated *Peter Pan* with doomed children who die before they fully mature (such as his brother David, George, and Michael), he also identified with all that made *Peter Pan* a tragic boy. Barrie wanted to develop into a man—to have a reciprocal relationship with a woman and

have children of his own. But as a boy in a man's body, he was possibly unable to consummate his marriage and would never experience these joys. Instead, he was driven to turn to a family of strangers and to adopt five boys who were not his own. Barrie's closeness with the Davies children was all-consuming and heartrending. Likewise, Peter Pan's happiness cloaks a fundamental sorrow. His rebellion against time might be seen as a form of make-believe; if he could, he would gladly grow up. In the play *Peter Pan*, Mrs. Darling tries to convince Peter to let her adopt him, and he asks if that means he will have to grow up. When she responds in the affirmative, he says passionately, "I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy and to have fun." But Barrie wisely adds this parenthetical remark: ("So perhaps he thinks, but it is only his greatest pretend"). With this aside, Barrie gives us an important clue as to what makes Peter Pan a tragic boy.

People who read the novel version of *Peter Pan* for the first time may be surprised by Peter's fits of sadness, considering that by nature he seems to be such a happy boy. In the chapter "Do You Believe in Fairies?" Barrie explains Peter's trouble with dreams: "Sometimes, though not often, he has dreams, and they were more painful than the dreams of other boys. For hours he could not be separated from these dreams, though he wailed piteously in them. They had to do, I think, with the riddle of his existence" (p. 115). Even on the night when Peter kills Captain Hook he has "one of his dreams" and he cries in his sleep "for a long time," while Wendy holds him tight (p. 138). Barrie drew these details about Peter Pan's dreams from notes he made about Michael Llewelyn Davies. As a child, Michael had horrible nightmares or waking dreams, and he used to like for Barrie to sit by his bed at night doing something ordinary, like reading the newspaper. Some of Barrie's notes about Michael may have been for a sequel to *Peter Pan* about Peter's brother, "Michael Pan." However, this piece never got much further than the title, perhaps because Barrie interwove his notes about Michael in his descriptions of Peter in the novel *Peter and Wendy*. Michael and Peter Pan merged in other ways as well. When *Peter and Wendy* was first published in 1911, ten years before Michael's death, Barrie gave the sculptor Sir George Frampton a picture of Michael to use as a model for a statue of Peter Pan. Barrie then had the statue placed in Kensington Gardens one night after Lock-out Time so it would seem the next day to have been put there by magic. The statue still stands in London's Kensington Gardens.

Although Barrie wrote some fine plays after he lost George, such as *Dear Brutus* in 1917 and *My Darling Clementine* in 1920, he was so wounded by Michael's death that he could not repeat his past glories. However, he did continue to be recognized in other capacities. In 1922 he received the Order of Merit; in 1929 he gave all rights and royalties from *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children; in 1930 he received an honorary degree from Cambridge, and he was installed as chancellor of Edinburgh University. During his later years, Barrie developed a reputation as a public speaker. Nevertheless, his brightest days as a writer were over. He had been writing the play *Shall We Join Them or Not? Ladies?*, which appeared in 1921, for Michael and with Michael's guidance. Barrie did not complete the play after Michael's death but let it stand as it was. In 1936 his last play, *The Boy David*, was performed. Based on the Bible, it is about the relationship that develops between Saul and David (who is still a child). Although Saul grows to love David, he feels he must murder him when he realizes that David will replace him as king. Like *Peter Pan*, *The Boy David* deals with attraction, terror, and obsession. Barrie had high hopes for the play but was disappointed by its lack of success. The

production came to an end after only fifty-five performances, to Barrie's acute distress. He died shortly afterward, on June 19, 1937, at the age of seventy-seven and, at his request, was buried beside his family in the cemetery at Kirriemuir, his childhood home.

The best piece of Barrie's writing composed after his series of losses may be his 1928 dedication to the play *Peter Pan*. The same themes that run through all of Barrie's important work—the tension between childhood and adulthood, ferocious love and loss, memory and forgetfulness, realism and fantasy—take center stage in Barrie's dedication. He addresses all five Llewelyn Davies boys as if they are still alive, even though two of them were most likely already dead when he wrote it (George died in 1915 and Michael in 1921). Barrie begins the dedication by confessing that he has no recollection of ever having written *Peter Pan*. Speculating that he may have written the story, he still gives the boys all the credit: "As for myself, I suppose I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark got from you" (*Peter Pan and Other Plays*, p. 75). Barrie devotes much of the dedication to an exploration of the unsettling passage of time. He maintains that while some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives, he does not believe this. Rather, he supposes we remain the same from start to finish of our lives, "merely passing, as it were, in these lapses of time from one room to another, but all in the same house" (p. 78). Reminiscing about his own childhood, he remembers how he read feverishly about desert islands, which he called "wrecked islands." He pursues himself like a shadow, watching as he becomes an undergraduate who craves to be a real explorer. Still, he goes "from room to room," until he is a man, real exploration abandoned, though only because no one would have him. Soon he begins to write plays, many of which contain the wrecked islands that fascinated him so much in his youth. And he notes, "with the years the islands grow more sinister."

Barrie struggles to sustain the belief that we do not change as we grow older, but at last he concedes he may be wrong: "Of course this is over-charged. Perhaps we do change; except a little something in us which is no larger than a mote in the eye, and that, like it, dances in front of us beguiling us all our days. I cannot cut the hair by which it hangs" (p. 79). He concludes with what he considers to be his "grandest triumph," the best scene by far in *Peter Pan*, though the scene is not in *Peter Pan* at all (p. 85). This was the time long after Michael had ceased to believe in magic, the time when Barrie brought him back to the faith, even if only for a few minutes. Michael, Nico and Barrie were on the way in a boat to fish the Outer Hebrides. Even though Michael was excited to begin, he suffered from one pain: the absence of Johnny Mackay—a friend he had made the summer before who could not be with them, as he was in a distant country. As their boat drew nearer to the Kyle of Localsh pier, Barrie told Michael and Nico how this was such a famous wishing pier that all they had to do was to ask for something for their wish to be granted. Nico believed at once, but Michael refused to participate in the game. Barrie asked Michael whom he most wanted to see. When Michael answered "Johnny Mackay" Barrie told him that it couldn't do any harm to wish. At last Michael wished (quite contemptuously) and suddenly as the ropes were thrown on the pier, he saw Johnny waiting for him. Thus Barrie ends the dedication:

I know no one less like a fairy than Johnny Mackay, but for two minutes No. 4 [Michael] was quivering in another world than ours. When he came to he gave me a smile which meant that v

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