STUDY GUIDE FOR

PETER PAN
by
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PETER PAN--A SYNOPSIS

Certainly all of us know the story of Peter Pan, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up, but there are practically as many versions of Peter Pan as there have been productions of the play. Probably most of us are most familiar with the musical version of the play starring Mary Martin (and more recently, Sandy Duncan). This musical version has been very popular in the United States, but is a bit different from Barrie's original play which the IRT is producing. In turn, the original play is a bit different from the novel of Peter Pan which Barrie himself wrote prior to the stage version. The question for the producer then is, "which version should we produce?"

We at the IRT have opted to base our production script on Barrie's original stage version, while combining it with narrative sections from Barrie's novel version. For those of you who have seen IRT's production of A Christmas Carol, the style of presenting Peter Pan is quite similar--a narrator (in this case, Mr. Barrie himself) speaks directly to the audience, introducing us to the setting and action of the story. The effect of this presentation style is to bring the story of the play to the audience as Mr. Barrie might have told it himself. The actor playing Mr. Barrie pops up as a character in the play as well, providing a surprising and fresh interpretation of this familiar play.

Peter Pan opens on Christmas Eve in the cheery night-nursery of the Darling family in London. The Darling's canine nanny Nana is preparing the children, Wendy, John and Michael for bed. Mrs. Darling, who has been observing an odd phenomenon at the third floor nursery window--a boy's face has been appearing there at night--relates this strange tale to her husband, as they are preparing to go out for the evening. Nana has angered Mr. Darling of late, so he intends to tie her up outside for the night; Mrs. Darling, who fears the return of the strange boy at the window, appeals to him to leave Nana inside to guard the children. Mr. Darling prevails, and the watchful Nana is exiled, thus leaving the way clear for Peter Pan to steal the children away.

Peter is looking for a mother for the Lost Boys, a tribe of children sent to Neverland when they have fallen out of their carriages or been left behind by their parents. Wendy seems eager for the job, and knows many stories (another prerequisite for a mother) so Peter teaches Wendy and her brothers to fly so they can go with him to Neverland. Off they go, just as the Darling parents, aroused by Nana's plaintive barks, return to find that "the birds have flown."

"Second to the right and straight on 'til morning" find the children nearing Neverland, which is invariably an island populated with Indians and Pirates. Peter has been separated from the Darling children in flight, and shortly the three siblings are separated also, leaving the mischievous Tinker Bell to work some magic. She tells the Lost Boys in Fairy language that Peter wishes them to kill the Wendy bird, so they shoot her down with bows and arrows and wait gleefully for the return of their captain, Peter. Much to their dismay, Peter is far from pleased and the boys (and the jealous Tink) are reprimanded. Mirculously, Wendy lives (because the arrow has struck her on the acorn which Peter gave her) and the boys rejoice when Peter explains that he has brought Wendy to be their mother.

They quickly set up housekeeping in the boys' underground house, with Wendy as the mother, and Peter as the reluctant father (John and Michael have joined the band too). Numerous adventures ensue in which Peter rescues the Indian princess, Tiger Lily, thus earning the protection of the Indian tribe. But their protection proves insufficient when Captain Hook, the dastardly head of the Pirate gang, outwits them and captures the Lost Boys and Wendy as they have decided to return home to their real mothers. Hook thinks to do away with Peter by poisoning his medicine, but Tinker Bell saves Peter by taking the poisoned draught herself. At the Act I curtain, Peter pleads with the audience to clap if they believe in fairies, thus saving Tink and gallantly setting out to rescue Wendy and the boys.

Peter finds the Pirate band holding Wendy and the boys on their ship, the Jolly Roger. His rescue assault kills off all the Pirates one by one, leaving Hook til last. They battle it out with much swashbuckling, and just as Peter edges Hook out onto the plank, the crocodile (who has already feasted on Hook's arm) swims underneath, and faced with the choice of dying at Peter's hand or being eater by the crocodile, his arch-enemy, Hook chooses the ticking crocodile, leaving Peter victorious. Peter takes over command of the ship and sails it to London, where the Darling parents wait, distraught, for the return of their children. Mr. Darling has exiled himself to the kennel, feeling that it was all his fault that the children have flown; Mrs. Darling pines for the children, always being sure to leave the nursery window unlatched for their return. Peter returns first, having Tink lock the window so that Wendy will think that her mother has forgotten her and she will return to Peter. But the forelorn sight of Mrs. Darling playing the piano causes Peter to change his mind and leave the window ajar for Wendy's return.

Shortly, Wendy appears with Michael and John (who are not sure that they remember their home) and they slip into their beds so that Mrs. Darling might not be overpowered with the shock of seeing them. And when she does, she can hardly believe her eyes. Just as the happy family are reunited the Lost Boys appear at the window, and prevail upon the Darlings to adopt all of them! Peter appears to make a final plea with Wendy to come back to Neverland with him, but instead, Mrs. Darling volunteers to adopt Peter. When he learns that he would have to go to school and grow up and go to an office, Peter declines, preferring lonliness in Neverland to the conventionality of growing into an adult. He sails away, after leaving Wendy with a promise to return every year to see her.

In the final scene, we learn that Wendy has grown up, and has a daughter of her own now, named Jane. Wendy has not seen Peter in years, but for some reason which no one could know, Peter chooses to return on Christmas Eve. This time, Jane goes with him rather than Wendy, and so the story continues.

J.M. BARRIE

HIS BIOGRAPHY

Sir James Matthew Barrie, Scottish dramatist and novelist, lived from 1860 to 1937. Born at Kirriemuir, Forfarshire, a poor hand-loom-weaver's son, he was educated at the Academy, Dumfries, and proceeded to Edinburgh University. While working as a leader-writer on the Nottingham Daily Journal, he contributed articles to Frederick Greenwood's St. James's Gazette and in 1888 published his first full-length work, Auld Licht Idylls, followed by A Window in Thrums (1889). When a Man's Single was his first notable novel. The Little Minister (1891) gave the first glimpse of the laughter and tears, the strangeness and the naughtiness of a writer who could be at once sentimental and impish. His earliest plays were all unsuccessful, but Walker, London (1892) had Toole in the cast and caught on. The Professor's Love Story (1894) established Barrie as a successful playwright. In 1897 the play of The Little Minister established him as a wealthy man. More novels, Sentimental Tommy and Tommy and Grizel, appeared round the turn of the century, and in 1904 Peter Pan stepped out of a story-book and took the stage. In the theatre Barrie made his way by a series of surprises. The years before the First World War saw the production of Quality Street and The Admirable Crichton (both 1902), Little Mary (1903), Alice Sit-By-The-Fire (1905), Josephine (1906), What Every Woman Knows (1908), and Rosalind (1912), besides a number of short plays like "Pantaloon" (1905), "Punch" (1906), "The Twelve Pound Look" and "A Slice of Life" (both 1910), and "The Will" (1913). During the war he wrote Rosy Rapture (1915), a revue, for Gaby Deslys, some small occasional pieces, such as The Old Lady Shows Her Medals (1917) and A Well Remembered Voice (1918), and also A Kiss for Cinderella (1916) and Dear Brutus (1917). The Truth About the Russian Dancers (1920) was his first piece after the war. It was followed by Mary Rose (1920), a play that was almost passionately liked and disliked, a strange, creepy, harrowing, exquisitely painful play of the supernatural and the natural. "Shall We Join the Ladies?", a delicately worked one-act puzzle, appeared in 1922. His last play, The Boy David, was written for Elisabeth Bergner and played by her in 1936. In 1913 Barrie was created a baronet; in 1922 he received the Order of Merit and in the same year he was elected Rector of St. Andrews University.

Barrie in his great moments was a stage magician. Only a consummate craftsman could have brought off certain masterpieces of theatrical effect--the cooking-pot at the end of Act II of The Admirable Crichton and the boom of the gun during the dance in Act III, the opening scenes of What Every Woman Knows and of Dear Brutus, hard to equal for rousing curiosity, the disappearance of Mary Rose on the island in the second act, and the first sentence - 'Mother, I have killed a lion!' - of The Boy David. Most of his work reveals a mind queerly compounded of fancifulness, sentimentality, and dry pessimism; but in Mary Rose he is no longer afraid to say that life can be dreadful. He is brave enough for the first time to make beauty out of reality, and in The Boy David he treats not childishness, which in Peter Pan was something distinct from manhood, but the childhood which is at the core of all humanity. He was something of a seer; and what he saw and showed had so little to do with time and fashion and manners that it is unlikely to fade entirely out of memory.

(from Oxford Companion to the Theatre)

J. M. BARRIE

HIS LIFE

PETER PAN cannot be said to be autobiographical; and yet it was intrinsically and completely formed from the substance of J.M. Barrie's life. The play's subtitle "The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up" can be as aptly applied to Barrie's own life as to Peter Pan: with an adult height of barely five feet, Barrie wrote, "If I had not smoked I would have grown to be 6'3". But I prefer to blame my stature on the fact that as a boy I used to wish never to grow up, and so, you see, my wish came true."

The real genesis of the Boy Who Would Not Grow Up began in a Scottish weaving town in 1860. James Matthew Barrie was the seventh child born to Margaret Ogilvy Barrie. In 1867 James' older brother David, age 13, his mother's favorite son, was killed in a skating accident, leaving Mrs. Barrie bereft. In an effort to cheer the mother he adored, 6-year-old James began to act out the role of his dead brother, reproducing attitudes and speech that he practiced in secret. This once carefree brother, who was to forever remain young in his family's memories, quite possibly planted the seed for Peter Pan, whose author later wrote, "After all, nothing that happens after we are twelve matters very much." Barrie's own attachment to his mother is mirrored in Peter Pan's search for the mother who would both lovingly tend, but never insist that the son grow up.

"The horror of my boyhood was that I knew a time would come when I too must give up games, and how it was to be done I saw not." Barrie's happiest times as a child were when he was living in the imaginary world of books; his happiest times as an adult were spent in the presence of children. Early success as a playwright led Barrie into marriage with an actress; unhappily, they never had children of their own. Barrie's legendary shyness and reserve caused him awkward moments in society, but children (and dogs) seemed to accept him unequivocably.

It was while taking one of his daily walks through London's Kensington Gardens with his Saint Bernard Porthos that Barrie met the little boy in the red tam-o'-shanter who was to change his life. George Llewelyn Davies, 4 years old, "struck a hundred gallant poses a day," and Barrie quickly entered into the boy's imaginative life by making up stories to delight him. The gardens became their Neverland, offering innumerable adventures in their daily walks. George seemed to combine all the finest qualities of boyhood in abundance, and his exuberant curiosity and boldness wove its way into several pieces of Barrie's fiction. What was more, George had two other little brothers at home, who over the next few years were joined by yet two more. By 1903, the Llewelyn Davies family included George, Jack, Peter, Michael and Nicholas (Nico), father Arthur, a struggling solicitor, and mother Sylvia (DuMaurier) Davies, thought by Barrie to be "the most beautiful creature I had ever seen."

Thus began Barrie's life-long patronage of the Llewelyn Davies family. With a great deal of money from his writing career, and no family to support, Barrie lavished vacations and gifts upon the boys whom he came to call his own. Their shared vacations at Barrie's Black Lake Cottage in Surrey yielded much of the raw material for what eventually became PETER PAN, as Barrie spent idyllic hours tramping through the woods, assisting the boys as they acted out pirate and Indian adventures. Barrie's association with the family culminated in his adoption of the five boys following their father's death in 1907, his own divorce in 1909, and their mother's death in 1910. During their parents' lifetimes, Barrie had been a kindly, if perhaps too frequent visitor whom the younger boys, Michael and Nico, called Uncle Jimmy. After their parents' deaths, Barrie became their father, their sole means of support, and their chief mourner, as first George (in World War I) and then Michael (in a swimming accident) died tragically. Barrie's fictional works chart the development of these boys as eventually all, much to Barrie's chagrin, ceased to beieve in fairies.

Barrie himself died in 1937 with numerous plays and novels to his credit, a figurehead of Edwardian literature, who was acquainted with many of the famous Englishmen of his day. And yet his most beloved role always remained the Boy Who Would Not Grow Up, a boy both carefree and tinged with sorrow. He wrote in his autobiographical novel Sentimental Tommy, "Have I been too cunning, or have you seen through me all the time? Have you discovered that I was really pitying the boy who was so fond of boyhood that he could not with years become a man?"

(written by Janet Allen for IRT Onstage)

PETER PAN

THE PLAY

Nicolas Llewelyn Davies wrote of J.M. Barrie, "Uncle Jimmy was a darling man. He was an innocent; which is why he could write PETER PAN."

The evolution of PETER PAN seems to have begun with Barrie's first writing venture. At age 12 he composed a lengthy unfinished novel describing his boyhood. "It was as if I knew already that the next best thing to being a boy was to write about them."

The character of Peter Pan developed quite early in Barrie's career; in 1890 he published an article in an Edinburgh newspaper describing the antics of his nephew called "Peterkin: A Marvel of Nature." By 1985, Barrie had begun taking notes about children's activities in Kensington Gardens for a book which was to become THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD. The course of this book was significantly changed by Barrie's friendship with George Llewelyn Davies: "There never was a cockier boy. It is difficult to believe that he walks to the Gardens; he always seems to have alighted there." These early descriptions of George in THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD have much of the tone of Peter Pan in them.

PETER PAN as we know it actually developed as a tale for the Llewelyn Davies boys that "had no moral application," as the boys' nanny had objected to the stories Barrie told them and Barrie himself took almost as much delight in vexing the nurse as the boys did themselves. The origin for the idea of a flying Peter Pan is as follows: according to Barrie, all children were birds once and "the reason there are bars on nursery windows is because children sometimes forget that they have no longer wings and try to fly away through the window." Several chapters of THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD devoted to the antics of a flying Peter Pan (named after the Greek god who symbolized nature and paganism) were later reprinted as a separate book, PETER PAN IN KENSINGTON GARDENS. This early telling was little more than a transcription of the oral stories spun between Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies boys on daily walks in Kensington Gardens. These first Peter Pan tales are rather serious in tone: they seek to explain some of the childhood fears of parental desertion, death, even of growing up, by making Peter a boy who never grows up, whose mother has barred the window against him, which has caused him to befriend frightened children on their journey after death (to some unspecified after-life which Barrie later developed into Neverland). Such tales lead George to make the famous statement repeated in PETER PAN, "To die must be an awfully big adventure."

THE BOY CASTAWAYS, compiled in 1901, "The best and the rarest of this author's works," represented the next literary step toward a play of PETER PAN. This thin volume, of which Barrie printed only two copies, recounted, in a series of 35 photographs, the adventure stories acted out by the boys at Barrie's summer retreat. The book had no text; only 16 chapter headings outlining the pirate and Indian stories they played with the assistance of the dog Porthos (already in training for the character of Nana), and Barrie himself (who played Captain Swarthy, a dry run for Captain Hook).

The idea to dramatize the Peter Pan stories had two strong impulses: in 1896, Barrie had met American producer Charles Frohman with whom he struck up a lasting friendship and professional partnership. Frohman shared Barrie's child-like view of the world and Barrie had reason to believe that a stage version of the Peter Pan tales might please Frohman, who had produced several of Barrie's other plays. Perhaps more important though was the influence of the Llewelyn Davies boys who, having reached theatre-going age, were being taken to children's Christmas plays which Barrie found to be decidedly inferior products. Barrie had himself written a Christmas pantomime which he produced privately for the boys and their friends in 1901, and the Peter Pan play was probably begun as yet another way to captivate their imaginations. The resulting play, first titled ANON (this original manuscript is owned by Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana), later THE GREAT WHITE FATHER, and finally PETER PAN, completed in 1904, was unlike any theatrical text ever created: it had an equally strong appeal to both children and adults.

Frohman adored the play, which Barrie called his "dream-child," and quickly agreed to ready a production for Christmas. It was understood that Frohman's star actress, Maude Adams, would appear in it, and Barrie had in fact written the part of Wendy especially for her, assuming the part of Peter would be played by a boy. But a technicality in British law stipulating that children could not appear on the stage after 9 p.m. caused Frohman to suggest that the diminutive Maude play Peter, and thus the tradition of women Peter Pans began. This controversial play, which was rehearsed in great secrecy lest the public should hear of its innovative magic, was a runaway success in its London premiere in 1904, and has been repeated at Christmas almost every year since then--most recently with male Peter Pans--with the same wild enthusiasm by adults and children alike.

In the preface to the published version of PETER PAN Barrie wrote to the Llewelyn Davies boys: "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 I got from you."

(written by Janet Allen for IRT Onstage

PETER PAN RETURNS HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The fact that the original production of PETER PAN opened in Christmas week of 1904 is no coincidence: its author, the famed novelist and playwright J.M. Barrie, had in his mind to create a Christmas pageant which would bring adults and children together in a mutual celebration of delight.

But perhaps few of us remember that PETER PAN is actually set at Christmas: Mr. and Mrs. Darling depart in the first scene to a Christmas party, leaving the way clear for Peter Pan to sweep their children away to Never Neverland on a crisp, cold, winter night. Liza the maid is unaware of their flight because she is busy in the kitchen preparing the Christmas pudding, and Nana, the faithful canine nanny, has been exiled outdoors to keep her out from underfoot during these Christmas preparations.

Barrie invokes the spirit of the holiday once again in his description of Never Neverland: "Wendy and John and Michael stood on tiptoe in the air to get their first sight of the island. Strange to say, they all recognized it at once, not as something long dreamt of and seen at last, but as a familiar friend to whom they were returning home for the holidays."

Barrie's play PETER PAN has itself come to be just such a friend returning home for the holidays. In England, the annual production of PETER PAN has been part of the Christmas and New Year celebration for 75 years, and numerous British theatre critics have fondly described seeing three generations (themselves included) of PETER PAN lovers sit enthralled by Peter's yearly return flight with Christmas.

Writer Kenneth Harris reports:

> The best-known characters in British literature are Robin Hood, Sherlock Holmes, and Peter Pan. Of these, Peter Pan is certainly the earliest known, because children get to Peter a long time before they meet Hood or Holmes. Peter Pan, or, as Barrie subtitled his play, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up, is like roast beef, rugby, and the monarchy: a British institution. Typical British persons like myself have been going to see PETER PAN for years. In the first phase of your life you are taken when you are a kid, in the second phase you take your own kids, when you run out of your own kids you fill in the time with other people's kids until you become a grandparent. But you have to keep going!

compiled by Janet Allen for IRT's <u>Marquee</u>

PETER PAN - HIDDEN MEANINGS AND FAIRY MAGIC

When James M. Barrie brought a new play to his producer, Charles Frohman, early in 1904, he was enthusiastic about it, but afraid it might not be commercial. As a successful novelist and playwright, Barrie was known for a sentimental realism with occassional bits of whimsy. This play was an outrageous fantasy -- in it, four people flew, a dog served as a nursemaid, and the audience was asked to applaud if it believed in fairies.

Though he didn't like the title, THE GREAT WHITE FATHER, Frohman was entranced with Barrie's play and suggested Barrie call it PETER PAN. It is doubtful whether Frohman saw the play about a boy who refused to grow up for what it was: a profound mirror of its creator, a man for whom fatherhood and motherhood had traumatic implications.

The first performance of PETER PAN on December 27, 1904, demonstrated that all of Barrie's fears about the success of his play were groundless. At the moment when Peter asked the audience to clap if they believed in fairies, the response of the audience - a typical London opening night crowd, not a kiddie matinee - was so deeply felt that the actress playing Peter was moved to tears.

Critics were equally generous in their praise. An American went so far as to call it "a breath of fresh air" after the "horror of GHOSTS and the sinister cynicism of MAN AND SUPERMAN and MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION." [contemporary plays by Shaw and Ibsen]

In fact few plays in this century have been as successful as PETER PAN, which was performed in England alone 10,000 times in its first fifty years.

Not everyone has fallen under Peter's spell. After the first performance in 1904, one of Barrie's friends found himself wishing for "an hour of Herod." The day's two leading critics George Bernard Shaw and Max Beerbohm (whose producer-cousin had deemed the play unstageable) were not impressed. Nor, in our own time, is the distinguished author of children's books and illustrator Maurice Sendak, who regards PETER PAN as a "fatuous, saccharine view adults have of childhood. The very concept of a child who doesn't want to grow up is sickening a normal child wants to grow up."

Unfortunately for Barrie, at the same time he was working toward PETER PAN, his contemporary Sigmund Freud was expounding his theory of the subconscious. The year 1900, the first time Barrie wrote about a boy who didn't want to grow up, was the year THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS was published. Freud's work made it impossible to read Barrie's in the innocent spirit in which it was written. Until Freud, literary criticism focused on the author's ability to create interesting characters and on his historical and social acuity, not to mention the quality of his prose, which might be praised regardless of the content. With the increasing acceptance of Freud's notion of the subconscious as the hidden, controlling force of conscious reality, the very idea of innocence quickly lost ground.

If PETER PAN were simply a flight of the imagination, it might not have retained its fascination for three-quarters of a century. What is remarkable about PETER PAN is how intensely personal a play it is. You cannot see it or read it without squirming over its obsession with being mothered. But this obsession was at the heart of all Barrie's work: in his highly regarded novels, SENTIMENTAL TOMMY and TOMMY AND GRIZEL (the former was a favorite of D.H. Lawrence), which he wrote at the same time he was developing the ideas that became PETER PAN, Barrie constantly conceived the loving relationships between men and women as those of sons and mothers.

Barrie never seemed embarrassed about depicting love in those terms. There is a poignant moment in MARGARET OGILVY, Barrie's 1896 tribute to his mother - a 207-page book in which his father is mentioned less than a dozen times--when he and his mother are discussing what it takes to be a novelist. "We had read somewhere that a novelist is better equipped than most of his trade if he knows himself and one woman, and my mother said, 'You know yourself, for everybody must know himself'...and she would add, dolefully, 'But I doubt I'm the only woman you know well.' Barrie's response is quite straight forward: "Then I must make you my heroine." And, in fact, he did.

Barrie confesses it was his mother's "profound conviction that if I was found out--that is, if readers discovered how frequently and in how many guises she appeared in my books--the affair would become a public scandal."

Barrie's identification with his mother dates from childhood, when he sympathized with the fact that she was denied her own youth. At the age of eight her mother died, meaning that she had to grow up immediately and take over all the feminine chores of her father's old-fashioned Scottish household. Contemplating his mother's lot, Barrie wrote: "The horror of my boyhood was that I knew a time would come when I must also give up the games, and how it was to be done I saw not....I felt that I must continue playing in secret, and I took this shadow to her, when she told me her experience, which convinced us both that we were very like each other inside."

In addition to internalizing his mother's misfortune, Barrie's fixation on youth reflected another, greater trauma she suffered -the death of his older brother David at the age of thirteen.

Barrie was only six when his older brother died in an accident. He barely knew David, but, relying on his older sister's memories, he did everything he could to be David for his mother, knowing as he did that David had been her favorite. Death, which snatched this child from her, also performed an odd service--death kept David from ceasing to be a child. Barrie almost makes his brother's death seem an advantage when he says, "When I became a man, and he was still a boy of thirteen...."

The whole play is riddled with mother imagery. When Peter takes Wendy to Never Land it is not just for companionship, but so she can be the Lost Boys' mother. One of the motivations for Captain Hook's plot to kidnap her is so she can be the pirates' mother. (It is interesting to note that, from the first production onward, Hook has been played by the same actor who plays Mr. Darling, implying that the father is the villain--though, again in PETER AND WENDY, Barrie notes that "In his dark nature there was a touch of the feminine, as in all the greatest pirates, and it sometimes gave him intuition.")

Maurice Sendak points out that "The dog is a mother. Wendy is a mother. The mother is a mother. At times Captain Hook becomes a mother. Everybody is a mother!" Sendak's list is not even complete. In the play Peter thinks Tinker Bell wants to be his mother.

The most bizarre manifestations of this mother obsession come in two scenes at the very end of the play. There is a cruel moment when Peter, leading Wendy, her siblings, and the Lost Boys back to London, rushes ahead to close the bedroom window so Wendy will think her mother has forgotten her, no longer wants her. Peter taunts Mrs. Darling, who can't hear him, by saying, "We can't both have her, lady." This is the sort of formulation we might expect in some lovers' triangle, but here the triangle consists of a boy, a pseudo-mother, and the real mother of the pseudo-mother.

In an assessment similar to Sendak's by someone who was very fond of Barrie, Lady Cynthia Asquith, his secretary during the last few decades of his life, once wrote to her husband: "As for the legend of his being himself the boy who wouldn't grow up, I see no evidence whatever of this. On the contrary he strikes me as more than old, in fact I doubt he ever was a boy. But then, for the matter of that, Peter Pan isn't a boy, is he? He is a wish-fulfillment projection in fable form of the kind of mother--Barrie is an expert at her--who doesn't want her son to grow up." In other words, Barrie has found a way to identify himself both with the yearning mother and the lost son.

excerpted from Howard Kissel's article on
<u>Peter Pan</u>, <u>Horizon</u> Magazine, Dec. 1979.