

Modern Drama

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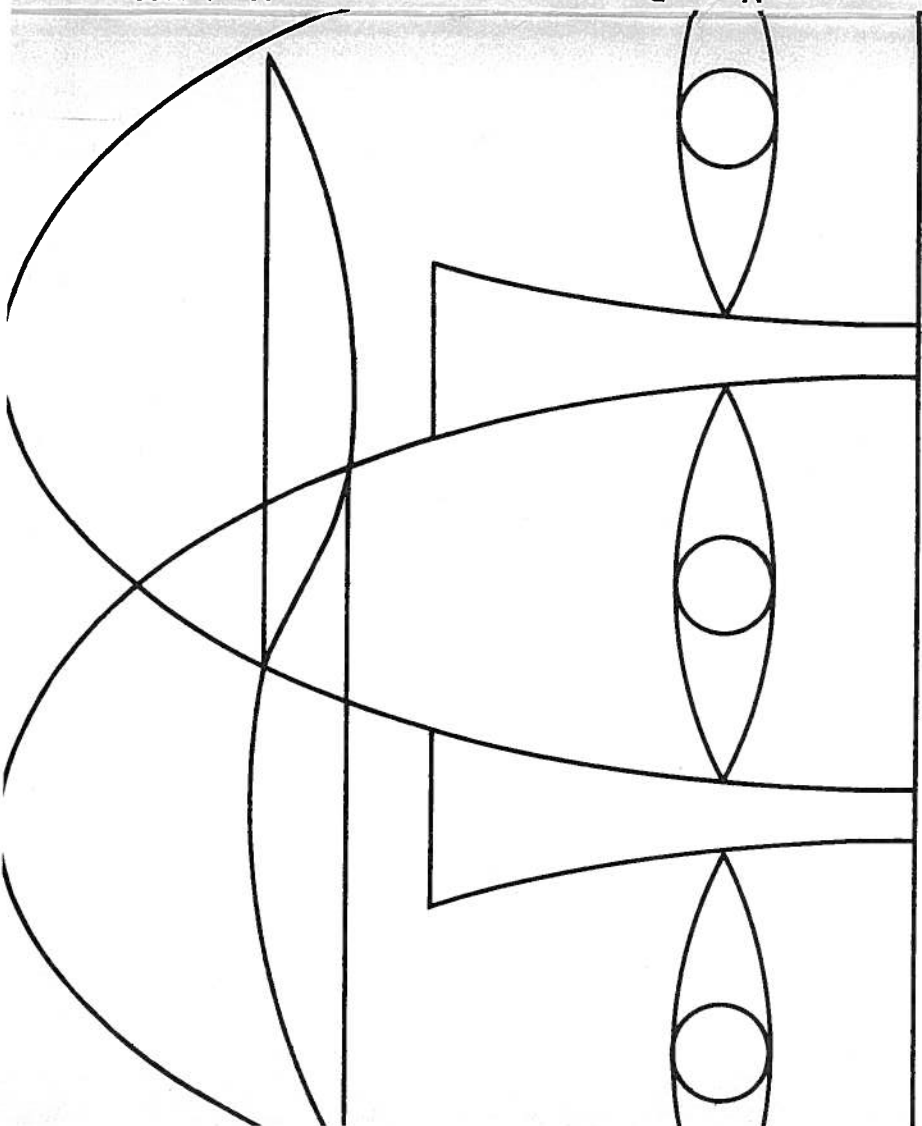
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A Biographical Note on Václav Havel

MICHAL SCHONBERG

Living with the elements of the absurd comes naturally to the Czechs. A succession of powerful bureaucratic systems of various political and ideological hues, but all sharing a rigidity of attitude and a pathological self-centredness, has created conditions in which absurd situations and circumstances flourish. Indeed, so ubiquitous and all-pervasive have these conditions become, that they are ever-increasingly confused with the traditionally acceptable and usual norms of behaviour. The absurd has its champions and practitioners everywhere; nothing and nobody is immune to it. It is found in all the public and private places and situations where sanity has reached its outer limits, where the fear bred by hopelessness comes into conflict with the people's powerful will to survive.

This biographical note is concerned with the great observer and taxonomist of the absurdities of contemporary Czech society, the playwright and theoretician Václav Havel.

Like his two great predecessors in the Czech literature of the absurd, Jaroslav Hašek and Franz Kafka, Václav Havel was born in Prague, and his life, much like the lives of the other two, was interrupted by war. But whereas Hašek and Kafka lived their early lives under a relatively benevolent form of absolutism and their shortened adulthoods under democratic conditions, Havel spent most of his childhood in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia and practically all of his later life has been spent under Communist rule. He was born on October 5, 1936 into the family of wealthy entrepreneurs. After the Communist take-over in 1948, the family holdings were confiscated, but paradoxically, while the wealth disappeared, its stigma remained. To Havel that meant not being able to enter high school; instead, he became a chemical technician and studied at night. In 1955, because of a good recommendation from his place of work, Havel was accepted into the Faculty of Economics of the Prague Polytechnical Institute. (There is a delightful touch of the absurd in the authorities' decision to admit the son of a former millionaire to business school. It must have been felt that some

states, "A buzz, I thought I heard a buzz," and the Corporal suggests it "Might have been a bee" (p. 300). The emphasis here on the word "buzz" suggests in turn an exchange between Harry and Surgeon Maxwell in Act III. Harry tells the doctor that he sometimes feels "a faint, fluttering kind of a buzz in the tops of my thighs" (p. 327), and the doctor says: "That's good. There might be a lot in that faint, fluttering kind of a buzz" (p. 328).

This concern with verbal repetition suggests yet another manner in which the play achieves a unity. Similar patterns of speech are distinguishable in all four acts, blurring the demarcations between realism and expressionism. Military slang idioms from the French, such as "napoo," are used in Act II, relating the dream world of soldiers to the "real" world of the other three acts. On the other side of the coin, the three "realistic" acts are not devoid of the same kind of trance-like chants which characterize the diction in Act II. Susie chants biblical phrases in the very beginning of Act I (p. 267), for example; but more to the point are the intrusions of chanting rhythms into ordinary speech. Near the end of Act I, a chant is sounded on the words "You must go back" (p. 291), and another: "Come on from your home to the boat; / Carry on from the boat to the camp. / ... From the camp up the line to the trenches" (p. 293). At the opening of Act III, Sylvester and Simon sound like the soldiers of Act II: "Down and up, up and down," "Up and down, down and up," and so forth (p. 318). Most strikingly, in Act IV, Mrs. Heegan, Sylvester, Simon, and Mrs. Foran start a chant, in which Harry and Teddy soon become the principal speakers (pp. 352-353, 354, 355).

Thematically, imagerially, and verbally, then, *The Silver Tassie* is a whole. Yeats's two criticisms notwithstanding, the play does not lack unity. His attack on the play, at least on these grounds, was invalid.

NOTES

- 1 David Krause, *Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work* (New York, 1960), p. 102.
- 2 Citations to the play in my text are to *The Silver Tassie*, in *Selected Plays of Sean O'Casey* (New York, 1955).
- 3 O.E.D., s.v. "Red-cap."
- 4 Krause, p. 118.

J. M. Barrie's Islands of Fantasy

LYNETTE HUNTER

1

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

On examination, the similarity between the later novels and early plays of the period 1890 to 1902 is so close² that it poses the interesting question: why did Barrie change his medium to drama alone after 1902? It could not have been solely for financial reasons, because his novels were selling well;³ and while he had written four very mediocre plays by 1902, only the first, *Walker, London*, a light farce, had more than a respectable run. I would suggest that the change in medium was due to a change in the author's understanding of art and what he saw as the artist's responsibilities. Barrie's early critical work of the late 1880's indicates that he had a strong belief in the possibility of absolute communication through words.⁴ But by the time he was writing *Tommy and Grizel* in 1900, he had personally discarded this belief, or developed it into a discussion of the fantasist who is a specific kind of artist defined by his belief in absolute personal communication. He is a man who thinks that he can create perfect alternative worlds, and that by initiating them from actual experience he can generate trust in them from his audience. Once created, the worlds are controlled absolutely

by the fantasist who builds defenses against the intrusion of reality by providing detailed accounts of language, customs, and a way of life that needs no reference to an external standard. Both the creation and control of these worlds demand a passive audience accepting and believing rather than involved and experiencing.

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

The "Tommy" stories provide an obvious study of Barrie's early beliefs about the powers of a writer through the central character. Yet he also examines his own motives for writing about Tommy through the narrator of each work, and the tone becomes increasingly cynical and bitter as he approaches the year 1900. In *Tommy and Grizel* the narrator interrupts a sarcastic comment on Tommy's obituaries to ask himself why he even wrote about such a despicable character. He concludes that although Tommy failed to conquer his selfishness and egotism, at least he tried. Barrie wishes not just to condemn fantasy, but also to demonstrate the essential battle with it if man is to avoid self-delusion.

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

The Little White Bird is an exception to this structural pattern and anticipates the later three-part structure of Barrie's plays. Here the author also fuses the roles of narrator and fantasist. The narrator is the ironic voice conscious of

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

II

Before moving on to the plays which succeed *The Little White Bird*, it is important to note the relationship of Barrie's ideas to the comments on fantasy made by other major contemporary authors. Barrie's attitude to fantasy distinguished the pure fantasy of the child and an equation of adult fantasy with sentimentalism in both "sentimental" Tommy and the sentimental narrator of *The Little White Bird*. Behind this definition we can see the immensely influential figure of Meredith. In Meredith's *The Egoist*, the central character, like Tommy, is a supreme fantasist creating a fantasy of self-limited perfection in his home and life. The related essay, *An Essay on Comedy* . . . , explicitly examines the egoist as sentimentalist.⁷ The influence of Meredith can also be found in the work of most of Barrie's contemporaries.⁸ But the closest to Barrie is D.H. Lawrence. He speaks of fantasy as a circle of self-consciousness evading the "real being of men . . ." ⁹ He too notes that when fantasy becomes conscious, it becomes egotistical and sentimental,¹⁰ and sentimentalism is linked with an adult wish to regain the fantasy of childhood, which Lawrence condemns as "disgusting."¹¹

For all these critics, the big point is the questionable use of personal authority over reality through fantasy, and the demand of fantasists for a passive audience to evade reality. All also perceive a need for some external authority, social, political or religious. Significantly, the most comprehensive modern study of fantasy, Colin Manlove's *Modern Fantasy*, concludes by saying that "the only basis in our reality . . . became the creator and not his audience." Further, the fantasist's self-involvement leads to sentimentality and escapism for himself and a "benign determinism" towards his audience.¹² It is the concept of human authority and control taken to its extreme that makes possible the isolated fantasies of potential perfection. It is interesting that the dominant image of an island in Barrie's works, which he himself notes in the dedication of *Peter Pan* (1928), is present in many other works of fantasy.¹³ Islands are important

because it is insularity that removes the invented world from actuality. But fantasy's potential perfection is only potential, for it is an unavoidable situation that "No man is an *Island*, intire of it selfe . . ."14 It is the assumption of perfection that the fantasist makes when he creates his worlds; and it is the danger in this assumption about which Barrie and other critics were worried.

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

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

Barrie tried to stabilize the presence of fantasy in his novels either by isolating it or by treating it ironically. In drama he found that the implicit separation between the spectator and the play controlled and pointed out the inescapable limits of the story more successfully than novelistic convention. Technically, the increased use of dialogue and episodic development in *The Little White Bird* cuts down on descriptive interpretation that can be used to control response. In the drama he still can and does exercise an editorial role through his extensive commentary; yet this does not intrude upon the play as the audience sees it. But fundamentally, Barrie recognizes the positive role of illusion in the theatre. As he comments in the bitter, autobiographical allegory "Pantaloons": "It is well known . . . that actors in general are not the same off the

stage as on; . . . they dress for their parts, speak words written for them which they do not necessarily believe . . ."18 It is the public and conscious knowledge of the illusory nature of theatre that Barrie needs in coming to terms with his new sense of artistic responsibility.

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

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

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

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

Peter Pan, as the boy "who would not grow up," not the boy who did not grow up, is the conscious fantasist, no longer a child yet determined to stay within his

invented world. The commentator explicitly notes that Never Land is Peter's island; he has made it.¹⁹ The creation of a complete personal world is the first of Barrie's conditions of fantasy. The second, absolute control over the actions and events, is also fulfilled. Peter controls not only the events but also their interpretations. At the end of each day when Wendy asks him what he has been doing, Peter tells her his version; but she is "never quite sure . . .; indeed the only one who is sure about anything on the island is PETER" (549). She becomes a passive audience "too guarded by this time to ask . . ." (538) for any truth.

The price Peter pays for this fantasy is his humanity. He is given a second chance to return to reality, but he refuses to accept the responsibility. In a key passage the commentator describes Peter saying to himself, "with a drum beating in his breast as if he were a real boy at last," "To die will be an awfully big adventure" (545). He echoes the observation in the final note to the play, saying: "If he could get the hang of the thing his cry might become 'To live would be an awfully big adventure!' but he can never quite get the hang of it, and so no one is as gay as he" (576). Peter wants to become a real boy, and to maintain his fantasy world. But the two are mutually exclusive, so Peter forfeits his humanity to preserve his fantasy. Wendy, on the other hand, acknowledges the desirability of fantasy but also the need to reject it. She provides a constant standard of reality within Never Land which allows her to learn about herself.

While Peter himself is the pure fantasist, Barrie creates the man with the *Thesaurus* who is similar to the narrator of the novels. The character is at times Barrie himself,²⁰ the commentator (503), Mr. Darling (513), and Captain Hook (557). He is the adult who wishes to return to fantasy and cannot. He is the sentimentalist, aware of an external standard of reality negating the value of personal desire. Barrie himself observes in the dedication the "Fragments of immortality . . ." (502) left him if he attempts fantasy, for reality always intrudes. The fantasy is always shattered. Rather than an escapist play, *Peter Pan* is a comment on the stasis and delusion of fantasy. The strength of the play is the tension between the desirability of Peter's fantasy-making power and the knowledge of the impossibility of using it without losing one's humanity.

Dear Brutus and *Mary Rose* are the best of the later plays. In the former Barrie extends his attitude to the nature of an artist's responsibility. He takes the ironic occurrence of self-knowledge reached between fantasies and makes it a positive goal. The artist is not just clearly distinguishing between reality and fantasy, but making it possible for people to move between the two. The idea of moving from reality to fantasy to reality, or from island to island, yet needing to question the fantastic nature of reality itself, is the predominant theme of *Dear Brutus*. The central character, Lob, like Peter Pan, creates a fantasy; but his guests choose to participate in and experience the fantasy without his control over their responses. Yet he too is inhuman; along with Peter, "he is so light that the subject must not be mentioned in his presence . . ." (1004). Like, yet unlike, the conscious fantasist, Lob lives an intermediate existence, always conscious of fantasy and providing it for others, but never indulging in it himself. We

understand from the commentator that all Lob's guests but one suffer a delusion about the reality in which they live. Lob provides them with a "second chance" to change their lives in the fantasy world of the wood beyond his garden.

It is impossible not to correlate the function of Lob with the role Barrie sees for himself. Barrie has moved away from the duality of Peter as the complete fantasist and the man with the *Thesaurus* as the sentimentalist, to a perspective through which he tries to use the deluding nature of his art positively in exposing the deluding nature of life. He comes to see this role as a further responsibility to his audience, yet without the convention of theatrical illusion it would be difficult to maintain the necessary balance.

Barrie's last successful full-length play is *Mary Rose*, written in 1920. Here he squarely faces the question occupying all the theorists on fantasy: that of control by personal authority and its dangerous potential. In *Peter Pan* the fantasist exercises totalitarian control over the invented world; Lob controls the presence of the fantasy but not the response to it. In *Mary Rose* Harry, like the narrator of *The Little White Bird*, has to control the fantasy of his mother, Mary Rose, not for others but for himself. The complex situation that results produces an atmosphere of elusive reality: layers of delusion and desire interpenetrating, shifting, fading, obscuring the actual events and revealing the difficulty of true self-knowledge.

Again from the commentator we learn that Mary Rose is similar to all the previous fantasists, especially in her femininity.²¹ They also share an "oddness" with her; like her, they are all frozen into eternal age or eternal youth. She too has her island with only an evergreen for eternal youth and a rowan tree for witchcraft on it; for Barrie increasingly equates fantasy with witchcraft and superstition, not only in *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* but also in *The Boy David*. And just as Peter forsook his second chance and condemned himself to fantasy, when Mary Rose tries to return a second time she can do so only as a ghost.

What Harry sees in the central act of the play is the memory of what he has been told of his mother. He learns to perceive the reality between what he wants Mary Rose to be to him and what she herself expects to find in him; and he realizes that his desire for a mother can never be fulfilled. Once Mary Rose as a mother figure has been exposed as a fantasy, she can finally die, and release is achieved at the end of the play for her and for Harry. This is one of the first discardings of fantasy that Barrie writes about; and significantly the commentator tells us that it happens through prayer. The exposure of fantasy is not an act of human authority but an act of will requiring more than human strength. Barrie's brief but clear answer to the need for some external authority to relieve man's dilemma of delusion and desire is found in a God to whom one can pray for strength of will. In this conclusion he also clearly connects artistic responsibility with a moral responsibility to indicate an external power that will lessen what he sees as the dangers of human authority in fantasy.

The Boy David, which was written fifteen years after *Mary Rose* and the year before Barrie's death, provides a summary of his mature ideas about com-

munication. It indicates that the gradual internalizing of the role of the fantasist has progressed to the stage where the writer feels that an artist should communicate absolutely, or not at all. In other words the fantasist has no moral right to re-create his fantasies for an audience without indicating the extent of personal authority within them. The purest communication in this play is Samuel's; one understands exactly what he means even when he does not speak. The most abased is Saul's, and his downfall is caused by a misunderstanding of his words. David enacts the supremely human conflict as he fluctuates between both. Barrie also tries hard to make his meaning totally understandable, but in doing so he produces a creaky play. The attention to biblical detail provides only a superficial reality; and the schematic development of characters, although clear, leaves them cold.

Samuel is presented as completely free from self-delusion. He communicates with God through prayer and vision, and speaks to man through allegorical action, prophecy and poetry. Saul, the corrupted king, insists on personal authority and must therefore depend upon Samuel to communicate with God for him. As a man-made authority, he must do things by himself, as Jonathan points out.²² Kings, just like fantasists, are entirely dependent on themselves for everything in their world. Like fantasists they insist on their personal points of view and impose their authority on others. In the end Saul begins to believe in his own fantasies, here portrayed as witchcraft, and he kills himself.

David's career throughout the play is a conflict between the two poles of fantasy and reality that the two men represent. Here it is important that David is still a boy; his fantasies are not yet dangerous. He is still the child fantasist, but in contrast to Peter, he is never allowed to indulge in an isolated fantasy. To accommodate this change in action, Barrie changes the structure of his play: there is no longer a "central fantasy," but a series of incidents in which David fluctuates between self-knowledge and desire. Initially it is Samuel's vision of God that helps David to know himself, but gradually he is given visions himself and can realize his true potential. When at the end of the play he loses a fight with Jonathan and finally has to accept his limitations, the commentator notes that he is changing from boy to man. In accepting reality he reaches "*the most tragic moment of his boyhood's story*" (1268).

The commentator carefully contrasts Saul's fantasies with David's visions which make up most of the final act of the play. The visions are real "as if they lived" (1249); and David is not "in" them, as with a fantasy, but "at" them. Significantly, in his visions the boy David sees himself grown up to be a king, and hurts a stone at himself; for man must always try to destroy in himself the delusion of personal power so dangerous in an adult. But he also sees the dead Saul made innocent again, and using David's own words to express himself. David will always remain in danger of becoming a Saul and only the constant recognition of God can prevent it.

In his straightforward writing, Barrie is specifically emulating Samuel's responsibility to communicate God's presence so that David can release himself

from fantasy. Samuel's responsibility is identified with the artist's responsibility to point to an external standard of reality and lessen the dangers of fantasy. In this we find another hint of Barrie's preference for the theatre. Samuel's main mode of communication is through the allegory of his prophecies and actions. Action on a stage made it possible for Barrie to stop talking about his personal interpretations of ideas and concepts except in the commentary, and to realize them instead. At least in the theatre Barrie's view of the insidious intangibility of fiction is made physical in three dimensions with real people. There is less room for authorial manipulation. However, the control over manipulation is taken too far in *The Boy David*. It is the tension between fantasy and reality not only in the characters, but also in the structures of the plays that strengthens Barrie's best work. Here the tension is hardly present at all. We are told that the characters have changed or will change, but the "brave affair" is not realized for us.

It is ironic that while Barrie's concern about the dangers of fantasy leads him to create some brilliant pieces of theatre, it also leads him to reject his particular artistic skill. The positive side of the later style is its experiment with action and attempt at allegory. Although the experiment fails, it indicates great courage on Barrie's own part; he himself has tried to change. The final form of his ideas about communication reveals a thoughtful and mature design. It is also surprisingly consistent in its assessment of action and prophecy as the purest communication, with contemporary developments in the philosophy of language, and with a growing interest in the use of allegory. That Barrie transformed his original, rather facile, acceptance of the absolute ability of words to communicate meaning into a consistent analysis of fantasy, poetry, and action or prophecy, deserves recognition. And that he was willing to put the ideas into practice, at the eventual cost of his own particular style, deserves admiration. Barrie's epilogue is exactly Prospero's, when he too has to leave his island:

*But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands:
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.*²³

NOTES

¹ See David Datches, "The Sexless Sentimentalist," *The Listener*, 63, No. 1624 (12 May 1960), pp. 841-843; Sheila Kaye-Smith, "J. M. Barrie, The Tragedian," *The Bookman*, 59 (Dec. 1920), 107-108; Patrick Braybrooke, *J. M. Barrie: A Study in*

- Fairies and Mortals* (London, [1924]); and Janet Dunbar, *J. M. Barrie: The Man Behind the Image* (London, 1970), for opinions on Barrie as a writer of tragedy, comedy, and farce.
- 2 Lynette Hunter, "J. M. Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy," *Scottish Literary Studies* (May 1978).
 - 3 Denis Mackail, *The Story of J. M. B.* (London, 1941), pp. 302 and 337.
 - 4 *The British Weekly*, 25 Oct. 1888, pp. 415-416.
 - 5 Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1910; rpt. London, 1967), pp. 234-6.
 - 6 See *Sentimental Tommy* (London, 1896), p. 385; and *The Letters of J. M. Barrie*, ed. Viola Meynell (London, 1942), p. 10.
 - 7 George Meredith, "Prelude to *The Egoist*," in *An Essay on Comedy, and The Uses of the Comic Spirit*, ed. Lane Cooper (London, 1972), p. 91.
 - 8 For example, see G. K. Chesterton, "Sentimental Literature," *The Speaker*, July 1901, p. 464.
 - 9 D. H. Lawrence, "Pornography and Obscenity," in *A Selection from Phoenix*, ed. A. A. M. Inglis (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 318.
 - 10 "The Crown," p. 435.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 440-441.
 - 12 C. N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 259-260.
 - 13 Among many examples are such diverse works as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, or *Perelandra* by C. S. Lewis; it should also be noted that Meredith refers to the egoist's home as an "island of perfection," "Prelude to *The Egoist*," p. 40.
 - 14 John Donne, "Devotion 17," in *Selected Prose*, chosen by Evelyn Simpson, ed. Helen Gardner and Timothy Healy (Oxford, 1967), p. 101.
 - 15 For example, see the chapter on Pilkington's; or the final chapter.
 - 16 George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (London, 1959).
 - 17 T. S. Eliot, and George Hoellering, *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral* (London, 1952), p. 8.
 - 18 *The Plays of J. M. Barrie*, ed. A. E. Wilson (London, 1928), p. 581; all quotations from Barrie's plays are from this edition and page numbers follow in brackets.
 - 19 *Peter Pan*, p. 523.
 - 20 For example, there is Barrie's reference to himself coming to London armed with only his *Thesaurus* in *The Greenwood Hat* (London, 1937), here alluded to on p. 503.
 - 21 Barrie's attitude to women is ambivalent: they are not only more resistant to fantasy but also at its base. The ambivalence is clarified partly by an early article on actors as both supreme fantasists and sexless, *The Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, March 1887. From Tommy in "sexless garments," to Peter Pan, always acted by a woman, and Captain Hook, great because of "a touch of the feminine" (546), to Lob with his "little feminine touches. . . ." (996), the fantasists are not so much female as bisexual or nonsexual.
 - 22 It is interesting to note that Walter J. Ong connects Pater with the man-made and personalized art with which Barrie's concept of fantasy began, *The Barbarian Within* (New York, 1962), p. 21.
 - 23 William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Morton Luce, 4th ed., rev. (London, 1938), pp. 147-8.

Granville Barker's Sexual Comedy

DENNIS KENNEDY

Harley Granville Barker's reputation suffered heavily when he left active theatre work after the Great War, hyphenated his name, and became a "mere professor." His admirers, who acknowledged him as the leader of the cause for a new theatre, felt abandoned in favor of a comfortable second marriage and a leisurely life, and his plays, already looked upon with suspicion, endured an added decline. Other external factors, such as the subsequent dominance of Shaw and the general reaction against naturalism, have obscured them further. It is an unfortunate state of affairs for English drama (though in the last few years there have been signs of change), for Granville Barker wrote four of the most significant plays of the Edwardian period, marked by their unusual sensitivity to language and originality of form. *The Marrying of Ann Leete*, *The Voyage Inheritance*, *Waste* ("our greatest modern tragedy," according to William Archer), and *The Madras House* are distinguished also by an even rarer characteristic for their time: while they deal outwardly with public subjects like politics and business, inwardly they are all centered on the sexual relationships of the main characters. Archer thought the last three plays "the biggest things our modern movement has produced,"¹ and in one sense they all are, for they are unique among English plays of the early century in the use of sexual relationships to define the worth of human action and to signify larger, moral, concerns. In the comedies this symbolic use of the urge to couple is especially apparent. Most comedies are "sexual" in some sense, of course, but Granville Barker's three major ones are less interested in the standard bawdry and mating we associate with the form, and more interested in using sexual relationships as an index of human sensibility.

Before *Ann Leete* he had written three apprentice plays with a fellow actor, Berte Thomas, and Barker, despite his youth, was the dominant partner in the collaboration.² While their flaws are many, these unpublished early pieces make clear that from the beginning he was concerned with the same subject that was to occupy the rest of his career as a playwright. In them he struggles to work