



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,  
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

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Volume 14  
Number 4

Article 5

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Summer 7-15-1988

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### Recommended Citation

Foster, Michael A. (1988) "Peter Pan: The Lost Last Act," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 14: No. 4, Article 5.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol14/iss4/5>

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### Peter Pan: The Lost Last Act

#### Abstract

Describes a little-known alternative ending to *Peter Pan*, found only in the manuscript of the first draft in Indiana University's Lilly Library.

#### Additional Keywords

Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan* (manuscript); Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan* (play)

# Peter Pan: The Lost Last Act

Michael A. Foster

A lost last act of *Peter Pan*, found in J.M. Barrie's first draft manuscript of the play, includes a happy ending that unites Peter and Wendy in London, accounts for the Lost Boys, and climaxes when Captain Hook reappears as a birch-carrying, cap-and-gowned English school master, looking for Peter in order to force him into school.

The lost last act features a curious resolution of Peter and Wendy's relationship with Wendy mothering Peter, sometimes scoldingly, in the little house built for her in the Neverland, now removed to London's Kensington Gardens.

But this curious tableau of Peter and Wendy safe together was replaced, of course, by the more famous bittersweet ending wherein Peter returns to the Neverland, leaving Wendy to grow up into a mere woman.

The two-scene act is found only in Barrie's first draft holograph of the play's script, dated Nov. 23, 1903, through March 1, 1904. This holograph manuscript, written on tiny (5" x 8") sheets of fine linen paper in Barrie's minuscule and often illegible hand, is in the collection of Indiana University's Lilly Library Manuscript Collection. It takes place in the Darling family nursery and later in Kensington Gardens; it has never been published and is generally unknown.

In its climatic scene, Barrie reverts to the nineteenth century English stage pantomime tradition. As Hook pursues Peter in order to take him off to school, Peter is transformed into a clown and Wendy into a Columbine by Tippy, who is Barrie's early version of the fairy Tinker Bell.

Tippy transforms all the people in Kensington Gardens, including the grown Lost Boys, into clown and Columbine look-alikes, and the resulting chase falls foursquare into the classic pantomime slapstick chase mode. This tradition Barrie also explored in his little-known one-act play *Pantaloon*, written early in 1905, his first work after the wildly successful premiere of *Peter Pan*, Dec. 27, 1904. *Pantaloon*, which also explores themes of innocent love, is a relative rarity collected in the anthology *Half-Hours* (1920).

Much of Barrie's first-draft manuscript of *Peter Pan*, which he gave to American actress Maude Adams with a first-page dedication, one of America's most famous *Peter Pans*, is nearly identical with the final and famous published version of the stage play.

A beguiling Barrie drawing, an overhead view of the first scene's Darling nursery set design, decorates the top of the first page of the Lilly Library's *Peter Pan* manuscript. It is dated "Nov. 23, 1903" in the author's hand, and bears, scrawled sideways in the upper left corner, Barrie's bequest

to Maude Adams from "her humble servant and affectionate friend." Oddly, no byline or title appears on this first page; only "ANON" for the former and "play" for the latter.

Both the manuscript and the published play, for instance, begin with Nanna, the nurse-maid dog (whose name is spelled *Nanna* in the holograph), preparing the youngest Darling child (named Alexander, and not Michael, in the holograph) for his 6 p.m. nightly bath. Accordingly, much of Barrie's first draft was incorporated verbatim into the published version.

But the lost last act provides startling differences.

It begins, as the current last act likewise does, with the tableau scene of Mr. Darling and Mrs. Darling in their children's abandoned nursery. Mr. Darling has taken to the doghouse, literally: he goes to work in Nanna's kennel and returns likewise.

The manuscript version of this seems to show a vain Mr. Darling glorying much more in his kennel-prompted fame. He is less humble and repentant than the Mr. Darling of the final version. On Recto page 68 of Barrie's manuscript, for instance, Mr. Darling brags of being interviewed in his doghouse by "seven interviewers and a deputation of ladies, so affected that they wept."

Darling goes on to catalog "twelve autograph books and six invitations to dinner, all saying, 'Do come in the kennel. I think you've married pretty well Mary, Mary, pretty well--ah? ha? ah?'"

The scene takes another turn when Mr. Darling reluctantly admits to his wife that he kissed some of his female admirers:

Mrs. Darling: "You didn't kiss them, did you?"

Mrs. Darling: "They asked for something to remember me by, and I am a poor man."

At this point, as in the published version of the play, Mrs. Darling sits to play "Home, Sweet Home" on the nursery piano as Mr. Darling slinks back in his kennel. Then, their three children, Wendy, John, and Alexander, return. When Mr. Darling emerges from the kennel to see his prodigal children, Barrie notes that he has straw in his hair.

Other adult touches not found in the final version likewise appear. Nanna the nursemaid dog, for instance, is seen at this moment carrying "a French novel" in her mouth, a subtle Barrie give away at the worldliness of nursemaids.



Then Peter Pan reappears, and a long scene follows which accounts for the adoption of all the Lost Boys.

This scene, referred to as the Beautiful Mothers Scene, is no longer played. It was apparently performed in early versions of *Peter Pan*.

In this rather cloying episode, Wendy reveals to her parents that she and Peter have advertised in the papers for twenty of the most beautiful mothers to apply to the Darling's address "where they will find something to their advantage." Many more than twenty women apply, however.

Wendy peeks outside and reports, "That's Peter, and he's picking out the twenty prettiest ones."

When Peter finally enters, Wendy warns her father to "be careful -- Peter doesn't like to be contradicted."

Mr. Darling complies: "Proud to see you, Captain," he says.

Peter's reaction is curious: "Thank you, Grandpapa," he says. When Mr. Darling demurs, Peter explains: "Wendy's my mother. You're Grandpapa."

Then the Beautiful Mothers begin to enter. The first, called the Countess of Copley, is introduced, and Peter and Wendy shake her hand. This strange exchange will be amplified in the final scene of this lost last act.

Other Beautiful Mothers are introduced by the Darlings' maid, here called Helen, not Liza as in the final version. Helen announces Miss Fitz Reynolds, Mm. Villon, Lady Elizabeth Verral (The Lost Boy Slightly immediately picks her as his mother and

warns Tootles: "That's mine! Tootles, you must not speak to me when I'm a lord.") Another mother is introduced as Mrs. William P. Davis; one introduced only "prefers to remain anonymous."

When all the mothers are assembled, the process of weeding out the unfit ones begins. Peter orders three mothers removed when they do not respond emotionally to the sight of baby clothes.

Then he directs the remainder to watch the Lost Boy Curly sleep. Peter asked the candidate mothers to give Curly a "thimble," that is, a kiss, as in Peter's famous first-act malapropism. The mother who kisses Curly so gently that her kiss does not awaken him is chosen to be his.

Peter's capacity for make-believe also affects the selection of the mother for the second Lost Boy, Nibs. Here Peter, testing for "animal instincts," constructs a make-believe situation that would involve Nibs being burned. His mother-to-be saves him.

Now Slightly, the most know-it-all of the Lost Boys, must be picked. He is clearly no prize. Wendy points out that Slightly is biting his knuckles and they are bleeding. When no other mother notices this, Helen the maid adopts Slightly because she alone notices his knuckles are bleeding and feels pity for him. Thus Slightly, who had hoped to be a lord, is adopted by a lowly housemaid.

Tootles and the Twins remain. Tootles, the humblest Lost Boy, is adopted by the Countess of Copley, thereby becoming the lord Slightly would have hoped to have been. The Twins are adopted just before that by a genteel woman who refuses to lose patience at her confusion over which of the two is which.

After some quibbling with Mr. Darling about the cost of the fares, Peter goes out to whistle for five hansom cabs. Barrie's stage directions, rendered legible only through a transcription available to scholars at the Lilly Library, notes "(D [Mr. Darling] would like to defy him, then exit R, cowed)."

But when Tootles notes, "My mother says I'm nearly a man," the reaction is predictable:

P (startled:) "Does she! (he is suddenly subdued) Goodbye, all of you."

At first Wendy does not notice. She is busy telling Helen, the maid, in an aside that "I tied Slightly's ears back at night. They are rather prominent." She then "break(s) down" at the exult of the newly-adopted lost boys, her former make-believe children.

However, Peter Pan soon reveals his fearful thought.

Barrie notes the stage direction of this line of Peter's: "P (in agony) Wendy, I've never told you, but I think I'm nearly as old as Tootles." He rei-

terates his famous dismay at the thought of growing up and says that he always wants to be "a wonderful boy." Wendy replies: "That's what you'll always be, dear Peter."

Mrs. Darling then makes this revealing aside: "Poor Wendy. I see now what her sweet sorrow is." But the seeming soon-to-come separation of the two, which of course does result in published versions of the play and the novel version of this story, here does not materialize.

Instead, Peter relates, "Tippy is bringing the little house I built for Wendy to Kensington Gardens so Wendy may come and see me." Then they make their temporary farewells, with the same stage direction for both exit lines:

*Wendy (huskily): "Goodbye."*

*Peter (huskily): "I'm going away."*

Wendy reminds Peter to wear his "chest protector," but then vows to go with him. Peter queries her:

*Peter: "And you'll never send my to school, Mother?"*

*Wendy: "Never!"*

She then bids her father to call a sixth hansom cab to take the two of them to Kensington Gardens where they will live. After some haggling over the cab fare of one-and-sixpence, Peter suggests, "Wendy give the cab man a thimble [meaning a kiss]...he will like it better than money."

*Wendy: "What do you think, Mother?"*

*Mrs. Darling: "My pet, I'm told that's sometimes done."*

Adieu said, this Beautiful Mothers scene ends.

The next and final scene of Barrie's holograph takes place in Kensington Gardens, the locale of Barrie's earliest Peter Pan episodes in *The Little White Bird* (1902). Barrie's introductory tableau suggests a passing of stage extras: a ticket collector, a boarding school group of six girls and a "starchy governess," and others. He notes that all the boarding school group is to be played by the Beautiful Mothers of the previous scene, an interesting and economical solution to the "extra" problem.

Then four of the six Lost Boys reenter. First comes Tootles. Surprisingly, Barrie here shows him grown into a soldier, carrying a cane and smoking a cigarette. This soldier Tootles smiles at a governess and exits. The governess smiles back and exits in hot pursuit of him, leaving her charge in a pram behind her.

This pantomime continues with the entrance of the Twins dressed in "Eton suits." It is interesting to note here that Barrie's fascination with the famous English public school Eton, a school he never attended but picked to be Captain Hook's

"alma mater," is already surfacing. Barrie was to finance the Eton education of four of the five Llewellyn-Davies boys, who were the real models for and inspiration of Peter Pan.

The Eton-suited Twins then meet Slightly. Barrie describes him as a "street arab" carrying a cluster of balloons. Slightly speaks first to the Twins' mother:

*Slightly: "Buy a balloon, lady?"*

*Lady: "Go away, vulgar boy."*

*Slightly: "My wife is ill, ma'am, and I have ten starving children."*

*First Twin: (now very classy) "Mamma, it's Slightly."*

*Second Twin: "Hello Slightly."*

*Slightly: (mimicking them) "How de do, Twins."*

*Lady: "How often have I forbid you to talk to that vulgar boy?"*

As they exeunt left, Peter enters dressed and made up as a clown and rubs them with a "red-hot poker," another English stage pantomime tradition. They jump and he behaves in a traditional "clown manner." Though Slightly, and now Tootles, are still on the scene, Barrie notes that neither of them sees Peter.

Tootles speaks first, asking if Slightly knows him.

*Slightly: "Yes... you being a swell... I knowed you."*

*Tootles: "Rot! I say, Slightly, nobody is looking." (gives him a cigarette end)*  
*"How do I look, Slightly?"*

*Slightly: "Splendid, your lordship."*

As this byplay goes on, Wendy dances on, dressed as a traditional stage Columbine. She warns Peter of the coming of the Keeper, and they hide.

Now enters the park keeper, who turns out to be a buccaneer from Captain Hook's crew. This first draft of the play does not contain the beloved and famous pirate bosun, Smee. Instead, Starkey is the senior pirate on Hook's ship. So it is Starkey who now reenters as the Keeper of Kensington Gardens.

Now Barrie writes Captain Hook enters right, "dressed as a schoolmaster in cap and gown and carrying a birch. (The hook is hidden.)"

Hook, who is fascinatingly identified as "Michael Wylie," a name that is crossed out and replaced by "Hook," speaks to Starkey first:

*Hook: "Keeper, I am a schoolmaster,*

and I know there is a boy in these gardens who never goes to school. It's against the law. I want that boy. I want him." (flourishes hook)

Starkey, who was first called Snake in an edited-out name designation, recognizes Hook. Starkey tells Hook that he "thought the crocodile had you."

Hook: "No, I gave him this in the eye (holding up Hook)."

Hook now criticizes Starkey: "You are an honest man -- for shame."

Starkey: (cringing) "Times are so hard."

Hook: "That's why I am a schoolmaster -- to avenge myself on boys. I hook them so (indicating how he lifts them by the waist), and then I lay on like this. When it was found out what a useful hook I had, every school in merry England clamoured for my services."

Starkey: "What's clamoured?"

Hook: "Yelled, but that's not enough. I want Peter Pan himself. Sometimes I dream at night that I'm laying on to Peter Pan. I'll have him yet. He's here."

Starkey: "Here?"

Hook: "He paints his face that none may recognize him as a boy who ought to be in school."

Hook reveals further that he knows that Peter and Wendy live in Kensington Gardens, and he accuses Wendy, Peter's "mother," of breaking the law by not sending her boy to school.

He enlists Starkey to help him catch the two of them:

Hook: "Peter, I'll look after, and Mother Wendy, she'll go to jail. They can't escape me, I have assistant masters watching all the gates."

Peter and Wendy watch, "quaking":

Peter: "He's bound to get us. Boys oughtn't to be too funny, but oh, I wish I hadn't become a clown, just funny enough."

Wendy: "Our dress makes us conspicuous."

Peter: "What's conspicuous?"

Wendy: "Easy to pick out."

Peter: "School, Wendy."

Wendy: "Jail, Peter. Tippy alone can save us."

But Tippy, Peter's jealous pixie consort, is reluctant. Peter tells Wendy that Tippy's bell language says "she will save me but not you."

But Peter refuses Tippy's offer to be saved by himself. Instead, he seems ready to sacrifice himself to the worst of all possible fates:

Wendy: "Where are you going?"

Peter: "To give myself up to Hook if he promises to spare you."

Wendy: "No, Peter, no... let me go to jail."

Peter: "Never! Goodbye!"

At this point, Tippy intervenes: Peter translates to say that she will rescue them after all: "She says stop that thimbling, and I'll save you both."

Tippy, usually played by a narrow-beamed spotlight, darts offstage, and just as Wendy wonders how the fairy will affect their rescue, a sound of firecrackers is heard. Immediately, other characters from preceding scenes run by, but now all are dressed in clown and Columbine makeup and dress as Peter and Wendy are. All the female characters seen before become Columbines; all the male characters, clowns. Thus, as Wendy notes, Hook will not be able to pick the two of them out from the horde of similarly-clad extras.

After a bit of gratuitous pantomime burlesque, Hook reenters, roaring "I have him now!" But, of course, the clown he sees is not Peter, and the confusion continues.

Here Barrie notes that the scene changes to elsewhere in Kensington Gardens. He directs that the whole stage backcloth be raised to reveal a replica of the Serpentine, the winding stream through that London park. Upstage center is set the little house built in Neverland, now covered with clowns, pantaloons, Columbines, and Harlequins, the four stock characters of the English pantomime.

By this time, John and Alexander have joined the other Lost Boys present, and the group goes through another one of their vaudevillesque "not me, how about you" scenes reminiscent of the Neverland home under the ground.

But, finally, the moment of Hook's fate must come. This is one of the most difficult sheets in the Lilly Library Manuscript Collection. A rider, written in manuscript off to the side of the page, includes this remarkable line that Barrie later would use in his 1911 novel version of the passing of Hook -- only this time uttered by Peter not by Barrie the omniscient narrator: "Thou not altogether unheroic figure, farewell."

Hook's reply to Peter's noble declamation in the side rider is baffling: "Peter, do you think you could get me a pack of cards quick, Peter?" (sic)

Then the crocodile, Hook's nemesis and Barrie's great symbol of time and fate, reenters. Peter crows. The crocodile disappears into the stage Serpentine, and Hook's assistant masters creep forward to trap Peter, who hides in the little house.

Next to it, the crocodile emerges from the Serpentine with its great mouth open and takes its place near a tree. Barrie's stage directions indicate: "Hook unconscious of danger comes down feet foremost & c, [center stage] enters the crocodile. He realizes his position. As his head goes down, the crocodile closes his mouth."

Peter has not even been aware of his passing. Now the scene fades out. Barrie's stage directions indicate the lights in the little house come up as Wendy and Mrs. Darling emerge from the interior. A curious domestic exchange occurs:

Wendy: "You really do like the house?"

Mrs. Darling: "Immensely. Of course, it's small."

Wendy: "It is small. Peter, don't bite your nails. You see, Mother, I didn't want a tall house. Stairs are such a bother to servants."

The scene continues, and Wendy scolds Peter again, and then Mr. Darling reappears, adding his approval of the little house:

Mr. Darling: "I like your house, Wendy. Gravel soil -- south aspect."

Wendy: "And the cupboard accommodations are so good, Father."

Again she criticizes Peter:

Wendy: "Peter, where do boys tousle their hair go to?"

With Tippy darting about, this homely scene continues. Peter still calls Mr. Darling "Grandpapa." Mr. Darling asks Wendy's permission to give Peter a penny. She agrees:

Wendy: "Thank you, Father, it will be very useful. Of course, our expenses are rather heavy just now."

Now, at Mrs. Darling's mention, Nanna reenters followed by two Newfoundland puppies. All but Peter and Wendy exeunt. The clock in the little house strikes six, the same hour that the clock in the nursery is striking at the play's beginning. Wendy speaks:

Wendy: "Peter, sweetheart, bedtime (lifts him up in her arms)."

Peter: "Are you glad, glad, glad, Mummy, that I'm your boy?" (The word *boy* is crossed out, and in its place, Barrie has written "son.")



Wendy: "Peter, I consider it a privilege (hugs him in motherly way. They wave handkerchiefs at audience, as it were, from door of little house.)"

Finally, Barrie describes the closing illusion. His stage directions indicate "no moon, but many stars. These twinkle violently. For a moment, many go out leaving stage dark, and in this moment, the little house is removed, and Peter and Wendy exeunt."

Barrie then indicates that "the house and Peter and Wendy and the stars are all to be flung by Pepper's ghost," an apparent stage effect. When Starkey reenters, the same illusion is used to allow them to fade away, and when Starkey leaves the scene, they reappear.

Barrie's concluding stage directions, the last words in the manuscript, read: "Stars all go out. Blackness. Curtain." Below, the author dates the completion of this work: "March 1, 1904."

So there is much of interest in the lost last act of *Peter Pan*. Wendy's maternal adoption of Peter to London life without school seems to deflate the strong tension of their seemingly equal and quasi-erotic love, demoting it to a merely filial affection.

Barrie chooses, fascinatingly, to revive his great pirate Captain Hook as a typically English public schoolmaster. This is especially interesting in light of Barrie's only published sequel to *Peter Pan*, the speech "Captain Hook at Eton" which Barrie presented to the First Hundred at Eton College on July 27, 1927, the eve of the annual prestigious cricket match between Eton and Harrow at Lord's.

Though Barrie's notes show that he toyed with other Peter Pan-related topics (including a fascinating title fragment, "Peter Pan Grown Old"), this speech is the only published writing of Barrie's to deal with the subjects of his most successful work in "Captain Hook at Eton," which has been collected in the book *McConnachie and J.M.B.* Barrie constructs a delightful and entertaining talk relating the career of the young Captain Hook at Eton. In this witty speech, we learned that Hook's school days showed a passion for "poetry, especially that of the Lake School," and that he was athletically unnotable at Balliol.

It notes the curiosity that "when hurt on the football field, he 'bled yellow.'" Barrie speaks of Hook's Aunt Emily and her collection of school caps belonging to the great pirate. It suggests that he was elected to the prestigious Eton Society, or Pop, by manipulation of the voting results. Barrie informs the boys who were the top 100 Eton scholars that Hook was one of their number in the First Hundred, but indicates strongly that Hook's contribution to the *Eton Journal* was a plagiarism from Charles Lamb, "A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig."

More material on Hook's school days indicate he was long bound to Eton: "A search made of the cabin of his floating hulks brought to light that throughout the years of his piracy, he had been a faithful subscriber to the *Eton Chronicle*. Hundreds of copies of it, much thumb-marked, were found littering his book."

Nonetheless, young Hook was not popular with his classmates. But the speech concludes with a fascinating and entertaining glimpse of Hook returning to Eton for a last visit. This last visit was to destroy evidence that he had a member of the Eton Society in order to "obliterate the memory of himself from the tabernacle he had fouled."

"In that moment, was he not a good Etonian?" Barrie asks. The speech concludes with a paragraph that, on the eve of the annual crucial cricket match, must have earned a big ovation indeed: "Perhaps it was just that at Oxford, he fell among bad companions — Harrovians."

The speech, then, brings Barrie's concept of Captain Hook as one intimately connected with public school education to a full circle. The pirate turned schoolmaster of 1904 first draft of the play was revived in 1927 as the schoolboy turned pirate.

Barrie, however, never returned to most of the ideas found in this lost last act. While the crocodile and the little house of Neverland reappear in the busy final scene of this unused last act, most of the rest of it disappeared from the final drafts of *Peter Pan*.

All readers and viewers of *Peter Pan* will doubtless agree that this unused first-draft ending lacks the emotional depth and bittersweet resonance of the separation scene Barrie finally did use.

But *Peter Pan* was a work that grew steadily over several years: from Barrie's first creation of him as a story to the young Llewellyn-Davies boys, George, Jack, and Peter, in Kensington Gardens, to the first published episodes of a baby Peter Pan's adventures in Kensington Gardens in *The Little White Bird*, to the 1904 stage version and 1911 novel version, even to Barrie's little-known but brilliant speech, "Captain Hook at Eton," delivered to that school's First Hundred in 1927. His notebooks show that late in life, he toyed with a tormenting and provocative title, "Peter Pan Grown Old," but apparently did not pursue the project.

And his very first draft has this happy ending, which allows triumph for both the Neverland and London sides of the story. It may be less fine than the version Barrie finally settled on. But it is nonetheless fascinating to scholars of this most enigmatic work, the story of the boy who could never grow up, bless and cursed with eternal youth.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is grateful for the help and cooperation of the Lilly Library of Indiana University, its director William Cagle, and curator of manuscripts Sandra Taylor.

The author also is grateful for assistance in preparation of this paper provided by the Illinois Central College Word Processing Department, especially Shari Otto and Tracy Steele.

#### Continued from page 26

them a far green country under a swift sunrise.

Lady Galadriel's wish for him was about to come true!

By contrast, Sam Gamgee is to find his Valimar in his own beloved shireland; and it is reached in a characteristic fashion for him. His wife, Rose, plumps little Elanor upon his lap, as soon as he gets in the house. Whereupon he draws a deep breath and says, no doubt very phlegmatically, "Well, I'm back."

So to a last fond farewell. May memory hold the door as I hear down the wind again the strains of distant bagpipes. They are playing for Frodo, poignantly, nostalgically, MacCrimmon's Lament:

Cha til mi tuille  
(Never more shall I return)

Nor will Frodo. Nor will Bilbo. For with their departure over Sea with the three Keepers, the Third Age is come to an end. \*

<sup>1</sup> With acknowledgements to R. Barber and A. Richards, "A Dictionary of Famous Beasts". Macmillan.