Interpreting J. M. Barrie: On Choices That Biographers Make

Bachelor’s Diploma Thesis

Supervisor: doc. Michael Matthew Kaylor, PhD

2014
I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

------------------------------------------
Michal Mikeš
I would like to thank my supervisor, doc. Michael Matthew Kaylor, Ph.D., for his help and valuable advice.
# Table of Contents

Introduction: Single Object, Multiple Portraits............................................................... 5  
Beyond Words and Deeds................................................................................................. 9  
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 32  
Works Cited ................................................................................................................... 35  
Resumé ............................................................................................................................ 38  
Résumé ........................................................................................................................... 39
Introduction: Single Object, Multiple Portraits

For his part, his love and attention knew no bounds. He took over the house-hold, sent four of the boys to Eton, two to Oxford. He rented houses, a castle, an island, for their long summer fishing holidays. He was obsessed with their loveliness, and he nurtured them with all his powers.¹

An obsessive stalker, an impotent husband, a lover of young boys . . . a man who filled the vacuum of his own sexual impotence by a compulsive desire to possess the family who inspired his most famous creation.²

These conflicting reactions represent what reviewers wrote about James Matthew Barrie after reading two different biographies of him, accurately illustrating the power biographers have over their subjects. Both of the passages allude, among other things, to the 1906 edition of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens which Barrie gave to dying Arthur Llewelyn Davies, father of the boys Barrie later took as his own: “To Sylvia and Arthur Llewelyn Davies and Their Boys (My boys)”³. While the dedication remains the same, the reviewers accepted it either as a “complimentary gesture”⁴, a testimony of boundless love and attention, or as a part of “Barrie’s triumph”⁵ over Arthur in possession of the five Llewelyn Davies boys. Yet, neither Barrie nor the evidence had changed – it is the interpretation and the context into which the evidence is placed, what differs and successfully alters the assessment of Barrie’s personality. As Jeanne Halpern writes, “There is little question that it is not primarily the materials, but the biographer’s management of them, which determines the shape of a biographical life”⁶.

¹ Cohen 3
² Picadie n.pag.
³ Barrie qtd. in Mackail 335
⁴ Birkin Lost Boys 147
⁵ Dudgeon 183
⁶ Halpern 7
Leon Edel describes the problem of recreating a life as follows: “I, as the biographer, must paint the portrait and I can only paint it from the angle of vision I have”\(^7\). By comparing a biographer’s task to that of a painter, Edel implies that a single portrait cannot encompass the whole personality since biographers study their subjects only from the angle they choose. This also opens the door for the possibility that two conflicting portraits of one person may both be comparably truthful when they focus on the subject from different perspectives. According to Virginia Woolf, “a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand”\(^8\), which indeed leaves many possible angles to look from. The primary task of biographers is then to present the evidence they have in a manner reveling the subject from the side they desire\(^9\). However, because the same evidence can put in different contexts as parts of various interpretations of subject’s personality\(^10\), it becomes clear that the principal decision determining an answer to the question ‘what was a person like’ depends on a subjective choice of the pattern by which the evidence is interpreted.

For the purpose of demonstrating choices made in different interpretations of evidence, the present work analyzes passages from two biographies of James Mathew Barrie: *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys* by Andrew Birkin and *Captivated: J. M. Barrie, Daphne du Maurier and the Dark Side of Neverland* by Piers Dudgeon. Those particular works had been chosen because they incline towards the opposite ends that biographical approaches can take, represented by Birkin’s resolution to write “a love story”\(^11\) and Dudgeon’s attempt to reveal Barrie’s “Satanic dark side”\(^12\). While it might be tempting to use the scale between hagiography and pathography in such a case, those terms are...
clearly not satisfactory since their definitions rely on the nature of evidence that is revealed\textsuperscript{13}. As such, both biographies of Barrie would have been labeled a pathography since, according to Joyce Carol Oates’ description, “its motifs are dysfunction and disaster, illnesses and pratfalls, failed marriages and failed careers, alcoholism and breakdowns and outrageous conduct”\textsuperscript{14}. Except for alcoholism, which Birkin does not mention, both works include every aspect of Oates’s definition. Thus, it is not particularly useful to explore the nature of the life events presented\textsuperscript{15}, as it is their interpretation which shapes the perception of Barrie’s life.

The present work emulates life-writing strategy of Janis Stout in an attempt to focus solely on the strategies used by the biographers in question: “I made no effort at independent verification of these facts. My purpose was not to establish biographical fact but to use biographical fact”\textsuperscript{16}. This is necessary for the following reasons: Firstly, both biographies make any attempts of verification as hard as possible; as Anita Tarr points out in her review of Piers Dudeon’s work, “there are no page numbers for citations given, and large sections of information, not to mention many small quotations, are given no citations at all”\textsuperscript{17}. Birkin, on the other hand, draws heavily on personal correspondence and notes taken during his meeting with the late Nicolas Llewelyn Davies. Secondly, the aim of the present work is neither to write another biography of Barrie, nor to shed light on his life and works – the primary concern is the analyzing biographical choices by describing how the same evidence is used to fit in different contexts.

Initially, the present work attempts to answer Edel’s question “why a modern biographer fixes his attention on certain faces and turn his back on others”\textsuperscript{18} by revealing

\textsuperscript{13} Winslow 28; 47
\textsuperscript{14} Oates n.pag.
\textsuperscript{15} Edel “Shaping and Telling” 171
\textsuperscript{16} Stout 62
\textsuperscript{17} Tarr 466
\textsuperscript{18} Edel Writing Lives 60
the tone or, more precisely, the impression both biographers strive to create, as it governs their interpretative choices\textsuperscript{19}. This is done by analyzing the introductions to the biographies by selecting the passages which reveal the biographers’ approach and tone. The subsequent part is devoted to an analysis of the events of Barrie’s life in order to describe the interpretative choices the biographers use in order to reconstruct Barrie’s life from different angles.

\textsuperscript{19} Benton 72
Beyond Words and Deeds

The suggestion that a key for revealing a biographer’s approach is in the introduction\textsuperscript{20} is also valid in case of Birkin and Dudgeon since they both use the initial parts of their works to set the tones which later govern their interpretation of evidence. Birkin presents his biography as “a love story told through the words and images of the \textit{dramatis personae} concerned”\textsuperscript{21}, which foreshadows a strong sentimental tone constructed primarily by the documents he decides to include. Birkin admits that his usage of sources is not objective:

There is, of course, no such thing as a totally objective documentary, for were I to withhold my opinion throughout, a degree of subjectivity would still be evidenced by what I had chosen to include or omit. Indeed, my selection of material has not been particularly objective: I have quoted certain items of questionable merit simply because they appealed to me, while other things of more possible value have been discarded.\textsuperscript{22}

Indeed, attempts to restrict his comments to a minimum and, except for the passage concerning Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’s will, uses his own words only to connect evidence or to provide summaries of events. Nevertheless, his own opinion, embodied in the choice of documents by which he illustrates such events, is always expressed clearly. Birkin’s subjectivity is presented by choosing ‘items of questionable merit’ over more reliable sources only because they appealed to him, which is a first sign of “the danger of a destructive emotional involvement”\textsuperscript{23} that Leon Edel finds in transference.

Birkin introduces his biography by means of a long passage quoted from Barrie’s “The Dedication to the Five”, on which both the sentimentality and selection of sources can be demonstrated:

\textsuperscript{20} Benton 78; Lee 124  
\textsuperscript{21} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} xvi  
\textsuperscript{22} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} xi  
\textsuperscript{23} Edel \textit{Writing Lives} 66
One by one as you swung monkey-wise from branch to branch in the wood of make-believe you reached the tree of knowledge. [. . .] That was a quarter of a century ago, and I clutch my brows in vain to remember whether it was a last desperate attempt to retain the five of you for a little longer, or merely a cold decision to turn you into bread and butter. You had played it until you tired of him, and tossed him in the air, and gored him, and left him derelict in the mud, and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed some of the gory fragments together with a pen-nib. 24

The tone emerges from the numerous images of transience that this passage contains. It depicts the Llewelyn Davies boys as they grew up and forfeit their childhood along with the Peter Pan fantasy. Setting the time twenty-five years before the dedication was written corresponds with the black and white cover image 25, leaving the reader appreciating the make-believe world Barrie created rather than the unhappy reality described as ‘a last desperate attempt’ to continue living in the fantasy – to retain the boys for a little longer. Birkin, at this point, is not as interested in pursuing the life of Barrie as he is in sharing the impression Barrie’s had left on the biographer himself: “this cry from the heart touched deep chords” 26. The sentimentality is further strengthened by the fact that this passage originally appeared in the Peter Pan novel, momentous for the newly added last scene depicting Wendy as an old mother in Peter Pan’s significant encounter with ageing and death.

The choice of presenting Barrie’s dedication is not unusual in his biographies 27, however, the fact that Birkin uses one of the early, unpublished versions, illustrates Birkin’s aforementioned strategy of selecting materials. The resulting change is apparent when the same passage is compared with Barrie’s final version:

. . . into bread and butter. This brings us back to my uncomfortable admission that I have no recollection of writing the play of Peter Pan, now

24 Birkin Lost Boys i
25 Appendix A
26 Birkin Lost Boys i
27 Chaney 205-6; Mackail 377
being published for the first time so long after he made his bow upon the stage. You had played it until you tired of it, and tossed it in the air and gored it and left it derelict in the mud and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed some of the gory fragments together with a pen-nib.  

The passage that Birkin uses is missing a key sentence, which leaves the impression that it is Barrie of whom the boys became tired and who is gored and left derelict in the mud, while in the published version, it is clearly Peter Pan. This choice is notable for the change in impression the passage produces: Birkin puts the fact that the Llewelyn Davies boys grew up in the background and emphasizes that effect it had on Barrie, who is no longer the boys’ playmate, a strategy that can be traced throughout the whole biography.

Birkin, later in the introduction, interweaves his own reality with Barrie’s as he presents the reader with a story about the death of his own son, in a description which, again, adds towards the already established sentimental tone:

My son Anno was born on my birthday in 1980, seven weeks after Nico died. As he and his brothers David and Ned grew up, I came to experience first hand the joy that Barrie had so longed for – children of one’s own. . . . Anno had been killed in a car smash in thick mist with three of his friends. Like Michael, he was one month short of 21. I don’t remember ever having read Peter Pan to Anno or his brothers. I don’t think he ever saw The Lost Boys, or read this book. He didn’t need to.

During the passage, Birkin mentions the death of two Llewelyn Davies boys, one of whom he compares to his own son while equating Barrie’s experience of fatherhood to Birkin’s own. In case the importance of an event should be measured by its length in a biography, the unfortunate death of Birkin’s son would be more important in the process of recreating Barrie’s personality than describing Barrie’s father because, compared to two pages Birkin designates for the events of his own life, David Barrie, Sr., is mentioned

28 Barrie “Dedication” 216
29 Birkin Lost Boys xiv-xv
only on three lines\textsuperscript{30}. That this is, however, true is apparent from the significance that transference affects Birkin’s interpretative choices, as demonstrated in the present work on Birkin’s approach to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’s will and Michael Llewlyn Davies’s death. Paula Backshieder, nevertheless, discourages critics from relying on transference since it is often misleading:

It is not uncommon for people to remark on the similarities between a biographer and the subject and to believe that the biographer at some level recognized the affinity and was influenced by it. Whether these similarities – and in my experience they are almost invariably superficial – existed before the biography was written, were written into the biography and, therefore, imposed on the subject, or were adopted by the biographer from long and intense exposure to the subject’s habits, mannerisms, and speech patterns will always be a tangled question.\textsuperscript{31}

Yet, in Andrew Birkin’s case it is apparently not a superficial approach since Birkin makes the comparison to Barrie himself. Moreover, the introduction to the new edition was added only after his son’s unfortunate accident. Before the first chapter, Birkin makes the following address: “yes, Anno, I do have something new to say”\textsuperscript{32} as a respond to his son’s inquiry not to write another Barrie’s biography unless Birkin unless he can add something to the former\textsuperscript{33}. When asked, after publishing the current biography, what he had added, Birkin responded that his own bereavement allowed him to understand Barrie’s life better. “I have to be careful” Birkin says, “not to superimpose my personality onto his if I were ever made another film about him”\textsuperscript{34}, which suggests that Birkin was not previous successful in this aspect.

Birkin also explains his acquaintance, at the time of writing, to Nicholas Llwelyn Davies, who proved to be a valuable source:

\textsuperscript{30} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} 6
\textsuperscript{31} Backshieder 35
\textsuperscript{32} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} xv
\textsuperscript{33} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} xiv
\textsuperscript{34} Birkin “Re: something new to say…..?” JMBarrie.co.uk. 6 Jul. 2010. Web. 14 Mar. 2014
I received a letter from him telling me that he had sent, under separate cover, ‘a few notes of things that aren’t quite accurate, but they don’t amount to much so of course disregard them if you want’. By the next post arrived a large package containing the few notes: four dozen sheets of closely written comments. [. . .] This may not seem particularly remarkable, until one considers the amount of speculation that has arisen in the last decade over Barrie’s sexuality.35

This passage describes Nicholas Llwelyn Davies as Birkin’s proof-reader who corrected every possible mistake appearing in the drafts of the biography during Birkin’s countless visits36 and “a spate of letter-writing”37, supposedly over six-hundred unpublished letters. While such relationship certainly adds to the overall credibility of Birkin’s work, it, nevertheless, also raises questions concerning the possibility of censorship38. This can be demonstrated in Birkin’s recall of Nicolas’s words addressed to Birkin when they first met: “‘I am certainly ready to help in any way I can, but I must warn you that I am entirely devoted to Barrie’s memory, by which I mean that you will hear little but praise from me.’ Nico has been true to his word”39. This statement, while illustrating Nicholas’s devotion to help, also shows that he was dedicated to keep the memory of Barrie as clear from ‘improper’ accusations as possible, which, as is demonstrated later, also reflects in Birkin’s approach to interpreting evidence.

Even though Piers Dudgeon’s introduction is significantly shorter than Birkin’s it is still possible to trace the approach he takes in analyzing the events of Barrie’s life. This is apparent from the following passage:

“I knew, of course, about the games of pirates and redskins that Uncle Jim played with [the Llewelyn Daviseses]; recalled on stage in the Neverland of Peter Pan. But I was interested to know more about their relationship

35 Birkin Lost Boys xviii
36 Birkin Lost Boys xii
37 Birkin Lost Boys xii
38 Roe 115; Lee 7
39 Birkin Lost Boys xviii
to Barrie and to Daphne, and in particular I wondered what had happened to them when they grew up.”

Dudgeon is, similarly to Birkin, also interested in revealing ‘something new’. Yet, instead of another account describing the Peter Pan games, Dudgeon approaches Barrie’s circle of friends in an attempt to discover the relationships and particularly the results of being a part of Barrie’s life. Contrasted with Birkin’s work, Dudgeon does not maintain the tone by presenting material; instead, he poses questions about what had not been revealed. “One has to wonder,” Dudgeon asks concerning the death of Michael Llewelyn Davies, “what, in a non-tidal pool, could lead to two fit lads drowning.” This approach builds a suspense, which further strengthened by Dudgeon’s rhetoric:

In 1910, tragedy struck again. Sylvia died, also from cancer, again aged only 44. And Barrie made the boys his own. But the deaths continued. In 1915, the eldest brother, George, was killed in the First World War in France, and in 1921 Michael drowned – many believed in a suicide pact with another boy. Almost forty years later, Peter committed suicide. Jack endured depression and ill health and died shortly before Peter. By 1960 Nico, the youngest, was the only surviving brother.

This description illustrates that Dudgeon, in his approach of Barrie, is not satisfied with the usual picture of a man who, from the time he appeared in their lives, devoted most of his energy, along with a significant amount of money, to help the Llewelyn Davies family. While not directly stated at this point, by mentioning all the deaths in one paragraph, Dudgeon constructs foundation to the impression that since Barrie appeared the family fell apart.

While analyses of the biographers’ choices allows to understand the course into which they steer their subject’s life, it is also possible to discover areas such biographers are not willing to approach. This can be demonstrated on the treatment of
Barrie’s short article “Peterkin: A Marvel of Nature”\(^{43}\), which both Birkin and Dudgeon include, although for only as an illustration of other events and not as primary evidence. As all the Barrie’s biographers frequently utilize excerpts from Barrie’s works in order to shed more light to the events of his life, the reason why no other biographer mentions that story, perhaps, the inclination towards sadism:

He came and stood by my side, offering himself mutely for slaughter. Then he sat down on a chair by the fire, and presently I discovered that he was crying.

“What is the matter now?” I demanded fiercely.
“You said you would kick me round the room,” he moaned.
“Well, I won’t do it,” I said, “if you are a good boy.”
“But you said you would do it.
“You don’t mean that you want it?”
“Ay, I want it. You said you would do’t.”
Wondering, I arose and kicked him.
“Is that the way?” he cried in rapture.
“That’s the way,” I said, returning to my chair.
“But,” he complained, “you said you would kick me right round the room.”
I got up again, and made a point of kicking him round the room.
“Kick harder!” he shouted, and so I kicked him into the lobby.\(^{44}\)

Birkin uses “Peterkin” at the end of a passage during which he describes Barrie’s early success which in writing and the fact that Barrie grew close to several children of his friends. Birkin introduces the passage as follows: “a visit from his nephew became the basis of an article in the distinguished *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*\(^{45}\). This, however, appears to be problematic, since a connection of the passage to Barrie would prove to be disastrous for Birkin’s attempt to describe Barrie favourably. In order to stop any discussion, Birkin puts three asterixes below the passage, which not repeated anywhere else in the work, after which Birkin describes Barrie’s attraction to girls: “Six feet three

\(^{43}\) The whole article can be found in Appendix C of the present work
\(^{44}\) Barrie qtd. in Birkin *Lost Boys* 20; in Dudgeon 94-95
\(^{45}\) Birkin *Lost Boys* 19
inches . . . If I had really grown to this it would have made a real difference in my life. [. . . ] My only aim would have been to become a favourite of the ladies which between you and me has always been my sorrowful ambition”46. Dudgeon, introducing the passage in exactly the same way47, is then only able to comment on the passage by informing the readers that: “Friendships between adult males and children outside the family were not uncommon in late Victorian England”48, which can be seen as a significant softening of the potential sadism the passage illustrates. Altogether, both biographers present this material without commenting on the possible implications, even though they often utilize literary works in order to describe events in Barrie’s life. This illustrates that even Dudgeon’s angle, which is highly unfavorable towards Barrie, has a clear delineation and aim that is more complex than simply denigrating the playwright.

In order to demonstrate the angle from which Birkin and Dudgeon approach Barrie, four occasions of bereavement that Barrie experienced, namely that of his brother David, and Sylvia, Michael, and Peter Llewelyn Davies, are utilized as examples of events which are in his biographies connected by means of opposing narratives. In Birkin’s Lost Boys, readers learn that his thirteen-year-old brother’s death left Barrie with a persistent dream of being forever a small boy: “here was the germ, rooted in his mind and soul from the age of six”49. Barrie was later able to realize this dream thanks to the Llewelyn Davies boys, who became Barrie’s frequent playmates and inspiration for Barrie’s most famous creation, Peter Pan or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up50. Over the years, the mutual attachment grew and Barrie became such an inseparable part of their family that he was the first choice for the boys’ guardian when the boys became orphaned in 1910, which is

46 Barrie qtd. in Birkin Lost Boys 21; “To Mrs Fred Oliver.” 21 Dec. 1931. in Meynell 138
47 Dudgeon 94
48 Dudgeon 95
49 Birkin Lost Boys 6
50 Birkin Lost Boys 103
clearly stated in the will written by their mother Sylvia. In 1921, Michael Llewelyn Davies accidentally drowned while bathing with one of his friends which “altered and darkened everything for the rest of his life”. Finally, in 1960, 23 years after Barrie’s death, Peter Llewelyn Davies, suffering from depressions, “walked down into the local underground station and threw himself beneath an on-coming train”.

“One wonders,” asks Birkin, “what fantasy reversion eased Michael into Sandford Pool, and tipped Peter into nothingness at Sloane Square tube station,” to which Dudgeon seems to responds by connecting the events in a contrasting manner. In his narrative, Barrie caused his brother’s death, leaving him with “a serious neurotic conflict” which eventually developed into “the morbidity that is present in the character of Peter Pan”. After meeting the Llewelyn Davies’s boys, Barrie insinuated himself into the family and when Sylvia died, forged her will in order to be the sole guardian. Barrie had a devastating effect on Michael, since “his morbid streak, and its roots in a neurosis and death fixation was being fed to Michael as if through an umbilical cord”. In an attempt to escape Barrie, Michael, suffering from depressions, committed suicide, which is the same solution that Peter used in order to escape his childhood traumas.

While it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions from such summaries, they illustrate the angles from which Birkin and Dudgeon look at Barrie’s life, as well as foreshadow possible problems in both biographies. Birkin approaches Barrie as a stationary character who is shaped by his environment, as a result of which Birkin tends
to describe the events in terms of consequences on Barrie’s life. Since Barrie during his life encountered numerous deaths of immediate family or friends supports Birkin’s sentimental tone, making the resulting portrait uniform to Denis Mackail’s *The Story of J. M. B.* and Janet Dunbar’s *The Man behind the Image*. Because Birkin uses the established and already accepted version of Barrie, he is able to steer evidence to fit the narrative only with feeble argumentation, as is the case with Sylvia’s second will that is discussed later in the present work. According to Norman White, “the fact is that biographical untruths are accepted by audiences if they have been said two or three times and fit in with expectations. There are sanctions of disapproval if you offer truths which are uncanonical; you can’t start a talk or paper by saying, for instance, ‘Gerard Hopkins was a homosexual midget’,“⁶¹ which is for some reviewers comparable to what Dudgeon does⁶². Nevertheless, since Dudgeon chooses an angle opposite to that of Birkin and approaches Barrie as an active character who causes the events of his life, including the aforementioned deaths, Dudgeon is in his biography freed from the necessity to incorporate well known facts of Barrie’s life into a favorable narrative. As a result, his interpretation appears more coherent than Birkin’s occasionally blatant attempts to fit the evidence into his narrative.

Even though Peter Llewelyn Davies’s death is chronologically the last, both Birkin and Dudgeon present it first in order to continue the development of the tone they set. For Birkin, this event proves to be only of limited use since, as was discussed earlier, his approach attempts to reflect on the development of Barrie’s persona which is, at the time of Peter’s death, no longer an option. Yet, it is possible to trace Birkin’s attempt to diminish the possibility of connecting the depressions of Peter, and later also Michael, to Barrie. “On April 5th, 1960,” Birkin informs, “a middle-aged publisher, Peter Llewelyn

---

⁶¹ White 215-16
⁶² Tarr 464
Davies, left the Royal Court Hotel, London, crossed Sloane Square, walked down into the local underground station and threw himself beneath an on-coming train. Eight days later a Coroner’s Jury returned a verdict of ‘suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed’.”⁶³ Birkin, by quoting numerous newspaper titles, establishes as the main cause of Peter’s depression the press since, throughout his life, it kept associating him to the genesis of Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, which Peter “referred to as ‘that terrible masterpiece’”⁶⁴.

Dudgeon, on the other hand, presents Peter’s collection of family letters as the likely cause of Peter’s suicide.

The first part, dealing with the coming together of his father and mother, had gone well, a snapshot of late Victorian grace, charm and dignity; but, wrote Peter to Nanny [Hodgson], ‘The entry on the scene of JMB introduces a strange and unavoidably controversial element into this compilation.’

That this was understatement was clear by December 1946, when Peter was admitting to Nanny that his work on it was ‘melancholy and sad enough’, and by April 1949: ‘Alas, the more one learns of those sad days, the sadder the tale becomes.’ So depressed did the research make him that he took to calling the history *The Morgue*, and eventually had to bring it to an early end.⁶⁵

Barrie’s appearance in the lives of Llewelyn Davies is, thus, early in the biography rendered controversial and Dudgeon strengthens the account by rephrasing Mary Hodgson’s careful choice of words in a following manner: “Barrie had insinuated his way into the family against Arthur [Llewelyn Davies]’s wishes”⁶⁶. According to Dudgeon, the sad days are those with Barrie in the picture, which he illustrates by Peter’s own account: “I am dimly aware of a great many ‘complexes’ in myself, which are traceable to 1907-1910”⁶⁷. However, since there there is no firm evidence which would allow Dudgeon to

---

⁶³ Birkin *Lost Boys* 1
⁶⁴ Birkin *Lost Boys* 1
⁶⁵ Dudgeon 12
⁶⁶ Dudgeon 13
⁶⁷ Llewelyn Davies, Peter, qtd. in Dudgeon 15
confirm his ideas, he consults Daphne du Maurier’s *The Breaking Point* to provide at least a suggestion of Barrie’s ulterior motives: “If, as [‘The Blue Lences’] and other stories in the collection suggest, Peter’s awakening to Barrie’s betrayal of members of his family was the reason for his suicide, how Barrie betray them? ‘The Menace’ suggests child abuse. Another story, ‘No Motive’, makes suicide the endgame for child abuse.”

While approaching the death of Barrie’s brother, David, both biographers chose different evidence even though they agree that the event proved to be Barrie’s inspiration for *Peter Pan*. According to Dudgeon, David Barrie’s obituary appeared in two newspapers: “The first announced it very simply: ‘At Bothwell Academy, on the 29th ult., David Oglivy Barrie, aged 13. The second was very different in tone: ‘At Rothesay, on the 29th ultimo. . . .’” Birkin, without mentioning the discrepancy in the reported location, approaches the bereavement similarly to the death of Peter Llewelyn Davies:

Until he was six, James Barrie lived in the shadow of David. But in January 1867, David was killed in a skating accident on the eve of his fourteenth birthday. Barrie was too young to remember the tragedy with any clarity, his chief memory being that of playing with his younger sister Maggie under the table on which stood David’s coffin.”

Birkin does not provide any additional information as the traditional approach to David’s death fits into his sentimental narrative. Notable, however, is the ellipsis Birkin uses while quoting Barrie’s biography of his mother, *Margaret Oglivy*:

> When I became a man and he was still a boy of thirteen, I wrote a little paper called ‘Dead This Twenty Years,’ which was about a similar tragedy in another woman’s life. . .

> When I became a man . . . he was still a boy of thirteen.

---

68 Dudgeon 33  
69 Dudgeon 72  
70 Birkin *Lost Boys* 3  
71 Barrie *Oglivy* 19  
72 Barrie in Birkin *Lost Boys* 5
While the content remains of the text remains the same, Birkin is, by finishing Barrie’s sentence abruptly, able to create material which can he later use for describing Peter Pan as a character based on Barrie’s mourning of his late brother David: “Perhaps we can find here, as in his childhood games of acting out adventures, the beginnings of his love play-acting, performance, and theater.”\(^{73}\)

Because Dudgeon selects the second newspaper article as trustworthy, he is able to turn the interpretation in a completely different way, even though the credibility is, compared to Birkin, smaller. Dudgeon begins his interpretation by stating that he “discovered some intriguing inconsistencies in reports concerning David’s death . . . which indicate that there was more to it than we have been told”\(^{74}\). Specifically, apart from a different place of death in the obituary, also a different cause of death on David’s death certificate: inflammation of the brain\(^{75}\). This is used in order to support the idea that it was Barrie who caused his brother’s death:

Suppose Jamie had travelled from Kirriemuir to Bothwell Academy with Alick and David at the end of the Christmas holiday in order to celebrate David’s birthday with him, in particular to go skating with him, taking a new pair of birthday skates to Rothesay. Suppose Jamie had been the ‘friend [who] set off on the one pair of skates which they shared’, and ‘accidentally’ knocked David down and was the one who ‘fractured his skull’.\(^{76}\)

None of the events described in the passage can be definitely proven, however, it demonstrates Dudgeon’s ability to differentiate his narrative from the canonical descriptions. On the other hand, because of the second newspaper article, this account also cannot be proven wrong. Moreover, “it explains the emotional dynamic between

\(^{73}\) Birkin *Lost Boys* lxxiii
\(^{74}\) Dudgeon 70-71
\(^{75}\) Dudgeon 71
\(^{76}\) Dudgeon 73, brackets in orig.
mother and son,”77 namely the question Dudgeon poses earlier: “Jamie felt a very strong need to put himself in front of Margaret, after David’s death, almost to plead his filial position with her. Why? And why did she resist him so?”78. Finally, Dudgeon also indicates that the events concerning David’s death were important for Barrie’s creation of Peter Pan; yet in Dudgeon’s point view of the events such creation possesses significantly darker undertone as, according to Dudgeon, “death had been ‘a thing’ for Jim ever since the death of his brother David,”79 which, as is discussed later in the present work, eventually manifests in Dudgeon interpretation of Michael Llewelyn Davies’s death.

Another event appropriate for illustrating interpretative choices is Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’s death and the legitimacy of Barrie’s guardianship of her five sons. Approximately six months after Sylvia died, Barrie found a document entitled “Sylvia’s Will”, which he transcribed and sent to Emma du Maurier, grandmother of the Llewelyn Davies’s boys:

What I wd like wd be if Jimmy wd come to Mary & that the two together would be looking after the boys & the house & helping each other. And it would be so nice for Mary.

I would like Mama & JMB & Guy & Crompton to be trustees & guardians to the boys . . . JMB I know will do everything in his power to help our boys – to advise, to comfort, to sympathise in all their joys & sorrows.80

The transcription was at the time enough to quieten all objections of the boys’ relatives, however, a closer reading renders it problematic: Barrie is, as is the case in “Notes for a Will” which Sylvia wrote four years earlier81, always referred to in a formal tone either

77 Dudgeon 73
78 Dudgeon 71
79 Dudgeon 172
80 Llewelyn Davies, Sylvia qtd. in Birkin JMBarrie.com
81 Llewelyn Davies, Sylvia qtd. in Birkin Lost Boys 154-55
as JMB or J. M. Barrie, except for the first mention of him in Barrie’s transcription. Barrie’s earlier biographers have dealt with this discrepancy by concealing it. While Denis Mackail solves the problem by writing a summary of the events, Janet Dunbar forestalls questioning of the material by replacing ‘Jimmy’ by ‘JMB’, which makes the passage consistent and, therefore, allows her to quote the whole passage.

The problem the will poses grew exponentially after Birkin discovered the original will, which revealed that Barrie wrote ‘Jimmy’ where Sylvia had clearly written ‘Jenny’, Mary Hodgson’s sister. Lisa Chaney explains the event in what is perhaps the most detached view any biographer has taken since the discovery of the original will: “This was presumably done because both the Llewelyn Davies and du Maurier families were dissatisfied with the position into which Barrie had manoeuvred himself.” However, this is not an explanation neither Birkin nor Dudgeon lean towards – the description of Barre as a person who ‘manoeuvred himself’ into the position of a father proves to be too unfavorable for Birkin and, at the same time, it does not expose Barrie’s ulterior motives in order to deserve Dudgeon’s content. In Birkin’s biography, the event is described as follows:

When Sylvia’s second Will was found several months after her death, Barrie made a careful, hand-written copy. . . . Part of the second paragraph, as transcribed by Barrie, read: ‘What I would like would be if Jimmy would come to Mary, and that the two together would be looking after the boys and the house and helping each other. And it would be so nice for Mary.’ In fact Sylvia had not written ‘Jimmy’ but ‘Jenny’ – Mary Hodgson’s sister. The mistranslation was no doubt unintentional, although the word ‘Jenny’ is clear enough, and Barrie can have had no illusions that his presence at Campden Hill Square would be ‘nice for Mary’.

---

82 Mackail 365
83 Dunbar 191
84 Chaney 284
85 Birkin *Lost Boys* 193-94
While the beginning of the passage does not present any issues, it is the last, apologetic part that lacks convincing argumentation. According to Birkin, Barrie knew well that his presence would not be appreciated by Mary, the original guardian of the Davies boys, who was also later driven away as a result of incessant conflicts. Moreover, Sylvia’s handwriting is ‘clear enough’; it is implausible that Barrie would misread while being ‘careful’ which renders ‘the mistranslation’ as anything but ‘unintentional’. Such an attempt to render Barrie’s actions favorably by interpreting the event as a mere mistake in spite of obvious contradictions can be again traced to the notion of transference: “When a biographer identifies with the subject, the emotions are bound to be more intense, and the result is the blindness that resides in idealization”.

Dudgeon, on the other hand, takes the opposite approach and, instead of apologizing for Barrie, bases his argument on the fact that Barrie, on the day Sylvia died, told Jack Llewelyn Davies that Barrie and Sylvia were to marry: “On the day his mother died, Jack was informed by Jim that Sylvia had agreed on her deathbed to marry him. . . . That Jim did this is either a mark of utter insensitivity or it was a lie and intended to introduce the idea that henceforth he would act as father to the boys”. Indeed, even Birkin admits that it is unlikely for the betrothal to be true as it was never mentioned while Sylvia was still alive. Hence, Dudgeon confronts Birkin’s conclusions by claiming that for Barrie, the mistranscription was necessary in order to ensure his entitlement, describing the event as “Jim’s abduction of the boys”:

Barrie did not yet feel entirely secure. And all of a sudden – at some point in March 1911 – a document was found, headed ‘Sylvia’s Will’. . . In an extraordinary manoeuvre Jim copied the whole thing out with one alteration: he changed ‘Jenny’ to ‘Jimmy’. . . . Andrew Birkin was aware

---

86 Dudgeon 208-10
87 Edel Transference 286; Edel Writing Lives 68-69
88 Dudgeon 191
89 Birkin Lost Boys 191
90 Dudgeon 194
of it, but writes on the jmbarrie.co.uk web site, that Barrie substituted his name for Jenny’s ‘no doubt inadvertently’. . . . Unfortunately for Barrie, the original and his copy still exist. There is no mistaking ‘Jenny’ for ‘Jimmy’. That Jim made the alteration exposes him utterly.\(^91\)

The passage above illustrates that since Dudgeon refuses the traditional portrait of nice Barrie that previous biographers take, he is able to deal with Barrie’s mischief with a clarity that Birkin’s interpretation lacks. Moreover, Dudgeon’s address of the event is in union with the facts that Sylvia Llewelyn Davies did not, even in her first draft of her will in 1906, wish Barrie to become the sole guardian\(^92\), and that Barrie’s claim to the boys were disputed by some of the boys’ relatives\(^93\).

Birkin’s transference-driven interpretative choice violates the rule that, in factual biographies, biographers are only allowed to imagine the stories to the point where the narrative is still firmly based on presented evidence\(^94\). In words of Homer Carey Hockett: “The quest must be for facts, even if they upset one’s pet notions”\(^95\). Birkin goes in the defense of his point of view as far as to publicly accuse Dudgeon, even though Dudgeon’s interpretation is far better supported: “[Dudgeon] repeats his allegation that ‘Barrie wilfully’ changed the names and ‘in this way, he made himself guardian of Sylvia’s five sons.’ Absolute rubbish! Changing ‘Jenny’ to ‘Jimmy’ changed nothing!”\(^96\). Such statement is produced to support Birkin’s former elucidation that “even before the discovery of the will, it was clear to all concerned that only Barrie had both the time and the means to assume full responsibility for the boys”\(^97\), rendering his own narrative inevitable. Barrie’s wealth, however, does not change the fact that entrusting children to

\(^{91}\) Dudgeon 195-96
\(^{92}\) Llewelyn Davies, Sylvia qtd. in Birkin Lost Boys 154; Dunbar 192
\(^{93}\) Dudgeon 194, Birkin Lost Boys 195
\(^{94}\) Edel Writing Lives 33, “Manifesto” 1
\(^{95}\) Hockett 41
\(^{97}\) Birkin Lost Boys 194-95
someone outside the family, especially when the sexuality of such a man is at the time wondered about\textsuperscript{98}, could be, without a will of the dying mother, doubtful. The ‘inevitability’ of the event, which Birkin describes, is, however, not an evidence, but rather the lack of it\textsuperscript{99} and leaves Birkin with no more than a lament: “I sometimes regret ever having spotted Barrie’s mistranscription of Sylvia’s Will, since it has given writers like Dudgeon ammunition on which to hang their own dubious theories”\textsuperscript{100}. Indeed, without the original will, Birkin’s presentation of the events connected to Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’ death would be plausible.

Altogether, the inclusion of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’ will proves to be a difficult task for biographers who attempt to draw Barrie in favorable light. Janet Dunbar solves the problem by covering at least some of the discrepancies by changing Barrie’s name to JMB, which is, however, no longer possible after Andrew Birkin reveals the original will and, therefore, also the fact that Barrie falsified it. Birkin’s attachment to the positive aspects of Barrie’s personality then proves to be too strong for Birkin to discuss the will without contradicting himself. On the other hand, Dudgeon’s view, which is not based on the early biographies, allows him to pose interpretation encompassing the evidence without problems.

Last event in Barrie’s life the present work analyses is incorporating Michael Llewelyn Davies’s drowning into Birkin’s and Dudgeon’s biographies. It illustrates a decision between two possibilities, accidental drowning and suicide, which are closely connected to two statements of one of Michael’s friends, Robert Boothby. The choice of which of those statements is given more importance then determinates the biographers’

\textsuperscript{98} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} 130; Dudgeon 231; Chaney 277
\textsuperscript{99} Worthen 228
interpretations and the context into which Boothby’s letters are included. Birkin introduces the event, again, by foregrounding Barrie:

At about eleven o’clock Barrie put on his hat and coat, took the letter and went down in the lift to post it. He was about to leave the building when a stranger came up to him. He introduced himself as a reporter from a London newspaper, and wondered whether Sir James could oblige him with a few more facts about the drowning. . . . Barrie needed no further details. He knew that Michael could barely swim a stroke.¹⁰¹

Birkin, intruding Barrie’s mind, has the answer at hand – since Michael could not swim and died in a Stanford Lake, Birkin presents it as a drowning accident with the help of two obituaries¹⁰². This allows him to consider the event closed and to deal rather with the effect that Michael’s death had on Barrie: “‘It may be said . . . that it was [Cynthia Asquith] who preserved [Barrie’s] reason, for throughout that almost unimaginable week-end there were moments of terrible danger.’ The ‘terrible danger’ was Barrie’s overwhelming desire to end his own life – a life rendered utterly pointless without Michael.”¹⁰³ It is clear that Birkin does not, even in this case, abandon the sentimental tone; even though there is a hint of doubt present when Birkin discusses the event few years later elsewhere:

For some reason Nico said he preferred to think it was suicide = it was Michael’s choice, not blind fate. Having lost my son Anno in a car crash (he was asleep in the back = meaningless fate) I couldn’t disagree more, but perhaps suicide seemed more tolerable to [Michael’s brothers]? I’m 80% sure Michael’s death was an accident.¹⁰⁴

Evidently, Michael’s brother Nicholas did not agree with Birkin’s interpretation and Birkin defends his findings by alluding to his personal story in another example of transference.

¹⁰¹ Birkin Lost Boys 291
¹⁰² Birkin Lost Boys 293
¹⁰³ Birkin Lost Boys 294
However, immediately before the account of Michael’s death, Birkin, presents two statements by Robert Boothby which, although capable of providing evidence contrasting to Birkin’s explanation, he includes in a context that further strengthens the aforementioned image of Barrie’s sadness. “Nico, like Michael, shared most of his adolescent problems with Barrie,”105 writes Birkin in an attempt to connect the following not with a cause of Michael’s death, but rather as an illustration of the closeness between Michael and Barrie or Michael and his other friend, Rupert Buxton, respectively:

There was a morbid atmosphere about it. I remember going there one day and it almost overwhelmed me, and I was glad to get away. We were going back to Oxford in Michael’s car, and I said, ‘It’s a relief to get away from that flat’, and he said, ‘Yes it is.’ But next day he’d be writing to Barrie as usual. . . . It was an extraordinary relationship, an unhealthy relationship. I don’t mean homosexual, I mean in a mental sense. It was morbid. [. . .] I think Michael and his brothers would have been better off living in poverty than with that odd, morbid little genius.106

Buxton was exceptionally clever, but he had a morbid influence on Michael: he was dark, gloomy, saturnine, with an almost suicidal streak in him.107

According to Birkin’s explanation, because Barrie’s mental state after Michael’s death is quickly deteriorating108 and because Rupert Buxton drowned in the lake alongside Michael, the ‘morbid influence’ is accounted solely to Buxton109. Moreover, that Birkin is able to approach the former statement solely as a favorable description of Michael’s close relationship to Barrie reveals the degree of selectivity in Birkin’s close reading or, perhaps, a refusal to pursue the topic further: “The last 7 pages of my book deal almost exclusively with the effect that Michael's death had on Barrie – what more,” Andrew

105 Birkin Lost Boys 281
106 Boothby in Birkin Lost Boys 282-83
107 Boothby in Birkin Lost Boys 284-85
108 Birkin Lost Boys 295
109 Birkin Lost Boys 293
Birkin asks, “is there to be said?”\textsuperscript{110} While it is possible that Birkin has accounted for all the pieces from which Michael Llewelyn Davies’s death is composed, Dudgeon is able to create a different picture by connecting such pieces in another order and context. This allows Dudgeon to comment on Boothby’s accounts in a manner contrasting to Birkin’s shallow reading, although with a similar amount of bias: “This was the nightmare world – the Satanic dark side of J. M. Barrie – from which Michael was endeavouring to escape when he walked with Rupert Buxton to Sandford that day in April 1921”\textsuperscript{111}. Buxton’s ‘morbid influence’ from the second letter is then referred to as “Buxton wanted Michael to get away”\textsuperscript{112} even if it means death.

Dudgeon does not choose between Rupert Buxton and Barrie in order to allot the blame for Michael Llewelyn Davies’s death because he suggests that they both played a considerable role, although a very different one. While Buxton, as was illustrated earlier, bolstered Michael’s decision to commit suicide, Barrie is shown guilty for steering Michael’s thoughts that way. According to Dudgeon, “Michael’s reason was clear to Jack [Llewelyn Davies]’s wife, Gerrie: ‘It was very bad for Michael to be so much the centre of Barrie’s world’”\textsuperscript{113}. Dudgeon specifies this by explaining that it was actually due to being in the center of the Peter Pan fantasy during the frequent sessions with Barrie, which he interprets as highly suggestive, with the possibility of influencing the young Llewelin Davieses\textsuperscript{114}. Dudgeon then, again, utilizes Barrie’s works; however, instead of using them as evidence, Dudgeon describe the effect they had on the boys: “The question is in what ways the boys’ minds were affected by these sessions, and you only have to look at the nihilistic and morbid ideas in Jim’s novels and plays for the answer”\textsuperscript{115}. Specifically,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Dudgeon 238
  \item Dudgeon 236
  \item Dudgeon 24
  \item Dudgeon 170-72
  \item Dudgeon 172
\end{itemize}
Dudgeon alludes to Peter Pan’s famous line accredited to Michael’s brother George\textsuperscript{116}: 
\begin{quote}
\textit{(with a drum beating in his chest as if he were a real boy at last)} To die will be an awfully big adventure\textsuperscript{117} which, according to Dudgeon, represents “the clearest expression of Jim’s obsession with death”\textsuperscript{118}.
\end{quote}

After establishing death as a main motif of Barrie’s Peter Pan fantasies enacted with Llewelyn Davieses, Dudgeon is able to discuss the influence it had, further supporting his idea that Barrie was at least partially responsible for Michael’s suicide. “From 1905, ‘to be a real boy’ was to pass over to the other side”\textsuperscript{119}, states Dudgeon as an allusion to Barrie’s stage direction for Peter Pan quoted above. Dudgeon later draws on the fact that during one of Barrie’s sessions with the boys, the games were centered around the two tombstones which can be found in Kensington Gardens: “Their initial destiny was some unspecified after-life, later developed into the Never Never Land – a child’s paradise, haven of the Lost Boys, abounding in pleasures designed to gratify a boy’s appetite for blood. Such visions of delight led George to make the not unnatural declaration”\textsuperscript{120}. Dudgeon’s careful choice of words are chosen in order to depict death as ‘their initial destiny’, which can mean both the attempt to reach the tombstones as a part of a game or, as was Peter and Michael’s case, as a part of life.

The approach of the biographers to Michael Llewelyn Davies’s death, again, illustrates their subjective decision of what kind of person Barrie was. As was the case with Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’s will, Birkin attempts to establish a point of view which drives the attention away from a possible interpretation that Barrie might have possibly been at least partially guilty for Michael’s death. Birkin’s presentation of the event is

\textsuperscript{116} Tatar 108
\textsuperscript{117} Barrie Peter Pan 3.1.180
\textsuperscript{118} Dudgeon 173
\textsuperscript{119} Dudgeon 173
\textsuperscript{120} Birkin Lost Boys 69
again challenged only by the materials which Birkin himself decides to include. Dudgeon is able to dispute Birkin’s view only by pointing to the fact that Michael and Robert Buxton were, according to a witness, not struggling in the water\textsuperscript{121} and that their bodies were clasped together when pulled out\textsuperscript{122}. Moreover, Birkin grants the largest information value to Barrie’s grief, putting the fact Barrie was, before Michael died, numerous times accused of having a ‘morbid influence’ on the boy, which is the point where Dudgeon, on the other hand, begins his analysis. It is also possible to see the influence the context has on the evidence: Birkin is able to background the unfavorable descriptions of Barrie by presenting them as illustrations of Barrie and Michael’s mutual closeness, while Dudgeon emphasizes the negative aspects of Boothby’s statements by connecting them directly to Michael’s death.

\textsuperscript{121} Dudgeon 240
\textsuperscript{122} Birkin \textit{Lost Boys} 293; Dudgeon 242
Conclusion

The present work describes how different approaches allow biographers, in this case Andrew Birkin and Piers Dudgeon, to focus on their subject from a different angle, establishing Leon Edel’s idea that “the biographer seeks to restore a sense of life to the inert materials that survive an individual’s passage on this earth – seeks to recapture some part of what was once tissue and brain, and above all, feeling, and to shape a likeness of the vanished figure”\(^{123}\). That the part of the vanished figure is not necessarily the same is also valid for James Matthew Barrie, whom Birkin describes in a highly favorable angle while Dudgeon manages to achieve the opposite.

The resulting biographies of Barrie are based on the tone both biographers reveal during the introductions. Setting the sentimental tone by approaching Barrie as a static character allows Birkin to portrait Barrie as a victim of the consequences. This approach is notable for depriving Barrie of any blame for the events that happened during his life. Birkin’s treatment of sources is sometimes questionable for two reasons: Firstly, Birkin admits that he at times quotes doubtful sources even though he has more credible ones at hand, which is illustrated on the usage of an early version of Barrie’s “Dedication to the Five”. Secondly, since he often utilizes Nicolas Llewelyn Davis’s comments from interviews and letters, there is a possibility that Birkin’s biography is steered towards the way which Nicholas preferred. Lastly, the analysis of Birkin’s introduction reveals a high degree of transference which is manifested in one of Birkin’s interpretative choices, particularly in the manner of describing Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’s will and the death of her son Michael. On the other hand, while Dudgeon’s introduction to his biography is significantly shorter, it still provides enough material to depict him as an investigator who reveals discrepancies in the previous accounts of Barrie’s life. The advantage of such

\(^{123}\) Edel Writing Lives 33, emphasis added
approach then appears to be the ability to divert from the usual choices that are, in case of Birkin’s favorable point of view, expected. This allows Dudgeon to integrate into his narrative passages what other biographers struggle with.

In the subsequent analysis of both biographies, four events were selected in order to demonstrate the strategies the biographers utilize to incorporate events of Barrie’s life into the narratives they chose. The present work first discusses the suicide of Peter Llewelyn Davies, which for Birkin’s approach proves to be of limited use, since Birkin’s biography focuses solely on illustrating the formation of Barrie’s personality. Therefore, Birkin, similarly to his treatment of David Barrie’s death, utilizes the passage only to set the tone. Apart from that, David Barrie’s death is by Birkin also used to show an early inspiration for Barrie’s Peter Pan. Dudgeon’s approach to those two events is contrasting with Birkin’s strategy. Since Dudgeon attempts to describe the effect Barrie had on others, he uses Peter’s suicide in order to demonstrate Barrie’s ‘morbid influence’, a phrase which Dudgeon later incorporates in connection to Michael Llewelyn Davies’s death. It is the account of Davie’s death when Dudgeon begins to fully realize, as he connects the existing evidence in a manner that suggests, that James Matthew Barrie was connected to his brother’s death. While this cannot be definitively proven, it also cannot be disputed.

The last two events this thesis discusses are Barrie’s mistranscription of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies’s will and the drowning of her son Michael. The limitations of Birkin’s sentimental approach are clear, as he is unable to interpret such events in order to fit into his narrative. On the other hand, Dudgeon includes both of these accounts, namely Barrie’s falsification of the will and the drowning (which Dudgeon reveals to be a suicide), because it fits the angle he chose. In conclusion, by revealing both the weak and the strong sides of these different approaches, it becomes clear that, indeed, no biography can be definitive as the number of interpretations of a single event is countless. Therefore,
it is neither suitable nor possible to say that one of the resulting biographies provides a more accurate picture of Barrie’s personality: They are both accurate in describing Barrie in the biographers’ necessarily subjective angles.
Works Cited


Resumé

Résumé

The focus of the present work is the possibility of interpreting evidence from the life of a single person in various ways. This is demonstrated of works of Andrew Birkin, *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, and Piers Dudgeon, *Captivated: J. M. Barrie, Daphne du Maurier and the Dark Side of Neverland*, which describe the life of a Scottish playwright James Matthew Barrie from contrasting points of view. First part of the present work analyses the tone the biographers set in order to explain the choices in their biographies. Second part analyses four selected events of Barrie’s life, which both biographers interprets differently. Apart from that, the present work explains the choices the biographers made in order to create the personality they wanted.
Make the right choices on a daily basis so that you may live an authentic life that is true to who you want to be. Be brave and bold with the choices you make. You are free to make whatever choice you want, but you are not free from the consequences of the choice.

Anonymous. Decisions are the hardest thing to make especially when it is a choice between where you should be and where you want to be.

Anonymous. May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.

Nelson Mandela. The 3 C’s of life: Choices, Chances, Changes. You must make a choice to take a chance or your life never change.

J.M. Barrie, Scottish dramatist and novelist who is best known as the creator of Peter Pan, the boy who refused to grow up. The son of a weaver, Barrie never recovered from the shock he received at six from a brother’s death and its grievous effect on his mother, who dominated his childhood and.

Encyclopaedia Britannica's editors oversee subject areas in which they have extensive knowledge, whether from years of experience gained by working on that content or via study for an advanced degree. Last Updated: Jun 15, 2020 See Article History. Alternative Titles: Sir James Matthew Barrie, 1st Baronet.