

An Evaluation of Fantasy as Antifantasy

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*Cosmological Implication of
Consciousness and Fictionality*

By

Makoto Kuroda

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part 1

1 Transformation of Fantasy and Irony	2
2 Metafiction and Fairy Dust.....	7
3 Neverland—Lost Faith	13
4 The Ambivalence of Make Believe and Convention.....	18
5 Heartless Children	25
6 Pan-religion and Peter	32
7 Peter’s Ignorance and Mysterious Wisdom.....	42
8 Kiss and Riddle.....	56
9 Good Form and Reflection: Captain Hook’s Melancholia	67
10 Fraudulent Narration: Deconstruction in Antifantasy.....	78
11 Postmodernist Strategy of Antifantasy: The Ridiculous in <i>The Last Unicorn</i>	92
12 Hookian Anti-hero and Deified Ignorance	101

Part 2

1 Actualism and Antifantasy: Quantum Logic, Paradox and Impossible Worlds	112
2 Universal Unicorn: Ontological Merkmal in <i>The Last Unicorn</i>	157

3 Meaningless Meanings: Ambiguity, Inconsistency, Sorcery and Dream in <i>The Last Unicorn</i>	177
4 Fabulous Hero in Antifantasy.....	200
5 The Ridiculous and Fraud: Aspiration for the Eternal in Antifantasy....	221
6 Rhetoric of Nonexistence: Impossible Simile and Unrealizable Scenes in <i>The Last Unicorn</i>	245
7 Red Bull: The Shadow of Ignorance and Blindness	266
8 Supernatural Systems Theory and Antifantasy: Space-Time Equivalence Principle and Persona Shifts.....	288
Bibliography.....	334
Index.....	337

PART 1

TRANSFORMATION OF FANTASY AND IRONY

It is only towards the end of the 20th century that the literary genre of fantasy seemed to gain its rightful citizenship in the field of literary research. For example, it is precisely because Brian Attebery actively evaluated the existence of fantasy literature as an established method of literary expression that he sought to trace the trajectory of “the tradition of fantasy literature in the United States”, in *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin*, (1980). As the subtitle suggests, the scope of the “tradition” covered by this book goes back to Washington Irving, following Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, and using L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* (1900) as a turning point, Attebery traces the existence of Ray Bradbury and others in the lineage of the “Baum tradition”. By acknowledging Ursula K. le Guin’s works as one of the most complete forms of modern fantasy, the study completes the developmental course of fantasy literature in the United States up to 1980.

Prior to this, several research books had dealt with fantasy, but they often took the form of genre criticism rather than evaluating the literary value of the works themselves; they regarded fantasy as a cultural phenomenon and an object of psychological study. It is an undeniable fact that those who dealt with fantasy were operating within the framework of social phenomena analysis.

It is true that arguments in defense of fantasy have existed for a long time. C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien adopted the term “sub-creation” to evaluate the significance of creative activity as a means of “positive escapism” to better observe the real world. However, it is safe to say that their arguments were not strictly literary theories by scholars, but were made from the subjective standpoint of practitioners involved in the creation of fantasy literature.¹

¹ Tolkien himself did not use the word “fantasy” to refer to his works. In his lecture “On Fairy-Stories”(1938), in which he defended his literary career, he used the term “fairy-story” to refer to his ideal work. This is probably in line with George

The trend in literary criticism was to dismiss such views as archaic, applying Freudian psychology to them—as seen in Rosemary Jackson’s *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*—or analyzing them as social phenomena through structuralist theory, as Tsvetan Todorov did in *The Fantastic* (1975).

In particular, Jackson did not attempt to evaluate Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-5), which sparked the modern fantasy literature trend, and in Todorov’s case, the work was not in his sights at all. Moreover, what Todorov defined “the fantastic”—the hesitation felt by one who knows only natural laws when confronted with a seemingly supernatural phenomenon—did not encompass fantasy in the general sense, but rather the psychological horror novels once popular in France. He chose a group of works with very limited specific tendencies and concluded they would likely disappear. This prophecy failed spectacularly; fantasy survived and flourished, and researchers like Attebery, have since sought to unearth a “tradition of fantasy in the United States,” even if the existence of such a cohesive tradition remains somewhat dubious.

Fantasy became a central body in literary trends during the second half of the 20th century. In many respects, Attebery’s *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin*, was a landmark study. He regarded *The Lord of the Rings* as the epitome of the genre and sought to positively evaluate contemporary works under its direct influence. Whether one accepts *The Lord of the Rings* as a valuable work of literature, has become an important indicator of one’s viewpoint on fantasy. It is noteworthy that Edmund Wilson refused to acknowledge its literary merit,

McDonald’s adoption of the term “fairytale” in “The Fantastic Imagination,” which also describes his motivation for creation. Incidentally, Tolkien’s comrade C. S. Lewis used the term “science fiction” to describe the specific genre, but the adjective “fantastic” is also used in his essay. He divides what is commonly referred to as science fiction into several subcategories, some impeaching and others defending, but he cites some of the works published in the American magazine *Fantasy and Science Fiction* as examples of what is of particular interest to him. It has elements that depict supernatural subjects imaginatively. (“On Science Fiction”, in *Other Worlds*, 1975. p. 67)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* also lists the first occurrence of the word “fantasy” as “a genre of literary composition” in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, published in 1949. And its further examples include M. F. Rodell’s, “Mystery belongs to the vast category of escapist novels of Western romance, historical fiction, and fantasy other than Satire”, (*Mystery Fiction* ii. 4, 1954), and F. Brown’s “Fantasy deals with things that don’t and can’t exist, and science fiction deals with things that can exist and will appear someday.” (*Angels & Spaceships* 9, 1955).

despite the fantasy craze it caused in the U. S.² C. N. Manlove, in *Modern Fantasy* (1975), devoted a chapter to Tolkien while remaining dismissive of the work's literary value. Tolkien either gained fanatical followers, was completely ignored, or was fiercely criticized.

In light of this, Attebery represents a key perspective in the American acceptance of fantasy—a country where the genre had not previously taken deep root. He discussed the significance of the American fantasy culminating in le Guin and dared to consider a “tradition” prior to Tolkien's influence by examining writers like Ray Bradbury.

To put it simply, however, though Attebery accepted fantasy favorably, he misunderstood its essence. That is, while attempting to discuss fantasy in the broadest sense, he failed to grasp the phenomenon revealed as fantasy in the most subtle and strict sense of its literary genre.

It is often pointed out that the term “fantasy” is very difficult to define. Attebery himself later wrote *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992), in which he presents two contrasting definitions:

1. Fantasy is a form of popular escapist literature that combines stock characters and devices—wizards, dragons, magic sword, and the like—into a predictable plot in which the perennially understaffed forces of good triumph over a monolithic evil.

2. Fantasy is a sophisticated mode of storytelling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of established orders of society and thought. Arguably the major fictional mode of the late twentieth century, it draws upon contemporary ideas about sign systems and the indeterminacy of meaning and at the same time recaptures the vitality and freedom of nonmimetic traditional forms such as epic, folktale, romance, and myth. (p.1)

These represent the two ends of the spectrum for Attebery.

While this tolerance is a commendable quality in Attebery as a critic, when he wrote his 1980 study, he likely thought he would not revisit the topic. However, by 1992, he was forced to reconsider the genre through the lens of postmodernism and metafiction. This reflected both a change in the times and the development of Attebery's own understanding. But what if the genre we call fantasy has possessed this problematic, “meta” character from its very inception?

² Ref., Edmund Wilson, “Oo, Those Awful Orcs!” *Nation* 182 (14 April 1956), pp. 312-3

Attebery rightly traces the emergence of fantasy from the fairy tales of German Romanticism. There is a close relationship between the German Romantics and the fantasy movement, as asserted in Marianne Thalmann's *The Romantic Fairy Tale* (1964). The British writer George McDonald, who influenced Lewis and Tolkien, was the catalysts for the 20th-century revival. McDonald was directly influenced by the German Romantics, opening a horizon that became the source of modern fantasy. Thalmann discussed the literary fairy tale (Kunst Märchen) of the German Romantics in the context of modern Romanticism and its influence on surrealism. Indeed, fantasy works like McDonald's have taken a more modern form that includes these philosophical speculations. McDonald should be considered the founder of modern fantasy.

Beyond the "sub-creation" of other worlds, there is an ironic mechanism in the presentational mode of fiction that must not be overlooked. The genre of fantasy—describing events not considered possible—is paradoxical in itself, interfering with the coordinate systems of both "fiction" and "reality." In recent years, the concept of "metafiction" has interacted with conventional fantasy to generate postmodern works with a high degree of deviation from realism. Irony is a key factor in this metafictional space-time. The introduction of fantasy often manifested as a desire for a religious substitute amidst the collapse of traditional universal views. George MacDonald's motivation was a typical example. Fantasy was sought as an alternative to traditional Christian beliefs that could no longer be taken literally, providing a "psychological metaphysics" compatible with rational intelligence.

As with the German Romantics, irony was a dialectical means to overcome the conflict between the desire to "believe" in eternal values and the realization that conventional knowledge could no longer be believed literally. This spirit of irony incorporates nihilism, subverting the act of "believing" while creating a new space-time. This aligns with the contemporary awareness Attebery identified in his second definition of fantasy. This description of thought resulted in the *Märchen* of the German Romantics, where faith and disbelief are seamlessly united. Depending on the fluctuation, either faith or disbelief comes to the surface. Typical examples of the former are Wackenroder and Novalis; examples of the latter are Brentano and E. T. A. Hoffmann. While Romanticism is often linked to "belief in the unknown," the "ingenious expression of immanent disbelief"

is its other face.³ This study will highlight this nihilistic aspect and survey the ironic mechanisms actively introduced in fantasy works.

³ This mechanism of German Romantic irony is noted by G. R. Thompson, in *Poe's Fiction: Romantic Irony in the Gothic Tales*, the University of Wisconsin Press, (1973.) Thompson discusses in detail the relationship between irony and "transcendentalism," which later came to be adopted by Jackson and others in order to derisively call Tolkien's theory of the creation of fantasy literature, in a subtle relationship between Poe and the German Romantics.

METAFICTION AND FAIRY DUST

In *The Tradition of Fantasy in American Literature*, Attebery attempts to contrast Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* with Tolkien's concept of literary creation, which aimed to construct an entirely independent "otherworld". Attebery begins by noting that Beagle was strongly influenced by Tolkien in this regard.

Peter Beagle is one of the great appreciators of Tolkien. His essay on "Tolkien's Magic Ring" expresses the delight that many of us felt on discovering *The Lord of the Rings*. It points to Tolkien's own faith in his materials as a source of strength, and it describes the sense Tolkien conveys that his story and the world within it were found rather than invented.⁴ But it has little to say about *how* Tolkien makes his commitment infectious, and

⁴ Taking great care not to make the reader feel that the world of the story being told is an artificial structure fabricated by the author's hand, Tolkien introduced a fictional tome, "The Red Book of Westmarch" in his work, and he posed as if he were merely a commentator to the literature and presented the world of *The Lord of the Rings* to the reader. This is what Attebery means when he says that it was "found rather than invented," and that is why he appreciates Tolkien's unique invention of literary expression, which is thoroughly committed to otherworldly realism. Attebery disagrees with Beagle's approach to his work, arguing that the way in which Beagle's world is constructed presents too blatantly processed fictionality to the reader. However, if Beagle's method is one of the metafictional attempts of postmodernism to overcome the traditional practice of presenting the narrative world, Tolkien's method of conceiving false realism is itself another attempt to overcome the convention of fictional world-building, representing a particular metafictional mechanism. It is interesting to note that Attebery himself later pointed out in *Strategies of Fantasy* that this mechanism, in which fiction itself is conscious of the framework of fiction and destroys that framework, can also be applied to *The Lord of the Rings*. (pp. 40-41) As Attebery notes, this approach came to dominate fantasy literature at the end of the 20th century. (p. 46) The pioneer of this technique was Barrie, and Peter Beagle was the pioneer in introducing into fantasy another typical post-modernist metafictional strategy pointed out by Attebery, in which the characters themselves speak of themselves as characters in the work world. (p. 47).

that should be the main concern of anyone who intends to follow in his footsteps.

p. 158

It is undeniable that Beagle—who wrote *The Last Unicorn* in 1968—and the American fantasy writers of the 1970s were heavily influenced by Tolkien. The creative method of fantasy, which frees thought from the trivialities of the real world to open a new realm of ideas, holds great appeal for breaking through modern psychological blockages. This influence is even more evident in Ursula K. le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), which is treated with the greatest importance in Attebery's study.

However, in this instance, Attebery speaks in a tone that suggests he harbors some doubt regarding Beagle's approach to interpreting Tolkien. It seems that this stems not so much from any deficiency in the quality of Beagle's essay on Tolkien, but rather from a certain prejudice that Attebery himself may hold toward Beagle. Let's examine that a little more.

Attebery goes on to introduce Beagle's career as a writer:

Before Beagle attempted a fantasy he wrote a funny, offbeat ghost story called *A Fine and Private Place*. The type of low-key satire found in it is completely foreign to Tolkien's fantasy: it is more likely to be found in the better grades of television situation comedy. When, in *The Last Unicorn*, Beagle attempted to express his appreciation for Tolkien in the form of a literary homage, he had to find some middle ground between the style he was accustomed to and the matter he was trying to incorp[or]ate. If there is any middle ground between wry comedy and high fantasy, it might just be the Thurber fairy tale, which is dazzling and funny and solemn, all at the same time. And the tone of *The Last Unicorn*, in its opening pages, is remarkably like that of *The White Deer*. Even little tricks like the anticlima[c]tic catalogs that both mock the subject and endear it to us, are the same. Here is a sample, a description of the Unicorn;

She had pointed ears and thin legs, with feathers of white hair at the ankles; and the long horn above her eyes shone and shivered with its own seashell light even in the deepest midnight. She had killed dragons with it, and healed a king whose poisoned wound would not close, and knocked down ripe chestnut for bear cubs.

pp. 158-9

Attebery views this creative strategy as both a homage to Tolkien and a departure from his achievements. While *The Lord of the Rings* is the epitome of high fantasy, *The Last Unicorn* represents a "new crop of novelty". It differs from standard "low fantasy" where supernatural elements enter a realistic world; instead, it floats between the poles of high

fantasy and “ironic ridicule”. However, Attebery’s final assessment is harsh:

But as soon as Beagle tries to inflate his fairy tale to encompass a world and a vision, after the manner of Tolkien, the Thurberish deftness departs and he grows self-conscious. The graft fails to take, and the two components draw apart, the magic into sentimentality and the modern voice into embarrassed joking. He gives his wizard the deflating name of Schmendrick and lets him indulge in anachronisms at the expense of the story, unlike Thurber, whose anachronisms always reinforce the charm of the fairy tale world through contrast. The center of *The Last Unicorn* does not hold: its characters and imagery go flying off in all directions, without reference to the patterns of significance that should command.

p. 159

Attebery concludes that Beagle is conscious of getting closer to Tolkien and is trying to do it by adopting Thurberian method but ends up breaking down.⁵ It’s true that Beagle’s “self-conscious” attitude permeates throughout

⁵ One thing I would like to point out here is that though Attebery understood that Beagle first adopted Tolkien’s style when writing *The Last Unicorn*, but in fact Beagle had already written one short story with a characteristic that belong to high fantasy before he knew Tolkien. At the age of 19, he wrote his first novel, *A Fine and Private Place*, and after the book was published in 1960, Beagle discovered Tolkien around 1965, and Beagle wrote an essay “Tolkien’s Magic Ring” for Holiday Magazine based on his impressions. But Beagle had written a short story “Come, Lady Death” in 1961, and it was published in 1963. This short story had been submitted to a writing class presided by Frank O’Connor, who hated fantasy while Beagle was a student at Stanford University, and O’Connor “read it aloud in a brilliant Abbey Theater voice” before saying, “This is a very beautifully written story, I hate it.”, according to Beagle’s commentary. (“introduction” to *The Fantasy Works of Peter Beagle*, 1978)

This short story is a masterpiece of extreme perfection, a graceful fantasy of stylistic workmanship where humour and irony blend together. At least, it’s not the type of thing that gives the kind of “low-key satire” or “ironic sarcasm” that Attebery felt in *A Fine and Private Place*. As far as this work is concerned, it is impossible to say that Beagle’s innate temperament prevents him from writing in a Thurber-like style, as Attebery concluded. Beagle doesn’t need to imitate Tolkien because he has his own style. Rather, here’s why I suspect Attebery may have failed to fathom the depth of Beagle’s irony.

Attebery seems to regard *The Lord of the Rings* as the epitome of high fantasy, but even if we admit to it, this dichotomy can fluctuate depending on which elements of *The Lord of the Rings* are considered to be conditions for high fantasy. By the way, according to Robert H. Boyer and Kenneth J. Zahorski, who compiled

the work, as pointed out by Attebery. However, is this a characteristic that deserves to be counted as an example of the flaw in which the author Beagle lost control of literary expression and technique in the course of his construction of a fictional world? Is it fair to say that this peculiar narrative is the result of the inherent ironic nature of Beagle, who wrote *A Fine and Private Place*, which Attebery called “low-key satire,” revealing discrepancy in his attempts to depict high fantasy after the manner of Tolkien? What is the basis for convincing him that the expression of this “wry comedy” style ingrained in the Beagle is an indicator of failure in the field of literary production? In fact, this element of irony must be regarded as a crucial factor in understanding this kind of work, but Attebery does not necessarily apply the term in such a context. This point will have to be analyzed in more detail later in consideration of the relationship between irony and fantasy. In the end, Attebery concludes that Beagle’s strategy he chose for creating the fictional world, has been derailed.

Attebery only admits the author’s poetic sensibility, which is glimpsed in some parts of this work.

Parts of the story are memorable: the fraudulent magical circus that reminds one of Ray Bradbury’s sinister carnival, the outwardly prosperous but inwardly barren town, the vision of unicorns floating like froth on the surf, the ponderous and fearsome Red Bull.

p. 159

the collection *Dark Imaginings: A Collection of Gothic Fantasy*, (1978), high fantasy is a depiction of an imaginary secondary world, while low fantasy is a depiction of events in a realistic primary world setting. (“introduction” to *Dark Imaginings*) According to this, *The Last Unicorn*, in which the basic setting of the work is set in an alternate universe different from reality, can be classified as high fantasy. Attebery’s notion of high fantasy at this point seems to be too biased towards the style of *The Lord of the Rings*.

For example, James Branch Cabell’s *Biography of Manuel’s Life*, which consists of more than 19 volumes, has built up a vast geography and history that is not inferior to Tolkien’s profound story, is unmistakably high fantasy in that it depicts a medieval fictional world in an epic style, but it is also characterized by an ironic and satirical perspective and a self-consciousness of the fictional nature of the narrative world being told. Ironic high fantasy must also exist.

Although Beagle is not a very prolific writer, the style he chooses includes both poles of fantasy, so-called high fantasy and low fantasy. If the high fantasy short story is “Come, Lady Death” and the high fantasy novel is *The Last Unicorn*, then the low fantasy short story is “Lila the Werewolf” (1974), and the low fantasy novel is *A Fine and Private Place*. By the time *The Folk of the Air* (1977) was published, Beagle had written only four novels, meaning that he had written novels for each High Fantasy and Low Fantasy, and short stories for each High Fantasy and Low Fantasy. These four works are included in *The Fantasy Works of Peter Beagle*.

The richness of the creative senses introduced here is a very effective testimony of Beagle's genius as a writer. Attebery certainly acknowledges that. However, there is a part of Beagle that is definitively unacceptable to Attebery.

But Beagle does not gather these things into a satisfying whole because he lacks faith in them. He must lack faith, since he is always throwing pixy dust in our eyes to keep us from finding him out. This is pixy dust: "The witch's stagnant eyes blazed up so savagely bright that a ragged company of luna moths, off to a night's revel, fluttered straight into them and sizzled into snowy ashes". So is this: "Schmendrick lighted down to support her, and she clutched him with both hands as though he were a grapefruit hull". The first is uncalled-for, the second (grapefruit hull?) just silly. In neither case does the imagery advance the story, or even relate to what is going on. One feels like telling the author to play fair and let us see what he is about. Fantasy is not like parlor conjuring; its effects do not arise from misdirection and patter.

p. 159

This is the final conclusion sentenced by Attebery, a fantasy critic who admits Tolkien and cannot tolerate Beagle. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between fantasy and irony, starting from the limit point of Attebery's reception of fantasy. As a clue, I would like to first note that a somewhat interesting expression is used here. It is the description "he is always throwing pixy dust" when Attebery asserts that "Beagle provides the reader with a false fantasy." Do we have any associations with the words "fairy dust"? Needless to say, it was the "fairy dust" that appeared in the play *Peter Pan*, (1904), written by James M. Barrie. When the play was first staged, the Darling children were able to fly freely following Peter Pan in the air. However, after a series of accidents in which children who watched the play tried to imitate the Darling children and take off, falling out of bed, Barrie added a setting in a later version that Peter had to sprinkle "fairy dust" on them in order for the children to fly.

One may read here the sly side of Barrie, a popular playwright who is a clever entertainment provider and listens to the audience's reaction at each performance and shrewdly takes advantage of their mood. That's one thing to be considered. Certainly, Barrie used to carefully observe the audience's reaction and make changes to the script every time he performed his play.⁶ However, through many stagings of *Peter Pan*, Barrie wrote a new version of artistic presentation, in the form of a novel, *Peter and*

⁶ It was in the year 1928, that the completed screen play of *Peter Pan* was published as a final manuscript. There are several versions of the scenario of *Peter Pan*, that remain in several different forms, testifying the phases of deviation in derivative creation.

Wendy, (1911) after considerable lapse of time since the first performance of the play. The novel version of *Peter and Wendy*, which differs from the screenplay version, has a variety of narrative twists. It can be said to be the culmination of Barrie's creative technique, who began his writing career by writing modernistic novels, with a strong awareness of the unique effects produced by manipulating fictionality in literary works.⁷ This narrative work was very cleverly set by the author to trap the readers who try to read "Fantasy" with an easy eye. That is the identity of the fairy dust that Attebery unintentionally called "pixie dust." It is a metafictional strategy similar to "parlor conjuring," to borrow Attebery's phrase, which presents an extremely "self-conscious" mode in which the work provides the reader with a fictional world and at the same time presents the fictionality itself to the reader in its entirety, revealing also the non-existence of the world of imagination.⁸ Moreover, this kind of mental attitude itself was the characteristic part of the philosophy of German Romantics which led to the birth of fantasy literature, and this kind of subtle way of perceiving reality is in fact the perspective that underlies the worldview contained in fantasy literature pioneered by George McDonald.⁹

⁷ A striking example of a modernist style is *The Little White Bird*, (1902), in which Barrie first introduced the character of Peter Pan. As the protagonist of this work, the narrator appears as a single middle-aged veteran, but for some reason he not only extends a nosy hand to young lovers, secretly reconciles them with each other, but also shows an unusual attachment to the boy born between them, and enjoys a kind of unique idyllic world of infancy with him. However, what makes the thing depicted in this method differ from the so-called human comedy is that the subject outlined above is presented as a world of abstract ideational game that unfolds around a first-person narrative, unlike the stories that are told in chronological events like novels using traditional narrative methods. Barrie has perfected the unique technique in this work, and added another twist in *Peter and Wendy*, and has gone beyond the existing limits of modernism. *The Little White Bird* was published as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, (1906) with only the middle part of the book extracted on its own, which is very interesting in relation to the establishment of *Peter and Wendy*.

⁸ As for the awareness of "nonexistence" in the discourse, it will be later discussed as one of the most important subjects of *Peter and Wendy*, in comparison with the metaphysical topology of Neverland, together with the existential principle of Peter Pan himself.

⁹ This particular propensity will be further discussed later, applying the notion of "manga", that testifies the drastic change of reality recognition and keen consciousness of fictionality.

NEVERLAND—LOST FAITH

There is one particularly disturbing depiction in *Peter and Wendy*. That's the part that narrates about Neverland. The narrator of the story introduces the reader to Neverland in this way.

If you shut your eyes and are lucky one, you may see at times a shapeless pool of lovely pale colours suspended in the darkness; then if you squeeze your eyes tighter, the pool begins to take shape, and the colours become so vivid that with another squeeze they must go on fire. But just before they go on fire you see the lagoon. This is the nearest you ever get to it on the mainland, just one heavenly moment; if there could be two moments you might see the surf and hear the mermaids singing.¹⁰

p. 78

Neverland, the island where Peter Pan lives, is by no means discoverable around “Second to the right, and straight on till morning” as Peter says. As the author says, what Peter says is not necessarily true. At the very least, the Neverland depicted here is not an isolated island in the South Seas, like ones described by Robert Louis Stevenson in *Treasure Island* (1883) or Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Although these were in the world of fiction, they were partial microcosms conceived in concrete topographical perspectives, their locations set in extension of realism. However, Neverland is a kind of mindscape that appears by itself in anyone's heart if one closes one's eyes. It is a hidden realm of the mind that will come out on its own if you can focus your thoughts correctly. I dare say that it may be close to what is called the collective unconscious, which is commonly discovered in the subjects of consciousness through introspection. A region called Neverland makes a key word that provides important clues in *Peter and Wendy*, in exploring the hidden nature of the mysterious protagonist named Peter. This world, like Peter himself, is like an alter ego of oneself, that everyone knows in the deep of their minds at some layer, without

¹⁰ The text of *Peter and Wendy* is based on the author's commentary *Annotated Peter and Wendy*, Kindai Bungei-sha (2006), which is based on a reprint of the first edition, *Peter Pan*; Random House (1987).

needing to be taught by anyone in particular. For example, the Darling children, who were taken by Peter to Neverland, do not see Neverland as a foreign world.

Strange to say, they all recognised it at once, and until fear fell upon them they hailed it, not as something long dreamt of and seen at last, but as a familiar friend to whom they were returning home for the holidays.

p. 45

Rather, Neverland is the home of their souls. So, unlike this real world, (this nightmare world where you wake up and realize you're being captured), it's a world of peace, where everything exists as it should be. The narrator also says of Neverland:

Of all delectable islands the Neverland is the snuggest and most compact, not large and sprawly, you know, with tedious distances between one adventure and another, but nicely crammed.

p. 11

There are no bothering details at all. Moderately cohesive, the world of Neverland is one where you don't feel uncomfortable or threat of any misgivings. It is, so to speak, a perfectly processed memory that has undergone a complete phase shift and compressed without any hindrances, through idealizing process. For those of us who live in modern world, who find various contradictory mechanisms in both human society and the Natural laws, and cannot help but question the Providence of God who is supposed to have created and govern this world, it is the truly convincing world. Between each individual and the world, and the relationships that mediate them, one is able to find a confirmed meaning, and there is no contaminant such as meaningless unlooked-for accidents. And the existence of Peter and the existence of Neverland in this way as they are, have equal implication in this story. The author hints at the inseparable relationship between Peter and Neverland throughout the story. Neverland is "Utopia" in the original sense of the word, which is equivalent to "ou = not + tópos = place" or "nowhere", and is literally the same as that Utopia, Thomas More depicted, an impossible place of ideals. Peter is rightly the god who invites us to the Utopia, and his surname "Pan" indicates that he is the shepherd god Faunus, the rustic god of the forest with a flute in his hand, who has been resurrected by the modern educated people who has had enough of the Christian dogma. So, it can be said that Neverland is a world of fable of the same quality, such as *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895), which George McDonald maneuvered his peculiar imagination to create, presenting a new metaphysical view of the universe that should replace conventional beliefs.

What this isolated island implies is the possibility of a new faith in a different form.

It is a world formula that has the power to link one's *raison d'être* with the fundamental mechanism of the universe, far more authentic than the flimsy and makeshift doctrines that the mid-twentieth century called democracy, capitalism, or socialism, which focus on no more than worldly ease. However, in the case of Barrie, there is something precarious. After the above quote, the narrator continues:

When you play at it by day with the chairs and tablecloth, it is not in the least alarming, but in the two minutes before you go to sleep it becomes very nearly real. That is why there are night-lights.

p. 11

This world of ideals becomes very realistic. And that's a very dangerous thing. It is because ideals that have been acquired and materialized always have something dark and eerie peeking behind them. Until their Neverland became a reality, it had been a safe game, as the author says, "Of course the Neverland had been make-believe in those days, but it was real now," (p.46). And as soon as it begins to take shape as reality, the dream world becomes a formidable thing full of fear, as the author narrates, "Thus sharply did the terrified three learn the difference between an island of make-believe and the same island come true." (p. 49). The dreamworld, which is a condensation of the desires in the heart, seems to be as familiar and comfortable as one's another self, but when this double materializes and appears in front of one as a new other, it reveals a hideous identity that one has never imagined before.

Thus, another key word is obtained. It's called make-believe, which means "to daydream, to pretend." In fact, the story seems to revolve around the idea of make-believe. Make-believe is a game of wanton ideas that one plays fluttering the wings of fantasy as depicted over and over again in the story, but it is also a complex psychological mechanism that functions as a deliberate and sometimes unconscious substitute for belief.¹¹

¹¹ After the publication of *Peter and Wendy*, a new trend of consciousness study has developed involving phenomenological reinterpretation of mental function and re-examination of the cosmological structure centered on the existence of primordial phase, called Fundamental Awareness. Neverland and make-believe were Barrie's innovative key subjects anticipating those speculative movements in the field of philosophy, that involved the newest research results of physics. They are centered on the relationship between observation, acknowledgement and event generation. Those are to be discussed as the cosmological relationship between consciousness and fictionality, in the further development of the author's argument.

The relationship between make-believe and belief is actually quite complicated. This is because it has been understood that there is fundamentally no safe way to distinguish one as reality and the other as fiction. Following Attebery's point, we can recall one of the problems of modern thought. One of the Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems seems to apply. "As long as an axiom system is consistent, it cannot prove its own consistency." To use this analogy, as long as we believe in that faith, we can't prove (or don't notice) that it's make-believe. The idea of the make-believe is both hopeless and mysterious. Peter is the genius of this make-believe playing. He behaves like a tyrannical wielder of this game rule, leading the Lost Boys kidnapped from the real world in Neverland to pretend to be at war and pretending to eat treats. And when Tinker Bell is about to die, Peter appeals to the children in the real world as well, saying that it takes children's "belief" in the existence of fairies to bring her back to life.

Peter flung out his arms. There were no children there, and it was night time; but he addressed all who might be dreaming of the Neverland, and who were therefore nearer to him than you think: boys and girls in their nighties, and naked papooses in their baskets hung from trees.

p. 117

At this point, our real world has already been incorporated into this story. No one can be allowed to sit idly by and watch the story unfold safely outside the realm of the story. Through Neverland, dreaming in their hearts, all the children hear Peter's words, "If you believe me, clap your hands, don't let Tink die." (p. 117) Children must respond to this request in some way. And the frightening thing is that the children's actions have already been foreseen in the work.¹²

¹² This mechanism of incorporating the reader's existence beyond the framework of the fictional world has become a common tactic used in postmodernist novels, but it was actually a strategy founded by the German Romantics in an attempt to involve the audience in the fictional world of the stage in the theatrical space. In the case of Barrie, it is interesting to note that he was ideologically involved with the flow of the zeitgeist as a pioneer of modernism, which flourished in the early 20th century, overcoming a mental state that tended to favor the natural religion of the Romantics. What kind of substance did postmodernism, which is now showing signs of corruption, really have? Also, what were the characteristics of "modernism" that postmodernism should have posited as a contrast? Having acknowledged both postmodernist seizure of power and its corruption, it seems necessary to re-examine the meaning of modernism again.

Many clapped.
Some didn't.
A few little beasts hissed.

p. 117

But for Peter, the children's beliefs he demanded were just one of the many diverting make-believe games he enjoyed. Only Peter can exercise the privilege of abruptly ending the make-believe he has been playing and starting another. The children have no idea when Peter will change his mind and move on to a new game. Just when you think Peter has been playing "Peter" and fighting against Hook, he even starts playing "Hook" and pretending to be a pirate fighting against children. The children, and those of us who have been reminded of Peter and Neverland through this story, will have to play aimlessly between the worlds of make-believe, as Peter chooses. The core of our thoughts has already been caught by Peter through the Neverland in our minds. Neverland is something that we are still new to, and therefore has a mysterious power to seize us. If we remember of Neverland, we can't even tell if the "faith" and "conviction" that we have accepted over time in order to live in the present reality are actually no other than one of the make-believes that Peter demands.

In the play *Peter Pan* at the premiere, (Duke of York's, December 27, 1904), Barrie did not expect the audience to enter the drama space and clap hands for Tink, and had managed that the orchestra musicians put their instruments down to the floor and clap their hands instead. Unexpectedly, however, the audience responded to Peter's request with a thunderous round of applause. Thus, this outlandish work became one of the most popular stories in the world, and many digest versions and anime film versions were created by Disney and others, and the original virulent substance was destined to be forgotten under its fame.

However, did the audience who responded with applause really believe in the existence of fairies? There is something frightening about the attitude of the audience to express their belief as implied by this applause. Nineteenth-century British fantasies, represented by McDonald's, arose as a religion substitute after the death of God, but by the time *Peter Pan* premiered, had people already chosen to worship a god they did not believe in? Or has the god of modern man who has forgotten his virtues and ethics fallen into a toy-like idol whose existence is ridiculed and tolerated by people who live only in fleeting pleasures and desires?

THE AMBIVALENCE OF MAKE BELIEVE AND CONVENTION

The idea of make-believe, as I mentioned earlier, is more perverted and dangerous than we can imagine. This is because even Mr. Darling, who is supposed to be immersed in the common sense of the world by manipulating the difficult words of “stocks and shares” that seems to be an economic term, sometimes performs a make-believe that is exactly the same as Peter and his children do. For example:

“George,” Mrs. Darling entreated him, “not so loud; the servants will hear you.” Somehow they had got into the way of calling Liza “the servants”.

p. 25

The Darling family, which is not very wealthy, has no servants, except for Liza, who babysits. But the couple refers to her as “servants” in the plural. They are pretending to be a wealthy family with a large number of servants. There were other make-believes of this kind. Here’s another example:

Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, owing to the amount of milk the children drank, this nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog, called Nana, who had belonged to no one in particular until the Darlings engaged her.

p. 5

In the same way that the Darlings refer to their babysitter Liza as “servants,” they also refer to their dog Nana as “babysitter” and pretend to hire her as one to have it actually do the babysitting work. They are conscious of how their neighbors live, and they use a dog as babysitter in an attempt to maintain a social appearance. It may be kind of practical, and it seems also not very practical. By having Nana babysit, is their respectability really duly maintained? This shows the mysterious part of the term “make-believe”. What does it really mean to “pretend to believe”? If you say “pretend”, you really don’t believe it. But is make-believe really “believing in something

you don't believe"? Or does make-believe mean "not believing that you believe"? This phrase contains a precarious implication that shakes the foundations of introspection related to our perception of reality and our intuitive ability for grasping absolute truth.¹³

Neverland was the world that embodied the essence of make-believe, and Peter's most distinctive attribute was that he was a genius at make-believe. Focusing on this key word, let's follow the story of *Peter and Wendy* for a while. First of all, the children are already starting to be swept up in the problems regarding to make-believe on their way to Neverland with Peter.

Sometimes it was dark and sometimes light, and now they were very cold and again too warm. Did they really feel hungry at times, or were they merely pretending, because Peter had such a jolly new way of feeding them?

p. 42

Children don't know whether they're hungry or not. That's because Peter teaches them an unusual way of eating, which is to steal food from the birds they encounter in the air. Did they really take food from the birds' beaks? Or had they already been drawn into Peter's favorite game of make-believe? "Eating" is an important issue. It is because this act implies the ruthless constraints of the real world that accompany the activity of sustaining life. To eat is to kill, to rob. If you refuse to eat and become a saint, it makes a very easy, false fantasy. There was such a popular work of mock-fantasy before. One specific example is the motif of "eating" that was introduced in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Since the world depicted in a literary work is a different world from the real one, it is not necessarily required for the characters to obtain food in order to construct the reality of the fictional world. The author can omit such troublesome parts and proceed with the description. As long as it does not disturb the order within the axiom system as an internal law of the world of the work, the author cannot be held responsible for the arbitrary choice of the object to be described. However, this story makes a fatal mistake that disrupts the internal laws of the work world.

¹³ In other words, make-believe is a vague projection of the system that operates our thinking and cognitive mechanisms, which is in principle impossible for us to be directly conscious of, and it is also an afterimage of the white board of the mind (tabula rasa) that has been initialized for the blank unconscious to be loaded. Manifested in this way, it can be a description of the intersection between the zeitgeist of the second half of the 20th century and the antifantasy strategy adopted by James M. Barrie.

The basic condition that Dorothy suddenly finds herself in another world and needs to find food in order to survive is not ignored in this work. Dorothy eats the bread in the basket and finds fruit to eat. There is no contradiction in the fact that the characters continue to eat food in order to continue their survival. However, in terms of the ethics associated with eating, this work exposes the author's slovenly attitude that cannot be overlooked.¹⁴ When Dorothy, who has eaten up all the bread left and has no

¹⁴ One work that has this ethical paradox presented by eating even more seriously betrayed as a disruption of the axiom system of the narrative world, is Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Dolittle in the Moon* (1928). It was this work that brought to light in a tragic way the practical constraint of having to kill in order to eat, which cannot be separated from the realization of the utopia of symbiosis of all living things. Akiko Waki's *The Secret of Fantasy* (2004), discusses this in detail. Furthermore, the question of whether or not human beings, who live as one of the species incorporated into the ecosystem, can speak of universal ethics was a serious problem faced by Kenji Miyazawa, a rare Japanese fantasy writer who inherited the dreams and hopes of German Romanticism and aspired for uniting poetry, science, and religion. Barrie's answer to this ethical question in *Peter and Wendy* was that "to live happily you have to be heartless." Kenji's own answer to this question was probably "He wanted to sacrifice himself for the happiness of others," but if we consider this conclusion as a logical answer rather than as a personal desire, we may say that this is a very irreverent solution. If everyone had made such a decision over passing away abandoning their lives, then all living things would be exterminated. Behind the idea of linking the happy lives of others with the renunciation of one's own life is a sense of privilege as a specified saviour, who can choose to be sacrificed. Also, if we reframe this issue in terms of the concept of atonement in the Christian context, even if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, actually had compassion on those who lived a life of suffering and had the power to atone for their sins, the act of compensation must be an extreme suffering that goes beyond mere physical suffering. But wasn't the greatest suffering for Jesus just that people would continue to suffer like this? If this is the case, his act of redemption by sacrificing himself to save others cannot be fulfilled by crucifixion. Wasn't it the price that Jesus should have paid to witness people continue to live horrible lives bound by the pain of childbirth, the pain of old age, and the heartache of killing and eating? If this is the case, then we, the objects of Jesus' mercy, will never be saved by His Atonement. Let's call this dilemma "the paradox of redemption." The idea of the act of salvation by separating oneself from others does not have the power to transcend the constraints of this logic. This paradox of redemption was reversed by Ursula K. le Guin, in her psycho myth "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas". "Atonement" can be seen as a paradoxical act in which the sacrificial rituals performed by ancient people, who were once forced to live a life of pain while being toyed with by the forces of Nature, were dynamically reversed as an act of voluntary salvation of others. Conversely, le Guin saw the forced sacrifice in the atonement. The world of Omelas is a peaceful utopia

idea what to get for the next day's breakfast, the lion offers to go to the forest to catch a deer, but the Tin Woodsman begs him not to do that because it is pitiful. So the lion goes into the forest alone and finds his own dinner. However, some time after this scene, when the Tin Woodsman finds a wildcat trying to capture and eat a wild mouse, he cuts off the wildcat's head to save the wild mouse, because "he knows" that it is wrong to try to kill such a cute and harmless animal. It's a literal opportunistic childish trick, but the truth is that children are more sensitive to the exactitude of the story's inner consistency than adults. Many adults accept the contradictions in the fictional world, arguing that the fictional world is a sham that is different from the real world and can be easily tolerated. Their mistake is that they forget that the axiom system presented by the narrative world is an independent system that is quite different from reality, and they impose on each other a tacit understanding that it is no problem to dismiss contradictions that are impossible to be overlooked in reality because it is a story, and to abandon their obsession with contradictions. In other words, adults, who share social common sense, have a fatal illusion when it comes to setting the conditions of convention for the acceptance of a fictional world.¹⁵

In the case of *Barrie*, he is actively trying to use the convention itself, as a strategic weapon in his work, which is closely related to the reception of such a fictional world. This is also a fact that can be pointed out as a metafictional mechanism. *Barrie* does not respond to the reader's naïve

built on the pain inflicted on a single victim. The people of Omelas are compelled to learn that the happiness they enjoy has been obtained in exchange for the endless torments of the helpless one chosen as a sacrifice. And most of Omelas allow them to settle in this deceitful utopia. But some reject this happiness that has been granted to them as false and choose to leave Omelas. A fable is depicted here that attempts to re-examine the question of ethics based on a perception of reality that excludes illusions. Le Guin used the term "psycho-myth" to refer to this kind of allegory based on simple ethical questions, but what is usually called fantasy actually has a much more subtle mechanism, as in the case of *Barrie*. Though the people of Omelas were able to walk away from Omelas of their own free will, we who live in real life know that it is literally impossible to walk away from it. The real world is not as easy as the world of Omelas. *Barrie* transfigures the mechanism of this "paradox of redemption" into an equation formula of "good form and reflection" and tells us a bittersweet story.

¹⁵ Oscar Wilde uses this term to describe the factors that determine the axiomatic system of the work world, in "The Decay of Lying". In considering the genre of fantasy as one of the possible worlds, the equivalent concept is discussed using the words "perspective", signifying "depth" and "correlation formula". Cf. Eric S. Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976).

desires and give them an easy illusion of justice. In this respect, the ethical concerns of *Peter and Wendy* are more ruthless and intense than any other realistic literary work.

Eating is closely related to the subject of make-believe, and forms the basis for the depiction of children's lives in Neverland as well as adventure. Here's how they eat.

This meal happened to be a make-believe tea, and they sat round the board, gazzling in their greed; and really, what with their chatter and recriminations, the noise, as Wendy said, was positively deafening.

p. 94

This pretended meal is one of the things Peter strictly orders his children to do. Wendy has to go out of her way to prepare make believe cooking for it, and the children have to perform a fake ritual of eating the treat against their will. The only time they can really eat is when they can prove that their fasting has made them so thin that their bodies no longer fit the size of the holes in the trees that lead them in and out of their secret underground house.

The cooking, I can tell you, kept her nose to the pot.... but you never exactly knew whether there would be a real meal or just a make-believe, it all depended upon Peter's whim. He could eat, really eat, if it was part of a game, but he could not stodge just to feel stodgy, which is what most children like better than anything else; the next better thing being to talk about it. Make believe was so real to him that during a meal of it you could see him getting rounder. Of course it was trying, but you simply had to follow his lead, and if you could prove to him that you were getting loose for your tree he let you stodge.

pp. 73-4

Peter, who forces his minions to play a game called make-believe, is somewhat similar to the god who forces sacrifices and offerings, and demands rituals, but also, he has a little different traits. For Peter, eating is a game, and living and dying are nothing more than a game of make-believe as a "tremendous adventure." Make-believe is sometimes a very childlike fantasy, empathizing with others and playing out other characters. This is revealed in the scene where Peter has defeated Hook and captured the pirate ship, then he takes Hook's belongings and disguises himself like the pirate captain.

It was afterwards whispered among them that on the first night he wore this suit he sat long in the cabin with Hook's cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook.

p. 137

The arch enemy Hook who must be defeated someday, is not really an obstacle for Peter that must be eliminated for practical or ethical reasons. Rather, because he is a formidable opponent, he even seems to have a certain admiration for Hook. As if to mock the limitations of the real world, where you cannot be yourself unless you survive by defeating others, and you cannot keep yourself alive without killing and eating living creatures, Barrie depicts the tyranny of absolute power wielded by Peter's transcendent whims of the divine. There is an unsurmountable gap between the children who play make-believe following Peter, and Peter who is the leader of the adventure.

The difference between him and the other boys at such a time was that they knew it was make-believe, while to him make-believe and true were exactly the same thing.

p. 67

For the children who participate in the game under Peter's direction, both good and evil, and life and death are absolute and unambiguous things with a grave significance that cannot be neglected. However, Peter, who has the power to change even these ground rules, sometimes betrays his mates with impunity.

It [the adventure] was a sanguinary affair, and especially interesting as showing one of Peter's peculiarities, which was that in the middle of a fight he would suddenly change sides.

p. 76

What we can point out about the mechanism of make-believe is that, while in our perception of reality, we, as the perceiving subjects, can never discern whether the laws of principle describing the rules of operation of our world have a positive vector or a negative vector in its absolute value, in spite of our real life being subject to absolute control by it, in the case of a transcendent being like Peter, they can be selectively manipulated arbitrarily. For Peter, who has omnipotent powers when it comes to make-believe, sometimes even the alternative "not to go on adventures that he should be able to enjoy" can be chosen by harnessing the power of make-believe.

Peter invented with Wendy's help, a new game... It consisted in pretending not to have adventure... To see Peter doing nothing on a stool was a great sight.

p. 75

In other words, in Almighty God, even non-existence is possibly selectable a phase. The proof of the existence of God in scholastic philosophy, which states that “God must exist under the condition that He is omnipotent,” should have premised that “even God is subject to the restriction of logic.” However, a truly Almighty God may be able to transcend the imperative of such binary logic.¹⁶ It can be said that this recognition was newly reaffirmed by modern people who discovered the physical fact that “the universe has been created from fluctuations in a vacuum” in the latter half of the 20th century. This is reflected in the latent problematic nature of fantasy literature, which Attebery later admitted the need to point out again.¹⁷ However, what is very unsettling for us is that Peter for himself, who must control the mechanism of make-believe, shows a spontaneous fluctuation, forgetting the rules of the game world, that is, his own identity. He doesn’t know if the fact that he was playing the role of the father of the children, as “the Great White Father” was true or a game, and asks Wendy anxiously, “It’s just make-believe that I’m the father of these children”.(p. 97).

What can be seen here is the ambivalence implied by the act of make-believe. Peter, who is full of life and always enjoys adventures, is actually an enigmatic god who does not even take food, and is willing not to venture or even ceases to be living if he feels like it. Combining one side of god who is full of the joy of life and fertility and another side of the god of death who brings the lifeless void, is the actual figure of the god, Peter Pan, who lurked in the depths before our memories take shape.

After all, Peter does not actually eat. However, the ethical issues associated with eating are not avoided in this story. This is because they are actually committing “killing,” which is a more straightforward and immoral act than eating. *Peter and Wendy* is a fantasy work that depicts the cruel acts of children. And, like many literary works that depicted utopias, the world of Neverland had an anti-utopian aspect of dystopia, in that in order to live happily, there must be adventures in which people kill each other.

¹⁶ For example, the Eleatic mystic philosopher Parmenides’ notion of the “unity of being and thinking” may be recalled as a variation of this kind of metaphysical speculation. One interpretation that reveals Peter’s identity would be the view that regards him as “the metaphysical transcendence of the principle of existence.”

¹⁷ This peculiarity of fantasy literature will be discussed later in relation to the metaphysical ideas, quantum mechanics have brought forth, in the chapter “Quantum Logic, Paradox and Impossible Worlds—Actualism and Antifantasy”.