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Barrie as Journeyman-Dramatist: A Study of "Walker London"



In 1892 three authors, until then primarily associated with other branches of literature, chose to present, in London, their first full-length plays. One of these was J.M. Barrie, who had earlier written a biographical tragedy, *Richard Savage* (with Marriott Watson) and a one-act parody, *Ibsen's Ghost*.¹ Of these the former had been judged a failure, the latter a minor success. But for Barrie neither a collaboration nor a curtain-raiser constituted a real test of his abilities as a writer for the stage. The first serious judgment on J.M. Barrie playwright would come when his comedy *Walker London* was produced in Toole's Theatre in late February. As it happened, Oscar Wilde's first play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, opened at the St. James's five nights before *Walker London* and on December ninth Bernard Shaw made his dramatic debut with *Widowers' Houses* at the Royalty.

Reading the contemporary reviews one soon gathers that of the three Barrie's contribution was the most popular with critics and public alike. A variety of factors determine these judgments, but one crucial distinction appears over and over again. Wilde and Shaw, it is argued, thought that talents nurtured in non-theatrical writing would automatically produce good drama. Only Barrie took real care to adapt to the new mode, to study

¹Both plays were produced in 1891, *Richard Savage* at the Criterion and *Ibsen's Ghost* at Toole's.

trends in the theater, to listen to his actor-manager, to attend rehearsals regularly and so discovered that a successful novelist cannot become a good dramatist overnight.

Thus *The Times* declares that the open stage has exposed Wilde as one of those "literary and artistic triflers" whose reputation depends on their remaining unintelligible while *Lloyds* regrets that *Widowers' Houses* is "In no sense a drama, but a succession of dialogues in which the author sets forth his views concerning Socialist questions." Clement Scott, on the other hand, greets *Walker London* as the answer to a drama critic's prayer:

We do not need to go to Norway or Belgium, or Spain for the new dramatist when we can get so good a one from bonny Scotland.²

Many modern critics would overturn the value judgments made by these late Victorian critics on the grounds that they are the products of a self-satisfied, populist dramatic tradition which, especially in the case of Shaw, was not ready for new challenges. Yet the leitmotiv I have highlighted does seem valid. In 1892 neither Wilde nor Shaw paid much attention to the unique challenge of the dramatic mode. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a much more successful vehicle for epigrammatic wit than it is a planned dramatic plot. *Widowers' Houses* does pay more attention to its polemical message than the best dramatic means of conveying it. Only Barrie had the modesty to admit that, whatever his achievements in other fields, he was still a journeyman-dramatist.

The purpose of this article is to study the various types of preparation Barrie made before presenting *Walker London* in finalized form to the public.³ From that point of view the "journeyman" image proves apt on two levels. It implies care in craftsmanship and the latter part of the study will be concerned with analyzing this aspect in depth. The text will be discussed in relation to Barrie's biography, his Notebooks, his earlier novels and—most importantly—to earlier drafts of the work. "Journeyman" also implies a "master" however, and this is where the young playwright's knowledge of theatrical traditions generally and his relationship with one actor-manager in particular assumes importance.

But first there is the play itself. *Walker London* is set on a houseboat on the Thames, and its slight plot centers on three love affairs, carefully differentiated and each bound on a troubled course towards marriage. Of these the relationship between the talented cricketer Kit Upjohn and the Girton graduate Bell Golightly is developed so as to satirize excessive re-

²*Illustrated London News*, March 1892.

³A.E. Wilson's edition of the play in the one volume "Definitive" edition of *The Plays* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1942) follows the 1907 acting edition closely and may be said to represent the play in the final form intended by the author. Barrie did not himself wish *Walker London* to appear in any collection of the dramatic works.

liance on brawn or brains. Kit gets off more lightly than Bell, who embodies all the fads and eccentricities of the Victorian blue stocking. Contrasting with this extremely volatile match is the quieter relationship between Andrew MacPhail and Nanny O'Brien. This is on one level the stock opposition between serious Scotsman and vivacious Irish girl, but the main comic focus is on MacPhail's morbid fears that he will fail his final medical examinations.

It is the third partnership which acts as the catalyst for all the misunderstandings and regroupings which constitute the storyline. The comic lead, Jasper Phipps (played by Toole), is a barber who jilts his faithful fiancée Sarah in order to have one last fling among the upper classes. Passing himself off as one of his clients, to whom he bears a striking resemblance, he becomes "Colonel Neil," famed African explorer, falsely gains credit for rescuing Bell from drowning and so becomes one of the houseboat guests. He flirts determinedly with all the women aboard and even, briefly, becomes engaged to Bell but is caught finally by the persevering Sarah to whom, in his own way, he has remained faithful.

Certain themes do emerge from this lighthearted story. The capacity of lovers to delude themselves; the folly of judging life on intellectual grounds alone; the barriers that need to be broken before one social class can mix easily with another—all of these are considered, but Barrie is much more concerned to amuse than instruct. What is noticeable already, even in this rather trivial context, is the care he takes to present his material clearly and dramatically. The love affairs are defined and differentiated in Act I; the complications develop in Act II and are gradually unraveled in Act III. Two humorized characters, Mrs. Golightly, the knitting-obsessed *materfamilias* and young W.G. who sees love as a passion designed to unman heroes and prevent cricket practices are introduced not only to add comic variety but also to provide the contrasting commentaries of youth and age. At the conclusion of each act Jasper and Sarah become the center of attention establishing a neat pattern of repetition and variation. In the first two acts Jasper cunningly prevents a face-to-face confrontation but at the end is only too pleased to escape with her. His growing knowledge that there is no serious emotion behind his flirtations and that he longs to return to his old life is thus formally underlined. It is evident that much thought has gone into the construction of the plot even if it has no profound message to impart.

In writing such a play at this time Barrie was trying to prove his skill to two masters. The first was the London Theatre. As a journalist and drama critic Barrie knew what that theater wished and at this early stage was only too anxious to meet known tastes and establish himself. Later he could become more ambitious, more original, but the journeyman had first to be accepted. That he gauged his audience correctly can simply be demonstrated by reference to the Box Office. *Walker London* had an opening run of 511 performances, the longest single run of any of his

plays. But *The Times*' review of drama in 1891, which appeared on January 7th 1892, when *Walker London* was going into rehearsal, had earlier confirmed that he was working on the right lines. Foreseeably this review begins with the major new force in European drama, Ibsen. Now that experimental productions of *Rosmersholm*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Lady from the Sea* and *Ghosts* have been seen on the London stage a clear judgment can be made. Ibsen has been "weighed in the balance and found wanting." Two principal reasons are advanced for this conclusion. Ibsenism presents an unrealistically pessimistic view of life, depicting "the exceptions rather than the rules of human nature." Linked to this quasi-critical criterion is another based solely on commercial fact. Such an unhealthy vision will be "fatal to [its] acceptance on stage, so long as the drama maintains its place as a popular entertainment."

What is wanted is not revolution—even Henry Jones's less radical attempts to establish a "literary drama" are viewed with suspicion⁴—but more skill within the traditional formulae. Comedy is preferred to tragedy and the call is for a "new Molière." Interestingly this leads the writer to think of Barrie and *Ibsen's Ghost*, which is then dismissed as promising but "too slight to be of much consequence." If the writer could only produce lighthearted drama paying more attention to characterization, plot and style than those writers currently holding the popular stage he would find both critics and audience ready to welcome him.

Barrie, that avid reader of *The Times*, must have been immensely encouraged by this article. *Walker London* seemed to meet all of these (not very rigorous) demands and, given some re-writing, it seemed likely to satisfy one master. That re-writing, dependent largely on the experience of rehearsal, would be done under the eye of the second master, James Lawrence Toole—actor-manager of the theater where the play was to be performed. His "little house in King William Street" was acknowledged to be the center for light comedy and as such was contrasted with Henry Irving's center for tragedy, "the big house in Wellington Street." Toole had already produced and acted in *Ibsen's Ghost* and was ready to take on the role of Jasper Phipps. But his connection with Barrie stretched back much further than that.

When still at school in Dumfries, Barrie had attended a performance given by Toole on one of his provincial tours. Shortly afterwards the Dumfries Academy Dramatic Society put on a triple bill. Two of the plays were works in which Toole had starred and the third was Barrie's own juvenile play *Bandalero the Bandit*. The show produced some self-righteous outrage in Dumfries but also a generous letter from the great man himself in which he jokingly suggested that one of the boys might later

⁴Jones sets out his views most fully in *The Theatre of Ideas* (New York, 1915).

write a play for him. Doubtless to his extreme surprise this prophecy was twice realized.

That Barrie listened to Toole's advice at rehearsals, that they discussed alterations to dialogue and characterization can be established through the evidence of eyewitnesses⁵ and through comparing successive drafts of the play. Indeed so successful was Toole in his role as Jasper Phipps that he forced the young dramatist to take a back seat. The program, for example, has Toole's name emblazoned on it three times to Barrie's one; the performance is billed as celebrating not Barrie's first three-act play but Toole's return to the stage after illness (Toole specialized in "returns" either from illness or the provinces); Toole it is who makes the final curtain speech, and the vast majority of reviewers begin by hailing Toole's triumph only coming later to the dramatist's contribution.

The contrast between this and the self-advertisement of Wilde in particular⁶ could not be more complete, and it might at first seem to work against Barrie. But in designing his plot to suit the cult of the actor-manager, he guaranteed that at the journeyman stage of his career he had both the advice of Toole to profit from and the influential theatrical figure of Toole to stand behind. Far from condescending to the theater he was making himself part of it and willingly learning from those who had dedicated their lives to it. This is why the drama critics warmed to his example rather than that of Wilde or Shaw. They welcomed *Walker London* as a fine piece of teamwork between author, actor-manager and production team. *The Scotsman* went so far as to find the major excellence of the performance lying in stage management.⁷ But even in this context it was stressed that the author had chosen, in the houseboat, a novel setting which got away from the usual exits and entrances of the conventional drawing room yet allowed a variety of clever stage effects. As Clement Scott put it, "No one who did not possess a strong dramatic instinct would have chosen the upper deck and cosy cabin of a Thames house-boat as the scene of an elaborate comic play."⁸

Barrie's natural instinct for the theater was to make itself felt much more powerfully in later works. As he gained confidence he would

⁵See H.M. Walbrook, *J.M. Barrie and the Theatre* (London, 1922), Chapt. 2.

⁶At the end of the first production of *Lady Windermere's Fan* Wilde came on to the stage, garishly dressed (and smoking!) to give a flamboyant speech consisting largely of self-congratulation.

⁷*The Scotsman*, 24th February 1892. "Singularly enough, it is in stage management not in dialogue that the play excels."

⁸*Illustrated London News*, March 1892.

become a more dominant figure at rehearsal and perhaps his earlier idolization of Toole and hesitance to overrule him was one of the reasons for his never returning to that particular theater. But it was with Toole, the second master in his journeyman phase, that he learned the all-important lesson that the craft of the dramatist does not end in the study but has to be carried in to the theater and there meet a whole series of new challenges.

This returns us to the idea of journeyman in the sense of careful craftsman and, in the first place, to Barrie's famous Notebooks⁹ in which he copied down ideas and scraps of dialogue if and when they occurred to him. They were initially a product of his busy days as a journalist and to the end he retained the journalist's desire to use as many of these ideas as possible. But he did make a clear distinction between ephemeral newspaper articles and those works (especially those dramatic works) on which he hoped to found his literary reputation. For these the ideas were usually given a longer period of incubation and he writes, revises and re-revises with an enthusiasm born partly of literary perfectionism and partly of an awareness of the practical difficulties posed by different stages and different audiences.

The Notebooks reveal that the ideas behind *Walker London* were already being actively explored in 1888, four years before the first production. In that year there are entries which show Barrie to be considering a comedy set on the Thames and called *The Houseboat Granny*. From then until 1891 they contain suggestions and scraps of dialogue intended for this work. The journeyman has not therefore rushed into composition but planned well in advance, allowing his ideas to mature before assessing the best time to begin writing.

Not all of Barrie's dramas wander through the pages of the Notebooks for such a long time but there they all begin in some form or another. Usually, too, his personal life is worked to a greater or lesser degree into his plots. Partly this is because he found it difficult to separate art from self-revelation; partly it was because he knew that the late Victorian theater, although generally sympathetic towards fantasy, liked those fantasies to work from a realistic base. *Lady Windermere's Fan* was to be condemned on just those grounds¹⁰ but *Walker London* avoided such criticism because Barrie founded a plot which sometimes verges on fantasy on a lifestyle which he had closely observed. In 1887 he actually shared a houseboat on the Thames with his friend Thomas Gilmour. Thus, however stylized the characters in his drama may be, the boat and its machinery, the songs being sung and the musical instruments played all evoke the river life as it

⁹The notebooks are among the extensive Barrie holdings in the Beinecke Library at Yale University.

¹⁰*The Times*, 22nd February 1892.

really was. Barrie's friend Jerome K. Jerome had earlier produced his own famous vision of this popular craze in *Three Men in a Boat*. In following him, Barrie knew not only that a dramatic variation on the theme was likely to be well received but that he had specific and detailed knowledge of the life he was describing.

Another major influence on *Walker London* comes from his earlier prose works. Aware of the generic leap he was about to make and its attendant problems Barrie was naturally anxious to minimize the dangers. *When A Man's Single*, *Lady Nicotine* and *An Edinburgh Eleven* had already proved themselves capable of arousing the public imagination and, having few scruples about re-using the same material in different contexts, he based a large part of *Walker London* on characters and situations which he had first explored in his prose works. As these often had a strong autobiographical emphasis themselves it becomes rather difficult to distinguish between the influences of life and art. The houseboat setting and the idyllic atmosphere surrounding it had already been evoked in *When a Man's Single*:

Rob stood on the deck of the house-boat *Tawny Owl*, looking down at Nell, who sat in the stern, her mother beside her, amid a blaze of Chinese Lanterns. Dick lay near them, prone, as he had fallen from a hammock whose one flaw was that it gave way when any one got into it...Mary, in a little blue nautical jacket with a cap to match, lay back in a camp-chair on deck with a silent banjo in her hands. Rob was brazening it out in flannels, and had been at such pains to select colours to suit him that the effect was atrocious.¹¹

Similarly in the play W.G.'s obsession with cricket reflects Barrie's own passion for the game and the matches he was then playing at Shere.¹² As a child figure, however, W.G. clearly develops from Will in *When a Man's Single*, even at times sharing brief snatches of dialogue with his predecessor.

When a Man's Single provides not only the original of W.G. There too we find a flirtatious barber passing himself off as a gentleman, and there too Jasper's philosophy of flirting as a brother rather than a lover is anticipated. But the specific role he chooses to carry off his deception—that of African explorer—is most fully developed in the essay collection *An Edinburgh Eleven*. There, "Africanus Neil's" prototype is discovered in Joseph Thomson, the explorer whose identity could "always be proved by simply mentioning Africa in his presence."¹³ From this source too comes Andrew Macphail's farcical fear of failing his medical examinations and his attempt to conceal it beneath a facade of worldly nonchalance. *An*

¹¹J.M. Barrie, *When a Man's Single* (London, 1888), p. 196.

¹²Dennis Mackail, *The Story of JMB* (London, 1941), pp. 133-4.

¹³J.M. Barrie, *An Edinburgh Eleven* (London, 1889), p. 101.

Edinburgh Eleven mainly consists of portraits of those Edinburgh University staff members who had impressed Barrie when he was a student there. In the chapter devoted to Professor Chrystal of the medical faculty, Barrie tells the story of an anonymous student who, with lordly air and cigar in hand, had persuaded his friends that he much preferred to remain sheltered from life within the University's walls. But on learning that he has passed, he shrieks:

"I'm through! I'm through!"...His cigar was dashed aside and he sped like an arrow from the bow to the nearest telegraph office, shouting "I'm through!" as he ran.¹⁴

Barrie's wish to rely on material drawn from work which had already proved to be popular is wholly understandable. Yet, despite quite extensive borrowing, he avoided any criticisms that he was plagiarizing himself. Indeed very few critics mentioned the relationship between *Walker London* and his earlier work at all. There are three major reasons for this. The central plot was new; he borrowed lightly from different prose works rather than concentrating on one and, in later drafts, cut down particular dialogue echoes to a minimum. As a result he was congratulated on his dramatic originality rather than condemned for excessive reliance on earlier "novels."

The drafts referred to above are of crucial importance in assessing the vast amount of work Barrie devoted even to such a lightweight drama as *Walker London*.¹⁵ A study of the changes made between the first draft for the play, now among the holdings of the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana¹⁶ and the text deposited with the Lord Chamberlain¹⁷ shortly before production, followed by an analysis of the changes between the latter text and the finalized version will enable us to chart in more detail the process by which Barrie learned the craft of drama. It will also provide an accurate model for his later practice. When he became a leading playwright he did not forget these earlier lessons but still maintained the discipline of almost constant revision.

Many of the changes introduced into the Lord Chamberlain's text are simply those we would expect in any transition from draft to full text. In

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁵Even Hugh MacDiarmid, alienated from Barrie's writing in almost every other respect, was impressed by his workaholic nature.

¹⁶I am grateful to the curators and the librarians of the Lilly Library for allowing me to consult this MS. and to the British Academy and the Carnegie Trust for providing grants to make the visit possible.

¹⁷British Library MS., Add 53493.

the Indiana MS. Barrie occasionally leaves gaps. In Act I of the Lord Chamberlain's text the letter sent by Jasper to Sarah explaining his reasons for deserting her is read out in full by Mrs. Golightly.¹⁸ In the Indiana MS. there is a space in mid-page with only two words "The Letter," indicating that Barrie has delayed composition. Similarly the word "Soliloquy" in the draft prepares us for Bell's lengthy weighing up of the rival claims of her two suitors near the start of Act II.¹⁹ In each case it seems likely that Barrie wished to develop the personalities of his major characters before returning to speeches in which they give detailed accounts of their respective philosophies.

In this category too we may place those occasions when Barrie simply changes his mind during composition. The clearest evidence for this centers on names. In the Indiana MS. Jasper begins his adventures as Colonel Kay but becomes Colonel Neil. More subtly, although Nanny O'Brien and Bell Golightly are throughout the Indiana MS. called Baby O'Brien and Nanny Golightly, there are internal signs that Barrie is already having doubts, as when W.G. remarks that they call Miss O'Brien "Baby," adding "though it is a rotter of a name." Certainly it becomes less and less apposite as Nanny's mature, worldlywise character unfolds.

This evidence is especially important because Barrie was an author who laid great stress on getting exactly the right name for his creations. Only when that name harmonizes with the character's personality does he feel that the latter comes firmly into focus. As Colonel Kay, Baby and Nanny develop from vague ideas into individual dramatic roles Barrie becomes dissatisfied with the names he had chosen somewhat arbitrarily for them at the outset and alters them either within the draft or in revision.

If the Notebooks show care being taken over the broad conception of plot, so a comparison between the Indiana MS. and the Lord Chamberlain's text reveals those changes in detail made by an artist who is wholly absorbed in the development of his fictional world. Always he is working towards greater character consistency, clearer plot formulation and more powerful dramatic effects. And he is so completely involved in this process that he can follow through the implications any one variation has for the rest of the plot. A good illustration of this can be provided without moving from the topic of names.

The major problem of nomenclature in *Walker London* concerned the title. The Indiana MS. is headed *The Houseboat*. This was changed to *Walker London* after the discovery that a play with this title already existed. There is irony in this because Barrie's Notebooks reveal no fewer than forty suggested titles, each rejected in favor of the one now outlawed

¹⁸*The Plays, op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

by copyright. Toole and Barrie are known to have worked together in efforts to find a substitute and there is general agreement that the final choice was a good one. "Walker," while obviously a surname suitable for the telegraphic address announced at the end, also had connotations of "practical joker" or "one clearing off to prevent discovery."²⁰ Both of these fitted in perfectly with Jasper's character and situation. What has not been appreciated is that the name "Walker" had been applied to Jasper in the Indiana MS. at an earlier stage in the action as well. When first describing her fiancé to Mrs. Golightly, Sarah had called him "a barber by trade, hookey walker by nature." When the new title was decided upon Barrie substituted "deceiver" for "hookey walker," thus reserving the first use of the word for the very last moment of the play when the disappearing Jasper shouts it across the water to Mrs. Golightly. Careful revision preserves both the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the climax.

If detailed changes such as these help to sharpen the effect of the drama, other alterations suggest that even in his gentle and genteel world by the Thames, Barrie is anxious to avoid stretching the credulity of his audience unnecessarily. He does not strive for naturalism, but by maintaining consistency of character and plot and avoiding excessive exaggeration he observes the theatrical code of the day and so avoids the strictures leveled, on grounds of improbability, against *Lady Windermere's Fan*.²¹ In his revision, therefore, he is at some pains to correct the wilder imaginings of his draft, toning down both farcical and melodramatic effects. Notably, while the minor characters are still essentially defined by their humors (Mrs. Golightly's knitting; W.G.'s love of cricket), those humors are played down. More care is also taken to lead naturally into highpoints of comedy. It is, for example, necessary that Jasper's enthusiastic wooing of Bell be conducted safe in the knowledge that she already loves Kit. In the Indiana MS. he is given this information after abruptly saying to Mrs. Golightly, "Let's talk of something else." Although he is not on familiar terms with her, he then proceeds to ask for intimate details about her daughter. In the Lord Chamberlain's text he makes sure that the information comes from a more likely source (W.G.) and is freely offered rather than awkwardly elicited.

The exact status of the Lord Chamberlain's text must be borne in mind when considering changes such as these. The play received its license on the 24th February 1892, one day before the first performance. Although the text had certainly been handed in some time earlier, its final format is largely the result of Barrie's experience in rehearsal. What he appears to

²⁰See Harry M. Geduld, *James Barrie* (New York, 1971), p. 99.

²¹William Archer in *The Old Drama and the New* (London, 1923), p. 331 in reviewing Barrie's work praises him for adapting dramas of fantasy "to the stern exigencies of the modern realistic technique."

have learned above all is that the leisurely, anecdotal style of the Indiana draft still betrayed his earlier training as a novelist. Sharpening of dialogue, highlighting of dramatic climaxes and simplification of form were all necessary to convert the material conceived in the study into powerful drama. This implied a good deal of cutting, and revisions aimed at achieving these goals were to continue even after he had received the Lord Chamberlain's license. In terms of the evolution of the play, therefore, this text represents an intermediary, if important, form. But two further types of alteration made at this stage, must be analyzed before looking at the final version.

Of these the first directly reflects the problem of changing mode. When discussing this point earlier I noted that the finalized text contained one or two passages which had discreetly been borrowed from the prose-works. Many more are to be found in the Indiana MS. but the majority are deleted in the Lord Chamberlain's text and are not resuscitated. It is, therefore, at this intermediary stage that Barrie most resolutely breaks the direct links between prose narrative and play. Usually the deletion simply speeds up dialogue. In the Indiana draft, for example, W.G.'s initial bantering with Baby (Nanny) included the following exchange:

Baby: The time will come when you'll give anything for a kiss.

W.G.: Look here, Baby, you have no right to bring such a charge against a fellow. And him as big as you. Little boy! Why you should just have seen me at breakfast with our tutor, old Jerry, that's all. The other fellows were frightened to open their mouths, but what do you think I did?

Baby: Something silly, Will.

W.G.: I asked old Jerry as cool as you like, to pass the butter! And I won't be called Will. My name is W.G.

In the Lord Chamberlain's text and the finalized version the joke about Jerry and the butter, which has been borrowed almost verbatim from chapter 4 of *When a Man's Single*, is omitted, so that the script reads:

Nanny: Pooh! the time will come when you will be willing to give anything for a kiss.

W.G.: Rot! You have no right to bring such charges against a fellow.

Nanny: A fellow! You horrid little boy.

W.G.: Little boy! I'm as tall as you!

Here the effect is simply to speed up the action by deleting a quietly amusing joke, more likely to please a leisurely reader than a theater audience. In Act II another borrowed passage disappears, but this time the decision is related to a more complex dramatic situation. In all versions the subject of smoking—one of Barrie's lasting obsessions and the ostensible topic of his prose narrative *Lady Nicotine*—is used to clever comic effect when Kit tries to give it up as proof of his love for Bell. In the Indiana MS. alone it is Jasper who first expatiates on the problem at length in

answer to an abrupt question from Baby. It has not been prepared for dramatically and serves only as an amusing digression:

Baby: Why do men smoke?

Jasper: Some so as not to get sick in the company of smokers, and some because they begin it at school and are afraid to leave off. A lot smoke for economy, because it makes them work harder, and then at picnics it drives away the midges from the ladies, and it keeps you cool in summer and warm in winter.

Baby: Does nobody smoke because he likes it?

Jasper: None.

Jasper's ideas have all been anticipated by Dick Abinger in Chapter XII of *When a Man's Single*:

I know some men who smoke because they might get sick otherwise when in the company of smokers. Others smoke because they began to do so at school, and are now afraid to leave off. A great many men smoke for philanthropic motives, smoking enabling them to work harder, and so being for the family's good. At picnics men smoke because it is the only way to keep the midges off the ladies. Smoking keeps you cool in summer and warm in winter, and is an excellent disinfectant. There are even said to be men who admit that they smoke because they like it, but for my own part I fancy I smoke because I forget not to do so.²²

The clumsiness of this interpolation would be highlighted on stage, but the deletion also confines the problems of smoking to Kit alone, clearly contrasting his genuine problems with love and the weed against Jasper's lighthearted flirtations and contented pipesmoking.

The second category of alteration is at first sight a surprising one. *Walker London* was in large part conceived as a vehicle for Toole. Yet seven lengthy speeches or soliloquys spoken by Jasper, the character he represented, disappear or are drastically shortened in the Lord Chamberlain's text and all subsequent versions. If, as seems certain, the former is a text influenced by theatrical performance, why does the actor-manager permit his own part to be cut?

The answer once more relates to Barrie's inexperience as a dramatist. The vast majority of these speeches come in Act III. They concern the barber's discovery of Sarah and his plan to convey her by the pulley and ropes used by W.G. for his cricket practice on deck down to the dinghy. Almost without exception they describe events and situations which are rendered self-evident by the visual dimension of the stage or can be conveyed more effectively by expression or gesture. Here, for example, is what Barrie originally intended Jasper to say towards the end of the play just before the clock strikes ten:

²²J.M. Barrie, *When a Man's Single* (London, 1888), p. 174.

Jasper: If they were to go inside, I wonder if I could carry her down to the dingey and...and pull off with her. I'm a desperate man. I can't get her down the ladder. No, she would wake up and expose me. Expose! That's the word and I don't like it.

Apart from the overly melodramatic nature of the content, this speech which disappears entirely in later versions could be much more comically conveyed through mime, especially by an actor whose reputation for comedy had largely been built up on the expressiveness of his face. In giving Toole more words to speak, Barrie is ironically underestimating the actor's art.

The acting edition received by the Lord Chamberlain, then, was a text which made much fuller allowance for the demands of the theater than the Indiana draft. It was also much shorter. But it is not the last stage of Barrie's revision as a comparison between it and the finalized version reveals. The emphasis in this last stage of revision (for Barrie did not include *Walker London* in the *Collected Works* of 1928 and so did not make changes after the theatrical run was over) is on creating a clearer overall form; on strengthening an, until then quite minimal, symbolic level of application; and on adding passages or theatrical effects which would increase the play's popular appeal. Most of these changes seem to have been made either at the late rehearsal stage or very early in the run, but here exactitude is impossible. Barrie kept making changes and Walbrook notes that he even added new jokes specifically for the 300th performance.²³

The additions aimed at increasing the play's popular appeal often suggest cooperation between dramatist and theater staff. The phrase "Sarah, I'm slipping" or variations on it recurs with greater frequency almost certainly because one of the advertising posters showed Toole in costume uttering those words.²⁴ The potential offered by the various enclosed compartments of the houseboat permitting separate conversations to continue contemporaneously or highlighting Jasper's final solitude had been quite fully exploited by Barrie even in the earliest drafts. But theatrical effects were increasingly drawn in to highlight these moments. In Act III of the final version, for example, Jasper's desperate situation as he struggles on the upper deck is highlighted by having the blinds in the saloon beneath drawn and using limelights to contrast his isolation against the shadows of those dancing happily inside.

The major addition at this stage, though, is the comic exchange between Nanny and Andrew in Act I, where they discuss national stereotypes:

²³Walbrook, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁴The poster is preserved in the Drama Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum—"Toole's Theatre, 1892."

Andrew: You're a bonny wee lassie.

Nanny: No compliments, but I see you're a Scotchman now, and I used to doubt it.

Andrew: Why?

Nanny: Because you never say 'Bang went saxpence whatever,' and then you don't wear the national costume.

Andrew: What national costume? (Nanny points to her skirts and to his legs.) Oh, it's only the English tourists that wear that; besides, you're not national either, for though you're an Irish girl, you don't flirt!

Nanny: No, never. Oh! there's a fly in my eye!

Andrew: Fly in your eye! Oh I must operate at once.²⁵

The introduction of this episode suggests that the audience enjoyed comedy which depended for its effect on the interplay of generally accepted myths of nationality. A study of contemporary plays would confirm that this was, indeed, a popular element in many light comedies. It assumes a particular importance for Barrie, because evidence such as this is used by some (mostly Scottish) critics as part of an argument aimed at depicting Barrie as a betrayer of his national heritage. Such attacks seem to this Scottish critic often to betray an overly serious view of comic conventions and/or failure to view the whole dramatic context. This first example of "Scotch stereotyping" in his plays is a late revision in which the stereotype, having been suggested by another (Irish) stereotype, is rejected and turned against yet another stereotype, that of the English tourist. The humor derives not from Andrew's use of the word "lassie" but from his failure to see that Nanny is flirting and so fulfilling her national stereotype while he so determinedly denies his. Neither Nanny nor Andrew discusses the subject again, nor do they load their conversation with the "Hoots mons" and "Sure and begorrahs" of contemporary farce or music hall. In Andrew's seriousness and lack of romantic fervor Barrie draws on another myth about Scotsmen, one which he will use in later dramas. But in *Walker London* he creates a situation which involves gentle mockery of all three nations, making as slight and reserved a bow to the comic potential of stage Scotsmen as he can.

The second and more important addition concerns the call of the cuckoo. There is no cuckoo in the Indiana MS. In the Lord Chamberlain's text its call is heard only after Jasper has been cross-examined on his African experiences in Act II. On hearing it, he becomes dizzy and when it calls out three times, Nanny draws attention to it:

Nanny: Listen to that cuckoo.

²⁵*The Plays, op. cit.*, p. 7.

Mrs. Golightly: Yes, we never heard it till you came to us Colonel and now we hear it a dozen times a day.²⁶

It sounds once more immediately afterwards and Jasper vows to shoot it. But, despite this melodramatic intention there is no further reference to it. In the final version, however, the cuckoo is so firmly related to the action that Walbrook entitles his chapter on *Walker London*, "J.L. Toole and the Cuckoo." This is because in the final version the cuckoo's call is heard at almost every crucial moment in Jasper's career. The symbolism is not subtle but it does effectively underline Jasper's position, concentrating on the more melancholy aspects of his swashbuckling.

The houseboat thus becomes the nest into which Jasper has infiltrated himself in the disguise of gentility. He successfully passes himself off to the mother (Mrs. Golightly) and her fledglings as one of the family. In the end the nest becomes overcrowded, nature reasserts itself and he returns to his own kind (Sarah). The leitmotiv is very clearly established and its implications are explicitly spelled out for an audience who would not expect to be intellectually challenged. Thus in the final version the bird's first call is accompanied by an explanation, provided by Jasper's mercenary ally old Ben:

I tell you what, I believe—you're the cuckoo in the hen's nest and that's your mate a-calling to you.²⁷

The mate is Sarah and the call is usually heard when she is nearby. At the end of Act I, for example, its cry annoys Jasper and shortly afterwards he sees Sarah searching for him. As it represents the call of nature, urging him to return to its own kind, it inevitably helps Sarah, the girl from his own class. At the end of Act II his shout of "Damn that cuckoo" alerts her to his whereabouts and he only narrowly escapes discovery, while in Act III it is the bird's call which awakens her and finally brings them face to face. In various ways Barrie's dialogue has suggested that the medieval law of "kynde" still works strongly in Victorian England. The symbolic use of the cuckoo underlines this.

Those critics who detect a sadder, more wistful message underlying the dominant farcical tone of the play are in part reacting to the implied associations of this symbolism. Jasper is an intruder, his adventure is doomed to failure and its continuation can only result in destruction of the idyllic family group. The story line, however, does not obey the fuller logic of the symbolism, and the end is conceived through a retreat from illusion and a happy resolution involving three marriages. A distinction is made between those who hear and understand the cuckoo's warning

²⁶This exchange is retained in the final version. See *The Plays*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 17.

(Sarah and Jasper) and those who hear but ignore it (the women on the houseboat). They are puzzled by the cuckoo but question no further because they are anxious to accept Jasper as the romantic adventurer of his and their imaginings. This tension between happy narrative conclusion and a more complex, ultimately melancholy, logic of metaphor or symbol will be used much more ambitiously by Barrie in later plays where the latter level is part of the initial conception of the work, not added at a late stage of revision. Already, however, he is experimenting with a technique which can allow him to remain within the conventions of light comedy while exploring means of escaping from them.

The cuckoo symbolism also becomes part of a re-ordering of his material to produce a more clear-cut, balanced form. In this he is already moving towards the model of the "well-made" play. Throughout his career in the theater this remains a constant goal. It betrays itself in an obsessional concern with dramatic highpoints, especially the ends of acts, which are almost always a major focus for revisions. This compulsion is first revealed in *Walker London*. In no case does the ending of an act in the final version coincide with that of either the Indiana MS. or the Lord Chamberlain's text, and in every case the cuckoo is introduced as part of the alteration.

In Act I the change is slight but important, showing Barrie once more concerned to play down unnecessary exaggeration and to eliminate inconsistency of character, while achieving maximum dramatic effect. In the Indiana MS. the sight of Sarah caused Jasper to faint. This was rather melodramatic and at odds with the self-possession he had displayed until then. In the Lord Chamberlain's text he does not faint but hides by pulling down the blind, while in the final version Barrie precedes the incident with a triple call from the cuckoo and makes his character duck out of sight, a contrived action wholly in key with his flirtatiousness and faked dizzy spells. The change maintains all the elements of surprise and suspense but keeps Jasper true to his role of self-serving deceiver.

The finale of Act II involves Sarah coming closer to her prey and discovering that Jasper is on the houseboat. In the Indiana MS. and Lord Chamberlain's text she does so by finding the straw hat he has earlier thrown away. In the final version it is the cuckoo which alerts her. Its call causes him to shout aloud and so introduces a tighter dramatic situation with symbolic undertones of the sort discussed earlier.

But the most radical change is reserved for Act III. Jasper's plan to spirit away Sarah at the end involves the most ambitious stage effect in the whole play. The crane which W.G. has set up for cricket practice is used in both the earlier versions to lift his sleeping fiancée from her chair on the upper deck down to the punt, so that they can make their escape. In practice this must have involved a deal of movement and noise, likely to awaken more lethargic mortals than Sarah. There was the danger that if she remained resolutely asleep while the crane creaked and the chair

dropped, farce might intervene at an inopportune moment. By having her wakened by the cuckoo, in the final version, Barrie at once achieved a more realistic finale and maintained the symmetry of introducing his key symbol at the end of each act.

Once Sarah and Jasper are sailing away, yet another variation is introduced in the final version. The words "Walker London" end the play in all texts but the context alters. In the Indiana MS. and the Lord Chamberlain's text Jasper and Sarah have passed out of earshot when Mrs. Golightly reveals that yesterday the "Colonel" had given her his telegraphic address. After searching in her purse she finds a scrap of paper and reads out the two words. In the final version this becomes part of a shouted exchange between houseboat and punt:

Mrs. Golightly: Your address?

Jasper (off): Walker, London.

All: Walker, London.²⁸

This minor alteration brings together many of the improvements detected in Barrie's revisions. It is more dramatic, being part of a dialogue with chorus; it is shouted out rather than read quietly; it gives the last effective word to the comic lead and it is more realistic—why should Jasper have written down a demonstrably false address? Why had Mrs. Golightly not read and questioned it earlier? Above all, it shows a dramatist whose second thoughts are usually an improvement on his first and who is so deeply concerned with his work that such detailed alterations are a matter of concern to him.

The importance of *Walker London* in a study of Barrie's dramatic career does not lie in the quality of the play itself. However popular it was then, it remains a slight piece which does not age well and did not even survive an Atlantic crossing, lasting only two weeks at the Park Theatre in New York.²⁹ What it does reveal is Barrie's complete committedness to this new form, his determination to make a successful transition from novel to drama and growing awareness of where the two modes reinforced each other and where they conflicted. His thorough revisions, ranging from minor details to radical alterations of form and symbolism, aim always at a clearer, more dramatic presentation of the tale and usually these aims are achieved. The real question is not whether as dramatic journeyman Barrie will eventually master his craft. All the signs suggest that he will. The remaining question is whether he will have anything of importance to say. And although there are already some signs of a unique vision

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁹Geduld, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

where comedy and pathos, naturalism and fantasy mingle, *Walker London* in its determined triviality cannot on its own provide an answer.

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