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J. M. Barrie's Jekyll and Hyde Drama: Lifting the Curtain on *The House of Fear*

The discoverer of a hitherto unpublished work by any major author is not the sort of person you should at once trust, especially when he has unearthed his "pearl" after a long search. In awareness of this, I have chosen to precede any account of my quest for *The House of Fear*, by facing a series of questions about its value. In turn, I shall ask what it is about, when it was written, whether it has a historical value and why I think it has literary value in and for itself. After all, the case may well be that the curtain should not rise on this play at all.

A brief précis will, at narrative level, answer the first question. The plot of the play concerns a fifty year old man called Lapraik, whom we first meet in his den explaining his fear of sleep to Fenton, his butler. His account in terms of an evil alter-ego's effort to possess him sounds, now, like an attempt to objectify the symptoms of the male menopause in its dual fear of death and longing for a last defiant rebellion in life. He falls asleep and, in a darkness lit only by the flames of the fire, his alter-ego, the diabolical Lapraik, is seen lurking in the hall. The butler then goes to Mrs. Lapraik's boudoir where his expressed desire to find another place after twenty years' service gives a plausible dramatic reason for their telling each other (and so the audience) the changes they have observed in her husband's behavior. The jaunty figure of the evil Lapraik enters posing as Mrs. Lapraik's husband. He is trapped into a false account of his "own" early life, begins to terrorize his wife and obliquely threatens to murder Fenton. The third boudoir visitor is the young husband of her youth who explains his guilt in willfully having allowed evil to pollute him and their marriage. Finally, he is persuaded to go upstairs to the bedroom where, erroneously, the evil Lapraik is thought to be. Five seconds later, the same actor, in his devilish guise, is seen downstairs in the hall climbing up to the bedroom. Evil rather than good, it appears, will have the advantage of surprise in the battle for Mr. Lapraik's soul. The play concludes as it opened in the den. The sleeping Lapraik of the first scene awakens. This and the "resurrection" of Fenton from his supposed murder reveal that the audience have, themselves, lived through a dream. But if the gap between life and dream is established for the audience, Mr. Lapraik still believes in the latter and waits for his future fate to be resolved in the battle terms of his reverie. Mrs. Lapraik, implored to go upstairs, does so and reports that nobody is there. Disbelieving and unsatisfied, her husband is killed by the tension.

Stated thus, it all sounds rather over the top. In addition, some of the dialogue betrays Barrie's continued awkwardness with direct expressions of

love. Mrs. Lapraik and Young Lapraik have one or two moments of undiluted sentiment, which a modern audience might well find farcical. There are, I think, strong reasons for *not* tuning one's critical ear solely, or even principally, at the narrative level. These I will introduce later, but the first test of the play, as plot, has not favored the case for the defense greatly.

As it happens, neither will the evidence concerning when it was composed. The typescripts of *The House of Fear* are dated November 19th, 1916, a time of crisis for the nation and of artistic and domestic crisis for Barrie. Between 1908 (*What Every Woman Knows*) and 1917 (*Dear Brutus*) only one full length play and no major prose works were produced. Barrie was almost entirely committed to shorter one act dramas and although a few of these were published and one—*The Twelve Pound Look* (1910)—was of the highest quality, he felt he had lost creative direction and even some of his normal workaholic enthusiasm. In a letter to the Duchess of Sutherland in 1917 he admits, "I either work a deal too much or not at all." He refers to "slinging off" about six shorts plays a week: "Mostly of no account."¹

In describing how he sadly tore up of most of these fragments, his most thorough biographer, Denis Mackail provides *The House of Fear* with its first supportive comment so far:

'The Fight for Mr. Lapraik,' it was called; then on second thoughts, 'The House of Fear'; and as he had it typed, he must have thought it one of the more promising ideas. A Jekyll-and-Hyde affair, the struggle for possession of a middle-aged man between the forces of good and evil.²

Mackail is enthusiastic about its quality. He calls it "eerie" and makes a tonal comparison with Poe. Despite this critical support, the fact remains that it was never performed.

If the artistic setting in time gives rather ambiguous testimony and needs deeper study, the domestic and national reasons for the playwright's bleakness of spirit are interlinked and unequivocal. The martial ambitions of the Kaiser led Barrie to question the results in practice of the competitive, Darwinian philosophy which had, until then, been the mainstay of his thinking. Conflict among the most talented in a battle for survival was a comforting idea for the self-made man and self-appointed genius in his study. When blood began to flow from these tenets, he reneged and patriotism took over in his writing. The uninspired propaganda play, *Der Tag* (1914) signalled an

¹Cited in Denis Mackail, *J.M.B.* (London, 1941), p. 500.

²*Ibid.*

end to his heroic, Carlylean form of Darwinism.³ The war, it should be remembered, had an intensely personal effect on Barrie who was, by then, guardian to all five Llewelyn Davies boys. If, until this time, he had been haunted by the knowledge that he only acted out feeling for others (the fate of Sentimental Tommy) selfless love and the emotional maturity that comes with it are reflected in his letters to all "his boys." The keenest expressions of that love are reserved for George, then on active service. In 1915, that correspondence breaks off with news of his death in battle.

Work on *The House of Fear*, therefore, coincided with a period of emotional crisis for Barrie. His grief may have delivered him from Sentimental Tommy's ersatz life in Art but, for the first time, writing was not the principal thing in his life. "When?" therefore, provides no more optimistic a background for *The House of Fear* than "What?"

More secure ground is reached, I believe, when one asks whether the play adds to our understanding of Barrie's work and his place within Scottish literature. The précis proves that the theme of the "doppelgänger" and devilish possession so popular in Scottish literature from Henryson through James VI to Hogg and Stevenson now 'possesses' Barrie. Mackail's association of it with *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) suggests that the playwright is conscious of this history. The protagonist's chosen name with its clear echo of "The Tale of Tod Lapraik" (1903) confirms the Stevenson link in particular.⁴

The value of the work for study of the Barrie canon is just as compelling. Accompanying Barrie's writings on the possession theme are no fewer than 391 "Notes" jotted down over a period of years. Almost all of his dramas begin in numbered note form in the general Notebooks where the ideas for different dramas jostle with one another. The Lapraik "Notes," like the "Faery Notes" for *Peter Pan*,⁵ warrant a separate manuscript. In extent, too, they vie with *Pan's* 466. But if this argues for the seriousness of Barrie's intention, it further highlights the failure of Lapraik's drama to win its way into print compared with *Peter Pan's* ten different modal triumphs.⁶

³See R. D. S. Jack, *The Road to the Never Land* (Aberdeen, 1991), pp. 73-5; 108-11; 251-6.

⁴"Black Andie's Tale of Tod Lapraik" forms part of Chapter XV of R. L. Stevenson's *Catriona* and is conveniently reprinted from Volume XI of the 1912 Swanston edition in *Selected Short Stories of R. L. Stevenson*, edited by Ian Campbell (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 90-7.

⁵Beinecke Barrie Collection MS P45/1903.

⁶Between 1900 and 1927 Barrie treated the Pan story as hypothesis within novel, part of a photograph story, as episode in adult novel, full length play, One Act play, Ballet, chil-

I believe that the great care lavished in the preparatory "Notes" should be related to Barrie's quest for a new literary direction. Essentially a sad man with a tragic turn of mind, he nonetheless found comedy easiest to write. His one early attempt at serious Ibsenite drama, *The Wedding Guest* (1900), had been a failure. Immediately prior to it, the dramatization of *The Little Minister* (1898)—though commercially successful—had disappointed Barrie even more. It too aimed at introducing a more serious tone, this time through the eerie mode of myth and faery. As a writer without other means of support, Barrie judged two artistic disasters quite enough and returned to a predominantly comic tone. Obsessive interest in the possession theme at a time of greater affluence and self-confessed artistic crisis marks a return to the diablerie and eeriness of *The Little Minister* and the attempt to find a more harmonious union between wit and witchery.

Clearly, this is not the place to argue such a case in full. The fact remains that the later Barrie's major successes often blend laughter with the haunting sadness of myth and legend. *Barbara's Wedding* (1927), the short story *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* (1931) and even *Dear Brutus* prove that the experimentation continued in the Lapraik "Notes"⁷ was not a waste of time, even if Lapraik remained stillborn. But of course it is *Mary Rose* (1920) which most closely draws on the ideas and dramatic techniques planned for *The House of Fear*. The ghostly music which acts as a leitmotif for the one act play will be "lifted" into the Hebrides; again a haunted house with closed doors and mysterious corridors will link past, present and future within a morality-mystery of faery possession. That *Mary Rose* is a much finer work goes without saying, but her dramatic appearance is evidently linked to *The House of Fear*.

Arguments from literary history, however compelling, remain second-hand justifications for publishing a text. While in no sense overrating the play, I wish finally to make a case for its literary value. This, in its turn, involves countering the most directly damaging evidence of all and facing the last of my proposed questions, "literary value in and for itself." So long as theater managers, offered the gold-mine of a new Barrie drama, appear to have thought it not worth the effort, the possibility that it is just a very bad play misjudged by Mackail and (on his evidence) its author remains open.

The opening Stage Directions to *The House of Fear* permit an alternative hypothesis. The call for a "revolving stage" limits the theaters of London at once to The Coliseum, the only one which could provide such a set. When,

dren's novel, film scenario, short story and speech.

⁷Beinecke Barrie Collection MS H665. A fuller account of this MS appears in the following section.

seven years later in 1923, Cynthia Asquith writes to remind Barrie of the play's continued suspension in dramatic limbo, his reply defines its unpopularity in technical, theatrical terms rather than transmitting doubts about its quality:

It is curious that the revolving stage play should have come back to your mind for it had quite gone out of mine though the Coliseum people occasionally drop a line about it. The worst of the thing is that they alone have a revolving stage and it is such a huge place.⁸

It should also be remembered that *The House of Fear* is only a curtain-raiser or one part of a triple bill. However impressive it may or may not be on its own, what would fill the majority of the evening's entertainment, attract the necessarily large audience and persuade a Stage Manager that his sanity could, at the same time, be preserved? That the question "Why?" is answered in this way by Barrie gives me further justification in offering it to a wider audience for the first time along with some account of its discovery along with the Lapraik "Notes."

The Hunt for Mr. Lapraik

Enter Mrs. Lapraik

The vast majority of Barrie MSS are held at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. It was there that the name Lapraik first caught my eye. The slim folder—M58—was entitled 'Mrs Lapraik.' It contained the 391 Notes, to which I have referred. These were in three sections⁹ along with two manuscript versions of what seemed at first sight a short ghost story. The name Lapraik with its suggestions of Stevenson's "possession" tale in *Catrina* had not misled. In fact, I had found what, the "Notes" confirmed, purported to be the opening Chapter of a Memoir, written by an actress. In this the mysterious Lapraik figure was also a woman representing the repressed, "ordinary" side to her personality. Inevitably, the actress feels, "Mrs Lapraik" is destroying the artistic part of her, and gaining control. As I have already traced the details of this part of the Lapraik quest and reprinted the

⁸Beinecke Barrie Collection MS A3 22/8/23 Letter to Cynthia Asquith. Their long author/secretary relationship makes their letters especially frank and the ideas expressed in them almost always reliable.

⁹Subsequently referred to as "Notes," "Act 1," and "Who?" from their respective headings.

shorter version of the chapter elsewhere,¹⁰ I shall only treat it briefly and in relation to *The House of Fear*.

In retrospect, many parallels may be traced between Memoir and drama—the shared name and theme, the emphasis on sleep and illness as the most vulnerable time for possession, the middle-age of the protagonists and so on. At this time, however, I did not have an inkling of Mr. Lapraik's existence. Moreover the main section headed "Notes" (numbered 1 to 335 with three additional double entries) clearly referred to the actress story. As I had dated the earlier note entries and the shorter story around 1913, all seemed neat and satisfying. After all, 1913 was the date for *Rosalind*, whose heroine had also been a middle-aged ("forty and a bittock") actress seeking refuge from membership of that "odd race" in the "comfy, sloppy" ordinary rôle of her own mother. It was easy to see that Mrs. Page in *Rosalind* had produced Mrs. Lapraik; what reason was there to assume a drama and a Mr. Lapraik?

Even the Stevenson parallels were mentioned in the "Notes," but adapted to female roles. Tod's "dwams," his fevers, his lost sense of identity—all are retranslated in the "Notes" and become part of the battle with Mrs. Lapraik. When Note 209 posits, "In a way it is a sort of Jekyll and Hyde," Note 208 has just confirmed that we are concerned with a lady's Memoirs. As Barrie had consciously turned Carlyle's heroes into their female equivalents,¹¹ might he not just be doing the same for the ghostly protagonists in Stevenson?

The hints towards a play and a Mr. Lapraik, as contained in the "Notes," can be simplified into three broad classes. The first sign was modal. Now, the syntax of Barrie's preparatory Notes is almost always conditional or hypothetical ("Suppose it were" rather than "Will be"). It is also usual for him to try out an idea in different modes before settling on one. The peculiarity of these "Notes," then, does not lie in his thinking successively of placing his actress in memoir, short story, one act play, three act play, series of articles by different hands, odd studies—as he does; the peculiarity lies in the continuing tenacity of the dramatic form as a rival to the Memoir.

Mrs. Lapraik and the actress are first specifically viewed as characters in a play at Note 48, to which in a side-note, Barrie adds "Beginning of play idea." Later sections—e.g. Notes 169-172 are wholly given over to the play concept. At the end, no decision has yet been reached. Note 283, for exam-

¹⁰As "The Hunt for Mrs Lapraik," *The Yale University Library Gazette*, 67 (October 1992), 47-57.

¹¹See my article "James Barrie and the Napoleonic Heroine," *The Carlyle Yearbook*, Vol. 13 (1992), 1-14.

ple, begins, "If it is a story instead of a play. . ." Of the two sets of subsidiary Notes, the shorter one (15 notes) is headed "Who" and is memoir/identity oriented. The longer set (38 notes) is headed "Act 1." It is the plan for the first Act of a full length drama.

The Notes I have so far discussed were all centered on the actress story. Indeed, the "Act 1" Notes are an attempt to disentangle one possible line in which the writing of the Memoirs is contained within and becomes a central focus for dramatic treatment. The idea that an actress's many roles make her peculiarly vulnerable to attacks on her identity is only the most obvious of the ideas distinguishing this tale from either Lapraik's or Jekyll's and the final note in "Act 1"—"38) Henry James's *Tragic Muse*" confirms that this has not been diminished. In summing up the actress, Marian Rooth, in *The Tragic Muse*, Peter Sherringham notes just that professional characteristic. "It struck him abruptly that [she was] a woman whose only being was to 'make believe,' to make believe that she had any personality you might like" (Chapter 36).¹²

The main "Notes" from the outset, however, develop another line of expansion centered on characters rather than modes. The very first Note suggests that the actress might wonder about a Mr. Lapraik. "1) I never knew any Lapraik but that is certainly her name. Does it mean that I should have married a Lapraik? . . . Certainly if I met a Lapraik now, it would interest me." At the same time, the actress's own husband is causing some concern, both for Memoir—"17) My Husband—a chapter"—and as a figure in the drama. In both contexts, various possibilities are run through. For the actress's husband Barrie prefers variations on innocence and unimaginative stolidity anticipating the younger Lapraik in *The House of Fear*. The mysterious Mr. Lapraik remains an imagined voice and presence but does draw on ideas of guilt and darkness.

None of this is developed in the Memoir manuscript. The modal evidence and the male characterization for the Memoir in the "Notes" would, on their own, have made me wonder whether a dually identified "Mr. Lapraik" might have emerged dramatically elsewhere. When the various hypotheses for a drama were added, that feeling intensified. Barrie decides, at Note 87, "In this case [play] . . . there should be a Mr L., the person Mrs L. should have married." At once, mystery, guilt, artistic energy and aggression enter the scene. This Lapraik has an "artistic temperament," is "brought home by the police," has "a hold over his wife," is "vengeful," "threatening" and "repents a past he has never had." Other (though fewer) entries suggest the opposite, "Or Mr L might be a simple creation who wandered guilelessly into

¹²*The Tragic Muse* was first published in installments in *The Atlantic Monthly*, beginning January 1889. Quotations are from the Macmillan edition of 1921.

play." Both Jekyll and Hyde aspects are emerging, as is the idea of their being the same soul, viewed at different times. Other dramatic characters are simultaneously being contemplated. Economically to acquaint the audience with the central situation, a servant may have to be "examined" or at least "questioned without letting him into the secret." Here is Fenton and here also, in embryo, the entire plot of *The House of Fear*. To suggest I deduced its existence would be an exaggeration. That the three lines of evidence in Barrie MS M58—Memoir/Drama; Lapraik/Memoir and Lapraik/Drama—initiated the second phase of the quest is incontestable.

Editing *The House of Fear*

As the manuscripts in the Beinecke Barrie collection are filed by the first letter of the title, I began by looking under M (Mr) and under L (Lapraik) with no success. It was at this point that I re-read Mackail's biography, starting from 1913. Describing the events of 1916, he calls attention to a play, *The Struggle for Mr Lapraik*, subsequently re-named *The House of Fear*. A check under "H" led me to MS H665 and the two typescripts on which the present edition is based.

There could be no doubt that I had discovered the "repressed" dramatic plot of the "Notes." Often, the plot of the play contains details shared with "Mrs Lapraik" and anticipated in those "Notes." For example "Who?" Note 2 reads, "Some one trying to push me out of way and take my place." In "Mrs Lapraik," the actress records, "She pushed me softly and with infinite stealth." In *The House of Fear*, the younger Lapraik notes the same symptom, "He was always pushing, trying to push me out of my office chair, off the curb, out of the carriage." Other details plotted in the "Notes" and subsequently realized in both Memoir and drama include the lamp being mysteriously switched off; the would-be possessor's habit of prowling while uttering animal noises; the use of doors as gateways into or barricades against evil and clothes as a focus for diabolic interest.

The plot of the play also contains ideas and even a major character (Fenton) not utilized for the Memoir Chapter. Dramatic form also permits one actor to play two parts as Note 48 had suggested—"The idea might write into a comedy in which actress plays both characters of two Mrs Lapraiks." In fact, the actor who takes on Lapraik's role in *The House of Fear* must play three characters and span youth to late middle age, a combination anticipated when Note 250 ("Passing of time") is added to Note 87, in which a further male character-contrast between the actress's naive husband and the mysterious Lapraik is considered.

The play concentrates on a later period of possession than the Memoir. In the latter, all is still potential; in the former, possession has already been gained. Note 83 had seen the theater as especially fitted for this stage of development. "Suppose Mrs L does get possession (instead of talking about possibility). This would be especially good in a play—tables turned." To this later stage of the mystery also belongs Note 306's idea of "Mrs L. petting and cajoling"—one of the techniques used by Mrs. Lapraik in *The House of Fear*; while Barrie (fifty-five in 1916) can develop the autobiographical suggestion of Note 103—"Mr Lapraik might be my character"—in a plot focussed on a "fifty-year old" man.

This established, I return to the dramatic texts contained in H665 with a view to "producing" them. In this context, I shall first give an account of the editorial method and, in the last section, return to the question of that text's literary value by studying it as a production in the theater rather than simply words on the page.

Beinecke Barrie MS H665 contains two copies of the same typescript. Each has a title page, a page for dramatis personae and twenty-nine pages of text. They are distinguished by the different manuscript excisions and additions made on each by Barrie. Both title pages read "THE FIGHT FOR MR. LAPRAILE," the name being a consistent misreading of "LAPRAIK" by the typist. Only MS H665(1) has Barrie's written instruction that this error be emended throughout and only MS H665(1) deletes that title and has the holograph alteration to "THE HOUSE OF FEAR." It is also shorter than MS H665(2) and Barrie tends to cut out purple passages in later revisions. For these reasons, I have used MS H665(1) with its holograph alterations as the basis for my text, introducing readings from MS H665(2) in two contexts only:

- I: For the one holograph addition concerning Fenton's scarf. This only appears in (2) and is followed through the play systematically.
- II: Where the Stage Directions in (2) provide clearer guidance for the actors. When the hall is revealed for the first time, only (2) directs Lapraik to behave "jauntily *but devilishly*."

In so doing, I may well be reinstating material which Barrie had consciously rejected as overly melodramatic or unnecessary. By keeping such readings to a minimum, however, I hope to have helped any drama company which might wish to perform it while giving one clear textual exemplification of the *type* of change contemplated by Barrie after the typescript had been received.

Precisely which stage in the dramatic evolution of *The House of Fear* the typescripts belong to can be gauged by relating them to their author's estab-

lished practice.¹³ As Mackail noted, typescript was itself a sign of the intention to produce a work on stage. The two typescripts are covered throughout with holograph alterations. As such, they are identical to those acting texts produced by Barrie at rehearsals for the plays which were subsequently performed. Unlike his major rival, Shaw, he was a team writer, who enjoyed being present throughout the production period. From a raised seat in the stalls he accommodated his work to or defended it against the exigencies of the theater.¹⁴

As *The House of Fear* was not performed, two hypotheses present themselves. Either Barrie was now capable—literally—of *seeing* the play through in his study or—and this seems much more likely—it was read through and acted out for him with a view to testing its stageability. Such a procedure can be persuasively inferred from the evidence accrued so far. Reading through to test stage management problems was quite common; only two actors and one actress would be needed; the play did present acknowledged presentation problems and its author was one of the greatest drawing powers in the Edwardian commercial theater. That The Coliseum hosted this exercise is strongly argued by the nature of the problems confronted—it alone had the facilities—and supported by the epistolary evidence. The letter to Cynthia Asquith indicates *continued* interest from its management and the play's opening Stage Direction explicitly asks for the scene in Lapraik's den to be set with "a false proscenium" in order "to minimise width in a big theatre."

These acting texts, under either hypothesis, provide the same interrelationship evidence for an editor. The typescript is their shared basis. Each text presents common *and* variant holograph alterations to the typed version rather than a shared holographic base on which one text later builds. Given Barrie's known practice, this supports the view that they are both early and provisional acting texts. At the initial rehearsal stage alone, he might revise one typescript at one run-through but offer different revisions on another typescript at a subsequent performance. Later he would coalesce these varying reactions into a re-typed acting text used by the producer and cast. That text, as dually altered, would become the First Night play.

The alternative variants but shared holograph of H665 suggest the first phase—Barrie reacting to two initial readings of the text on stage. The sec-

¹³As deduced from study of the many typescripts held in the Beinecke Barrie Collection. The original manuscript (Glasgow University MS Gen 701) as copy for the Beinecke typescripts represents an earlier stage and has less textual authority.

¹⁴A good description of Barrie at work in the theater is contained in Cyril Maude, *The Haymarket Theatre* (London, 1903).

ond typescript state would have, by contrast, the same holographic base plus additional variants agreed at rehearsal by dramatist and producer and entered each in his own hand on their respective texts. *The House of Fear's* stage history makes it improbable that it ever reached this full production stage. But it is clear that H665(1) is the text which would have gone back to the typist—possibly after a more serious collation process against (2)—to be copied for cast and production team. It is this understanding of the normal sequence of events which has led me to read (2)'s unique holograph additions only in a few, defined situations. In so doing I hope to have "produced" a text close to the one Barrie would have presented prior to "production."

The Play Produced

Having tried to justify the printing of *The House of Fear* in terms of its historical and comparative value while showing its "rejection" to stem from practical rather than evaluative considerations, I shall now return to the question with which I began. Critically evaluated in and for itself isn't the play rather "over the top" as the précis seemed to suggest?

I am attempting neither to deny this as a likely and perfectly justifiable first reaction nor to argue evaluatively that *The House of Fear* is on a par with the very best of Barrie's one act dramas. But I do believe that it stands comparison with many of his published plays in that mode, still successfully performed to appreciative audiences. That is because the précis tells only the obvious story-line and the overt plot in any Barrie play is just one part within a symphonic structure and so only one part of the total audience effect. To support this thesis I shall soon move into the theater but first confine myself to the written word, contextualizing the précis in turn *vertically*, *modally* and *horizontally*.

For whom was that word written? Many academics tacitly assume that Barrie must be writing to satisfy their tastes alone, hubristically forgetting that the popular theater provides entertainment for many whose interests are not serious nor literary. The young Barrie who wrote academic articles¹⁵ and wished to be the most serious dramatist alive, shared that hubris but pragmatically accepted that such writing was not open to someone relying on his art to pay board and lodging. As early as Thursday 24th April 1884 in a *Nottingham Journal* leader he explained the dilemma clearly: those who rejoice on his birthday that Shakespeare was a working playwright might "keep their transports within bounds" by considering "that if he had lived to-day he would probably never have written more than one drama. It would have

¹⁵His early articles on Skelton and Nash are preserved as Barrie MSS S354 and T63.

been returned by some manager as 'Not quite up to the mark of the Frivolity.'¹⁶ This critical view is again supported by a character in *The Tragic Muse*. Gabriel Nash satirically depicts an audience of business and society folk entering the theater:

When their taste is at its lowest, flocking out of hideous hotels and restaurants gorged with food, stultified with buying and selling . . . He (the dramatist) has to make the basest concessions. (1/4)

Part of Barrie speaks through Nash. In order to satisfy his audience-paymasters but also his own intellect he developed a layered structure—at once personal, political, moral, theological and artificial—on the model of his beloved Skelton. The précis described only the story level; I shall now demonstrate what is built upon it.

Often the key to the "allegoric" or vertical structure of a Barrie play lies in the names given to the main characters. In *Little Mary* (1903) a "quintessential" plot was announced.¹⁷ In it the five levels of romance, politics, social satire, literary theory and religious allegory were *literally* fused by the words medium and "phrene" (GK stomach/soul) in their different senses at each of those levels. But the heroine, Moira Loney/Little Mary, not only acted the role of the medium for her alchemist-grandfather's quintessence but nominally announced it. As Loney, she sacrificed *romance* and family; as Maire, the Irish Heroine, she tried to solve the *historical* and *political* problems of that country by a *social* revolution centered on eating habits in a manner which parodied Shaw's views on the subject; as Mary she shadowed the Virgin's *theological* intermediacy.

Nothing so analytically complex or so conceptually neat is intended in *The House of Fear* but the same structural principle pertains. Most obviously, Stevenson has provided the name Lapraik and the line of literary comparison begins from his skillful employment of Tod Lapraik or Fox/Death Wolfrake to sign the diabolical nature of possession three times over. Fox and Wolf are types of Satan in the bestiaries. In medieval iconography the

¹⁶Barrie worked as leader writer on *The Nottingham Journal* from January 1883 until October 1884.

¹⁷See Jack, *Road to Never Land*, pp. 131-54. The major thesis of this book is that critics should judge Barrie's dramas as multi-level, poetic pieces rather than single line stories. *Little Mary* is the most extreme example of the practice being the play in which he sets his critics a communication test which they practically all failed. Shaw—an object of satiric comment within it and the master of the opposed dramatic method—was, ironically, one of the few who understood, proclaiming that this play was the one which proved Barrie's genius to him.

three-pronged fork signs his power to capture souls. In addition, "raik" may mean "sheepfold" and so, *nominally*, join the victim to its Satanic adversary.

Is Barrie conscious of all this in taking over the name from Stevenson? In the longer and later Memoir (Beinecke M58) he makes the etymological reference to the fox clearer by adopting Lupraik (Lat. *lupus*). This and his own earlier practice argue "Yes" to the first question. The significant name change in *The House of Fear* gives an affirmative reply to the second. Will Lapraik not Tod Lapraik is his protagonist's name. The new first name is repeated over and over again the moment young Will enters and the psychomachia begins. Mrs. Lapraik calls him Will fourteen times in their short exchange. This is also the dialogue which sounds oddest to modern ears. Barrie, whatever our surface reactions, is making sure that we hear that word so often that we must, however subliminally, think of the psychic will and see the young man going upstairs to fight, on Lapraik's behalf, for the re-established harmony within his soul.

Understood in this way, it becomes clear why there is so great an emphasis on Lapraik's ordinariness in *The House of Fear* as against the uniqueness of the actress protagonist in the Memoir. The "Notes" had suggested this with some regularity as, for example, in Note 319 he is designated "normal"; perhaps even so conventionally good that thoughts of death set him to "repenting a 'past' he has never had" (Note 164). The play follows this "Everyman in ordinariness" definition consistently. In the opening dialogue, Lapraik explains his problem to Fenton as "common" among men of his age, adding pointedly—"not such bad men either." "Will" Lapraik cannot be an effective figure at the level of moral allegory if he is so evil that he cannot represent the *class* of humanity he belongs to. This does not cancel out but complements the autobiographic line in the "Notes," where Lapraik is compared to McConnachie (Note 215), the Barrie alter-ego in artistry and rebellion.¹⁸ Barrie seeks always to *add* tones. But it does confirm Stevenson's central concept that Jekyll and Hyde are both within us. For those who find the dialogue uncomfortable at points it may well be an intended effect aimed at stirring hermeneutic curiosity. *Little Mary*, after all, he called "an uncomfortable play."

And for those who wonder where the specifically literary reference lies in all this nominal evidence, then "raik" can also mean the downward slope (fall, descent) of the stage towards the lights while "Will" wittily recalls the

¹⁸Defined by Barrie in *Courage*, his 1922 Rectorial address at St Andrews University: "McConnachie . . . is the name I give to the unruly half of myself: the writing half. We are complement and supplement." Or Jekyll and Hyde muted, one might add. Barrie's consciousness of his own conflicting personalities would make the doppelgänger theme personally relevant.

1913 one act play out of which *The House of Fear* grew. Just as "Mrs Lapraik" grew out of *Rosalind* so *The Will* (also 1913) deals with two young lovers who, like Lapraik, grow more evil with age. Will Lapraik's profession is the law in all probability because *The Will* is set in a lawyer's office and the lovers' descent from charity to cupidity is dramatized through three successive wills they draw up over a period of fifty years. The closeness of this topic to the possession theme in the Lapraik play is contained in one observation by the old partner who is on each occasion present. "It was always in them—a spot no bigger than a pin's head, but waiting to spread and destroy them in the fulness of time."

This account of vertical structuring reminds us that the précis only describes one level of a Barrie text—albeit the crucial foundation level. Before I look at the linear structure and ask how much of the *playing time* the précis describes, it is necessary to examine the chosen dramatic mode and so question another tacit assumption behind my reaction in hypothesis to the précis. The critical concern that it might be "over the top" derives in large part from a naturalist assumption—i.e. that the play seeks to represent life as actually experienced. But already it is clear that Barrie's world (like Dickens's for example) has its own identity in artifice. What criteria should we employ in evaluating this world? And does he sign the rules of the game clearly enough to make his expectations fair and our errors fouls?

Max Beerbohm did not always give Barrie a good press but he answers this question fairly on his behalf. Critics must never condemn fantasy *as if it were* realism. He castigates another critic for judging *What Every Woman Knows* in this way:

He has made excellent use of the best recipe of all which is to blame your man for not having set out to do something quite alien from his purpose.. If the play pretended to be in the key of sober, realistic comedy, I, too, should be awfully angry about it. . . But in *What Every Woman Knows* the key of fantasy is struck from the outset, and to that key I attune my ears.¹⁹

The key struck by *The House of Fear* is that of popular melodrama. To hear it properly we must enter that world and hear its unique music.

Before Barrie's possession drama had been conceived, one of Stevenson's reasons for refusing to dramatize the story himself had been ironically overruled. Fearing the horrible things that might happen to it in the hands of an actor-manager, he had written, "No, I will not write a play for Irving or the devil." The reference was to the elder Irving. In 1910, Irving the younger starred in a four act melodrama, *Jekyll and Hyde*, written by J. W.

¹⁹Max Beerbohm, *Last Theatres* (London, 1970), p. 386.

Comyns Carr. This ran at The Queen's from 29th January for 96 performances.²⁰ It anticipates so much of the characterization, setting and lighting later proposed for *The House of Fear* that Barrie, as avid theatergoer and Stevenson worshipper, must have seen it. He is not, therefore, simply asking his popular audience whether Lapraik could be met in the streets of London. He is primarily asking them to enjoy a melodrama which incidentally comments on another recent melodrama's treatment of the fictive Edinburgh-London evoked in Stevenson's story. What else would one expect from the author of *Sentimental Tommy*?

Comparing the melodramatic doppelgänger world of Barrie with the melodramatic doppelgänger world of Carr is, then, to compare literary like with like. The first agreed critical reaction to Carr's play was that it was "a play of startling effects"²¹—a feature of West End popular theater from then until now. Many of these effects Barrie adopts to adapt. If we focus on the presentation of the Hyde figure alone, it is Carr who first uses a dramatic turning of the head to reveal a changed appearance. That change, Irving stresses, did not involve rushing offstage and changing costume. It was instantly done onstage by altered lighting effects, by his crouching rather than standing and by deftly changing wigs. In the Stage Directions of *The House of Fear*, Barrie follows this idea and may even hope to scorn the wig. "Clothes or make-up are not what makes the difference. It is more subtle."²² In short, the dialogue is melodramatic because *The House of Fear* is a melodrama. Compared with Carr's *Jekyll and Hyde* specifically or the range of Edwardian melodramas preserved in the Lord Chamberlain's Papers it is more muted, more thoughtful while remaining true to the conventions of that mode. Every comparison underlines this. Irving played the Hyde role as a "cringing gibbering Frankenstein" (*Times*) who appeared early on. Barrie held back Lapraik/Hyde's entry and when, finally, he does face his wife, it is to frustrate—not oversatisfy—melodramatic expectation:

(LAPRAIK opens the door. We may have expected his entrance to be startling, but it is just that of a cheery citizen coming into a room in his own house.)

²⁰The text of the play is preserved in The British Library as "Lord Chamberlain's Papers 1910/4C No. 237." The press photographs, articles and reviews referred to are available for consultation in The London Theatre Museum File: "Queen's Theatre 1913." The Stevenson reference is cited in Edward Morton's article-review, *The Playgoer and Society Illustrated*, January 29th, 1910, p. 198.

²¹*The Referee*, 30th January, 1910.

²²Review and interview with Irving, *The Times*, 30th January, 1910, p. 11.

Barrie accepts the conventions of melodrama and uses them at once to please his audience and gently to "push" them towards a re-definition of that form, which excludes its more self-indulgent histrionic excesses. Nor will Barrie's Lapraik/Hyde leap on to the stage to murder Lord Carew in full view of the audience. He will "gently push" *his* victim, Fenton, and murder him offstage as the Lapraik "Notes" had suggested.

That Barrie was consciously attempting a critique of Carr's play on Stevenson's behalf can also be deduced. Reviews of Carr's play had usually regretted his "giving Jekyll a reason for murder" (*Times*) as this lost the original psychic force of Stevenson's story. As *The Referee* journalist laments, "It is just as if Hyde, at least, did not know Mr Jekyll."

Barrie idolized Stevenson and shared most of his critical assumptions. His own Lapraik "Notes" often stress that the two forces of innocence and devilishness must be part of the same soul and he could only have been appalled by a Stevenson adaptation which dislocated one part of that soul so far from the other that an essence lived on unaware of itself. He does not follow Carr either in his explicatory sub-plot nor in his clear-cut conclusion. Barrie returns to the original story as mysterious study of the evil potential in man.

These dramatized criticisms can be demonstrated by comparing Carr's female characters and his conclusion with Barrie's. Both have to introduce a stronger female interest than Stevenson because a play without actresses would not have survived long on the Edwardian West End stage. But Carr uses his females to "explain" Hyde and sentimentalize the conclusion. In his play, Lady Carew appears to have been modelled on Lucretia Borgia. She and Jekyll have had an earlier affair and are now subject to blackmail. Jekyll, therefore, has a double motivation for becoming Hyde and murdering Lord Carew—to stop the scandal and to prevent Lady Carew being arrested for the poisoning of her own husband, which she has already begun with some enthusiasm. Mrs *Laura* Jekyll, on the other hand, has all the purity of Petrarch's heroine plus physical and mental blindness. Not able to see the changes, she believes no "Hyde" exists and so gives a final eulogy on Jekyll and his kindness while clasping Hyde's body. Sentimentality and innocence triumph here; all of Stevenson's mystery and tragic soul-questioning are lost.

Barrie does neither of these things. Nora²³ Lapraik may be innocent but she is far from ignorant or guileless. Indeed, she proves she can outwit her husband's possessor on innocent areas of his past life and so uses questions on childhood to entrap him. Barrie's ending, also, is not just uncertain—its syntax suggests a conscious exercise in non-conclusiveness. Fenton and Mrs.

²³She is probably named after Nora Helmer, the innocent cum self-reliant heroine of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Barrie believed Ibsen to be the finest of all modern dramatists and regularly echoed his texts.

Lapraik do not state anything in their last exchange. "How? . . . I don't know. . . They say. . . one can dream. . . Dream? Some dream. . . What dream? . . . I didn't know. . . I can't say. . . We shall never know. . . He said. . . many men. . . Not the worst. . . he said." In restoring to Stevenson the integrity of his tragically mysterious psychomachia and re-aligning himself with Chekhov as a dramatist who refines questions rather than answers them, Barrie also reminds us not to judge his story in disjunction from the rules of its mode. As artifice compared with artifice, it moves towards understatement; as story, it ruthlessly deconstructs any certainties to which its audience may have been clinging.

The final linear (horizontal) area of consideration is perhaps the most important. A reader of a play text tends to hasten over Stage Directions. My précis necessarily favored dialogue. But Barrie's adaptation of the sets and effects in Carr's *Jekyll and Hyde* are the surest proof that he had seen it, while the doors, passages, windows and upstairs rooms which attract both dramatists are practically characters already in Stevenson's tale.

Carr has four acts and changes his sets skillfully. He opens in a shallow library with adjoining corridor and stairs to an upstairs room. On this, Barrie's opening den set is clearly based. It too is "shallow"; it too has "a winding staircase" to an upstairs bedroom and leads by way of a corridor to the next set. This for Carr in Act One, Scene Two, is the laboratory. It is "reached" from the library by darkness under cover of which "the back of this [shallow] scene disappears." The change of focus is represented by the corridor opening moving from Downstage left in Scene One to Upstage Right in Scene Two. Barrie clearly liked this effect but went one step further by using the revolving stage actually to move us into the hall. Carr's Act Two centers on Carew. The melodramatic murder is acted out in his lounge. Barrie has neither that sub-plot nor the opulent lounge set associated with it. Instead, he moves to Mrs. Lapraik's boudoir by "revolve" through a corridor. While Carr's Act Three returns first to the library and then to Hyde's eerie lodgings, Barrie makes his third revolve to Mrs. Lapraik's boudoir. Carr ends in Act Four and the laboratory while Barrie literally returns full circle to hall and then den.

The settings used by Carr were cleverly thought out and each was associated with dramatic effects so striking that the press-release photographs were practically all published in the long pictorial article-reviews run in *The Playgoer and Society Illustrated* of January 29th and *The Sketch* of February 6th, 1910. Barrie repeated many of these cameo moments. He followed Carr in using red lighting effects from the fire to light up Lapraik/Hyde's face. He imitated, for Lapraik, the extreme lighting contrast between Hyde lurking in the dark shadows downstage while briefly upstage a door opens and shuts letting us glimpse his wife flooded with white. And although Barrie is de-

prived of Carr's most powerful visual cameo—that of Hyde peering in at the drawing room window—both Fenton and Mrs. Lapraik vividly describe it for us.

A number of crucial points follow from this. We may assume that the earlier melodrama impressed Barrie technically and that from it he got his more ambitious idea of the revolving stage linking *all* the atmospheric scenes with their doors and windows, dark corridors and hellish fires. He had always proclaimed that one defined a genre by those things it alone could do best and for that reason highlighted the visual aspects of drama.²⁴ So, if Carr could successfully use adjoining scenes to strengthen claustrophobic effect in a four act drama, Barrie would make that sustained theatrical effect the structural definition of a one act play. [Recently he had returned to the commedia dell' arte and mime in *Pantaloon* (1905). At the time of composing *The House of Fear* he was also devising a "ballet with minimal dialogue." As *The Origin of Harlequin*, this would have its first performance in 1917.]

The fact that Barrie was stretching the theater to its limits and beyond need not surprise anyone who understands his "genre defined by quiddity of genre" theory or who has read the stage history of that balletic-gymnastic-pantomime-pageant-play *Peter Pan*. But the same evidence should also lessen the fears of those still concerned with the initial problems suggested by the précis. It mainly transmitted what was *said* in *The House of Fear*. But what proportion of playing time is given over to dialogue in a play which precedes each phase of dialogue with an extended mime and introduces mime into the verbal exchanges themselves?

Reading the play will give the impression of two thirds dialogue to one third mime as that is, roughly, the ratio on the printed page. It will also suggest that the actions are crammed into a very short time slot. Any producer would conservatively multiply the playing time of the mime sections by a factor of three, producing a new proportion of 2:3 against dialogue.

The case for the play's own effectiveness begins and ends with theatricality. Staging considerations, rather than critical reservations, stopped it being performed. The *modal* study reminds us that the Lapraiks inhabit a self-consciously theatrical world. Measured against other melodramas, *The House of Fear* proves less overtly sentimental, less dominated by effects and less cavalier towards consistency of thought than most of its counterparts. *Horizontally*, the plot line as read in the study is transformed into the differ-

²⁴He consistently applied this theory to all genre translations, writing of the proposed Peter Pan film to Maude Adams: "I think it's only worth doing if one can have the many things shown that can't be done on stage." Beinecke Barrie Collection MS A3, 14th November 1920.

ent appearances and voices of the actors, alternated with the visual cameos of mime. Just how striking lighting effects, set and sounds together could be may be assessed by studying the Stage Directions for the mime which follows Lapraik's falling asleep. The sounds of the bell and of doors creaking open; blackness, fiery red, "pale" white, shades of gray, brilliant white; the turn of the face at once the same and not the same; the same body but moving in a new way—fast and jerky rather than slow and ponderous; many exits but no escape from the claustrophobic wheel of fortune which is the revolving stage. *Vertically*, levels of meaning also counterpoint one against the other. The narrative ends only in questions set by individual players in the last moments of dialogue. The multi-referential poetic drama of which Barrie is master refines those questions at the metonymic, specific level but simultaneously poses them according to other logics—of dream, myth and soul-battle. To those different keys we should attune our ears when judging *The House of Fear*, lest in listening only for one instrument we fail to hear the symphony.²⁵

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²⁵The research for this article was conducted during a Fellowship held at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University during Spring 1992. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the Trustees and Librarians for that invitation and for permission to publish Barrie MS H665 (*The House of Fear*).