

From Drama to Silent Film: The Case of Sir James Barrie¹

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In September 1921, when Charlie Chaplin visited London, crowds waited in Piccadilly and traffic was blocked all the way from Waterloo Station to the Ritz. Such was the drawing power of the film industry even in those early days. Less successful was the evening entertainment arranged for him on September 16th. He records in his autobiography that Eddie Knoblock had arranged a reception for him at the Garrick Club. The 'illustrious gentlemen' who attended, he found 'rather dull'.²

Barrie, who was currently working on his film-script for *Peter Pan* was among their number and used the opportunity to invite Chaplin to his flat in Adelphi Terrace for afternoon tea. This was a more profitable encounter. Chaplin recorded his pleasure at the setting, noting that the flat 'was like an *atelier*, a large room with a beautiful view of the River Thames'.³ That Barrie wanted to discuss cinema also became apparent. Chaplin recalls the conversation coming round to Paramount's desire to film *Peter Pan*. Actor and playwright were soon on common ground:

I told Barrie, 'It has even greater possibilities as a film than a play,' and he agreed. He expressly desired a scene to show Wendy sweeping up some fairies into the bark of a tree'.⁴

Yet, in 1935, Barrie would be so disillusioned with the American film industry that he refused to make the short journey from his house in Adelphi Terrace to the Tivoli Cinema where the talking version of his play, *The Little Minister*, was showing.⁵ What caused his loss of interest?

That Barrie should be particularly intrigued by film is not surprising. To understand this, however, one has to consider two areas of research, which have been almost entirely ignored by critics – his education at Edinburgh University and his own practical involvement in filmmaking. At Edinburgh, David Masson, the Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, advocated a theory of literature based on Aristotle and Bacon, which highlighted the importance of the visual imagination.⁶ Meanwhile, from the philosopher's viewpoint, Campbell Fraser, Edinburgh's Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, taught Barrie about Bishop Berkeley's views on vision. In *An Edinburgh XI*, Barrie introduces Fraser as the leading Berkeley scholar of his day:

Fraser's great work is his edition of Berkeley, a labour of love, that should live after him. He has two Berkeleys, the large one and the little one, and, to do him justice, it was the little one he advised us to consult.⁷

Selections from *A New Theory of Vision* dominate this set text, highlighting the particular importance given to sight and spatial perspective within the philosopher's central claim that all thought begins with sense perceptions. Fraser sums up the position briefly in his Introduction:

The Essay [i.e. *A New Theory of Vision*] and the other writings on Visual Language which follow may be used by the students as aids to a psychological analysis from the lower to the higher faculties of knowledge.⁸

The presentation of visual and spatial images is also of particular importance to dramatist and filmmaker. Barrie, whose lecture notes reflect his own interest in Berkeley's thought,⁹ would translate that academic enthusiasm into his own theatrical and cinematic practice.

Certainly, a playwright whose characters often suggest images in the very names they bear (e.g. Phoebe Throssel) or 'sign' their allegorical role in their dress (e.g. Little Mary's Napoleonic hat) is working from premises which silent filmmakers would find sympathetic. They were, therefore, attracted to the Kirriemuir playwright in part because they recognized another image-maker. The visual power of *The Admirable Crichton* so impressed Cecil B. de Mille that he used it as a vehicle for Gloria Swanson's glamour in the 1919 production of *Male and Female*.¹⁰ *Peter Pan* was filmed in 1925 and proved such a success that the director, Herbert Brenon, and leading lady, Betty Bronson, were asked to repeat the experiment in the following year. The 1926 production of *A Kiss for Cinderella* was even more warmly applauded by the critics. Box office receipts may not have been so good, but Barrie's imaginative dramas continued to have a surprising appeal given current audience tastes. As William K Everson notes, 'Whimsy and fantasy were ingredients that materialistic jazz-age audiences just were not buying. Harry Brenon's adaptation of Sir James Barrie's *Peter Pan* seemed to be a freak success because it hit the theaters at an ideal time as a Christmas attraction.'¹¹

Barrie's overriding concern for visual, aural and spatial effects also derives from his interest in *how* we construct our images of the 'real'. His careful stage directions gave film directors a promising basis for their own ingenuity. There was, however, a negative side to this equation. Seldom has any playwright been so driven by the desire to push practical effects to theoretical extremes. Thus, a character (Tinker Bell) who exists in light and sound *alone* must be created. Sounds, sights *and* smells must all be evoked when Crichton tempts the Loams to his island table. And so on. As a result, those stagehands who appreciated his respect for their skills could also resent the demands he made. Irene Vanbrugh's account of the technicians' strike prior to the first production of *The Admirable Crichton* confirms this:

It was a production full of mechanical difficulties. In one scene there was the clearing of a patch on a desert island. The lighting of a log fire, a pot to be brought to the boil at a given moment, all needed very careful timing.¹²

The role played by these effects in suggesting the profounder logic of his dramas must not be underestimated. Barrie explains the method psychologically in *The Greenwood Hat* as deriving from the various voices within his personality.¹³ Of these, it is the Imp, who rejoices in counterpointing, plot against plot, meaning against meaning. As Hugh Walpole argues, it is, therefore, dangerous to define his work in overt, story-line terms alone:

It has been in part his misfortune that so many people have taken him at his surface-word. The majority of us have no time, as regards other people, for more than surfaces – and so Barrie tricked nine-tenths of us, and knew well that he was tricking us. He was his own murderer, murderer and detective in his own mystery story'.¹⁴

Barrie's dramatic cameos provide microcosmic evidence of this polysemous approach. Audiences are puzzled by the sadness they experience when watching the supposedly happy bridal group at the end of *Quality Street*. After all, Phoebe Throssel has, in the poetic terms suggested by her name, managed to fly out of the imprisoning, shuttered confines of that street into the real world. We even see her in a wedding gown with her hair down, one of the visual signs of freedom. But these

leitmotifs are sadly contextualised by the presence next to her of her sister Susan, whose hair is still up and hidden beneath her Quaker cap. The wedding dress is Susan's also, made when she had nursed a hope to escape through matrimony. In this way, the happy words describing Phoebe's victory are offset by images reminding us that most female inhabitants of the street are still trapped into spinsterhood by a patriarchal society which demands genteel passivity from them. In this way, even the most talented women waste away their 'Quality' untested.

Sometimes Barrie's interest in translating images from one mode to another leads him to reproduce visual art itself. In *Peter Pan*, for example, he demanded that his main character exit and a gymnast play his part until he returns as Napoleon at the centre of a tableau, which exactly re-produces Orchardson's painting of the defeated French leader on the Bellerophon. Despite the many production problems involved, Barrie refused to accommodate over this because he wanted an exact visual analogue. Pan 'plays' at being a martial hero and so an image of Napoleon 'playing' at warfare is needed. The French commander posing imperially on the deck of his ship after he had lost any real power provided the perfect objective co-relative and therefore had to be maintained at all costs.

If this evidence explains Barrie's early enthusiasm for Silent Film, his later disenchantment must be due to the cinema industry's reception of it. Yet most histories of film show Hollywood so keen to honour his theatrical achievement, that they strive to imitate it. Everson reports that Paramount kept its version of *Peter Pan* 'essentially theatrical... out of respect to the form of the original'.¹⁵

But, for Barrie, imitation was the worst kind of flattery because he worked on the contrary principle, that cinema must define itself mainly in terms of its differences from drama. Again, his University experience explains why this is so. The entire M.A. at Edinburgh was based on making distinctions between the interlinked branches of knowledge being studied.¹⁶ As a result, lecturers usually began their courses by defining what differentiates their discipline from the others. 'In what are Mathematics and Logic akin and in what do they differ? Does not one enhance the other?' Barrie notes down from Professor Campbell Fraser. Then he adds on his own behalf, 'This subject worthy consideration'.¹⁷ It is clear that the classical topos – *varius sis sed tamen idem* – with its emphasis on the shared *and* variant sides to any comparison – guided Barrie's thinking when translating from one artistic mode to another. After all, he had already generically re-configured his own novels into plays. Even *Walker, London* (1892), his first full length play on the London stage, was clearly differentiated from its prose source *When A Man's Single* (1888). Careful thought about the greater visual potential offered by the theatre meant that its triple-level houseboat setting already pushed the visual potential of drama to its limits, causing its designer, Joseph Harker, to single it out as the most satisfying of his entire career.¹⁸

Barrie's most ambitious experiment in crossing from novel to drama, however, is *The Little Minister*, which had its British opening at the Haymarket in 1897. Based on his three volume novel of the same name, it shows that he knew how to turn academic theory into successful practice. Other dramatisers of prose works may have failed to realize the unique strengths of the different modes. But, as Howe notes, Barrie is an exception:

There is no part of the theatre's art which is more frequently foregone by the novelist in the theatre than what we may speak of as its visual possibilities....
And there is no part of the theatre's art which, by Barrie, is more surely seized.¹⁹

Walbrook also distinguishes his own theatrical experience from that of reading the novel in terms of sight and colour. For him, Winifred Emery 'barefooted and barelegged among the reddened leaves

of Caddam Woods, in her dress of leaf-green serge, loose bodice, leather belt, scarlet berries in her flying brown hair' provides the 'most enduring memory'.²⁰

Barrie retained an intense interest in the borderlines between drama and other forms throughout his career. The most virtuosic example of this is *Peter Pan* itself, where the basic plot is translated into nine different modes, as hypothesis within novel, photograph collection, episode in novel, full-length play, one-act play, ballet, short story, film and speech.²¹ Cinematically, therefore, he anticipates Bazin. Like the latter, he 'is concerned primarily with what is uniquely cinematic representation'.²² Barrie's critics seldom mention and never analyse his Silent Film scenarios. Yet, one experiment in the lighter, Revue mode and two of his matinée performances, designed to raise money for the war effort deserve detailed discussion. *Rosy Rapture* opened on March 22nd, 1915 at the Duke of York's while *The Real Thing at Last* (Coliseum: 7th March, 1916) and *Reconstructing the Crime* (Palace Theatre: February 13th, 1917) were only performed once.²³ As all three bring dramatic and cinematic conventions into direct confrontation *The Real Thing at Last* (or, as the first film caption describes it, 'First Real Performance of Macbeth on any stage. All Snap – No Talky-Talky') may represent the method economically. Written and directed by Barrie for a company, which included A. E. Matthews and Gerald Malver, it was devised for a gala charity performance. A prestigious group of actors including Nelson Keys, Gladys Cooper, Marie Löhr and Pauline Chase gave their services free.²⁴

When the curtain rises there is an immediate warning that a new set of conventions is invading the ones to which they are accustomed. The theatrical backcloth represents 'a picture palace' while its 'centre part... is almost immediately to be used as a cinema cloth'. As poor artifice is to be the focus of this satire, these sets are intentionally crude with the image of the cinema being 'merely painted on cloth' (f.1). Yet another division of the backcloth then bursts open:

There is a door cut in cloth at side, out of which comes Cinema Manager with a touch of American in his appearance... He is tremendously proud of the Movies and contemptuous of the old drama. (f. 1)

Without moving from the Coliseum, one of the bastions of West End Theatre, the audience have been asked to see a Picture Palace and listen to the Americanised voice of its manager. The final transition – to filmed drama – is also signalled in a contrived manner. The Manager melodramatically 'touches [a] spring. Film leaps up like a Jack-in-the-Box' (f.2). Cinematic, voiceless images of Macbeth as it might have been performed dramatically in the theatre of Shakespeare's day are then shown. These alternate with images of the same play, given the modern, Hollywood treatment. This format allows Barrie to demonstrate the power of those artistic conventions, which mediate between an audience and 'reality'. By forcing them to watch the same plot in different modes, he in fact puts Berkeley's thesis that understanding depends on how a thing is perceived to the test.

In *The Real Thing*, apart from the piano accompaniment, only the Manager's voice is heard. This consistently champions the supposed advances made by Hollywood against the Swan Theatre evidence despite the unrelieved awfulness of the film evidence on view. The silent shots of Shakespearean drama are subject to more gentle satire and even occasionally offer a contrastive standard of simplicity-in-excellence. This guarantees that Hollywood's excesses become the major object of derision.

Barrie does this without denying the new mode's huge and varied international audience. In his scenario of *Peter Pan*, as we shall see, he will try to meet these challenges positively. But in *The Real Thing* he contents himself with comic subversion and an easier target – those who prostitute their

art in the name of box office success alone. Thus, the need to glamourise is underlined by showing the witches, first of all as seventeenth-century theatrical hags, and then cutting to the Hollywood alternative. These are, as the caption informs us, 'Three pretty, popular actresses seen standing like the Graces'. (f.3) Modernizing tendencies result in the traditional castle re-appearing as a 'Drawing room at the refined home of the Macbeths'. (f.3) Film's populist preference for melodrama, sentimentality and happy endings is also parodied. Thus, Duncan's innocence is pathetically underlined by having 'Heart picture, an appeal to the best of all in us' (f.3) flung on the screen prior to his murder. The story then ends happily. Macduff takes pity on a reformed Macbeth, who is in turn reunited with his (very undead and very sensual) Queen. (f.4)

As a popular West End dramatist, Barrie knew how difficult it was to accommodate oneself to a mixed audience. Charity productions, however, offered him the rare chance to address an artistically sophisticated group. He could, therefore, satirize the concessions made by Art to populism more freely than usual. In *The Real Thing*, therefore, the Manager becomes the voice of uncritical artistic enthusiasm. Whatever pleases the box office pleases him.

The theatrical representations in the Swan are themselves deprived of the verbal power which constitutes drama's major advantage over silent film. As they exist as vehicles for criticising bad cinematic art, however, they come out of the comparison fairly well. Sometimes good, sometimes poor, their qualitative unevenness depends on whether direct contrast or variation on a similar theme more clearly illustrates the particular cinematic weakness under scrutiny.

Poor theatrical evidence may, therefore, precede worse. The Swan, for example, offers an unimaginative duel between Macbeth and MacDuff. But this is followed by commercial misuse of cinema's spatial potential. 'Hollywood' has the two fighting 'on land and sea' against a backdrop, which represents the best known tourist attractions in its most profitable markets across the world. (f.4) On other occasions, misunderstanding of Shakespeare's art and language rather than blatant commercialism thwarts the natural advantages of the camera. Close-ups of Lady Macbeth's face might well have intensified her guilt, but this director chooses to enlarge another part of her anatomy entirely. Interpreting the queen's references to her 'black spot' literally, he shows an 'enlarged hand with actual spot' (f.5) ever growing until it practically fills the screen.

The advantage of shooting events over a long period with make-up and technicians having time to prepare the best effects also becomes an aesthetic own goal in this absurd presentation. Duncan's murder is used to parody Hollywood's attraction to tasteless, melodramatic excesses. An understated Swan version uses only 'a spoonful of blood' (f.3) but proves more effective than the 'bath of blood' which is thrown over the king, prior to shooting the film version. (f.3)

Only the presentation of Macbeth's guilt shows cinema's defining advantages in a positive light. 'King Macbeth is haunted by visions of the past,' a caption announces. Barrie then calls for 'the film device of figures melting into each other' (f.4) as a means of suggesting the thought-processes of the monarch. On screen, images of Duncan and Banquo literally emanate from the king's screen image and then return within it.

Despite the work's confrontational structure and satirical tone, its final image holds out hope for future harmony between the contesting modes. As the Manager breaks down in joy at the 'success' of the film, Barrie's chosen symbol for Shakespearean theatre is thrown on to the screen – 'The Swan is a drawing. It is motionless. Then it and manager bow gracefully to each other. He swaggers off'. (f.5) In this way, the Swan of Avon, the Swan Theatre and the new, cinematic form are emblematically reconciled. As the audience leave the theatre, they may even ponder on the supreme irony of the title itself. For *The Real Thing at Last* – a play of a film about a play *and* a film –

has throughout been a contradictory revelation of artifice and unreality. Barrie's 'Picture Palace' script, like his dramas, shows more deeply than it says.

Therefore, Chaplin's London host in 1921 already had experience of writing and directing films when discussing his *Peter Pan* scenario. Having used these charity presentations as a means of analysing misuse of cinematic convention, he was now ready to teach Hollywood how high art and commercialism might reinforce one another. Who was better fitted to guide these novices than the man who had conquered the mixed audiences of London's West End?

The scenario for *Peter Pan* was his chosen means. The different versions of this film script, which survive in the Beinecke Research Library, prove how seriously Barrie regarded his attempt to conquer Hollywood's mass audience.²⁵ They also clearly confirm that the quidditative method, encouraged by his University training would govern this transition, as it had done his movement from novel to theatre. While film and play start from a shared base, the essential differences between the two forms are stressed at the outset:

Many of the chief scenes, especially those calling for novel cinema treatment, are of course not in the acted play, but where they are in it they should be acted in the same way, and to that extent the play should be a guide to the film. (f.1)

To achieve this aim, the different technical effects (visual, aural and spatial) offered by the new medium must be fully realized:

The technical matters are obviously of huge importance and difficulty, and it remains to be seen whether the cinema experts can solve them. (f.2)

That he intended to push these resources to their logical limits is confirmed in a letter to Maude Adams, enclosing the early parts of the scenario:

I think it's only with doing it one can have the many things shown that can't be done on the stage, for we may be sure that what *can* be done on the stage can be done much better than on the screen. But the flying, fairies, lagoon, etc. might be beautifully pictured. I don't know whether all this can be done – it is a tall order, but they seem willing to make a big effort.²⁶

The last phrase is consistent with the impression Barrie gave to Chaplin. He believed that Hollywood wanted him as directorial adviser as well as author. Therefore, the final outcome, rejecting his radical scenario so that a close imitation of the play might appear, was, in his terms a triple insult to his integrity as writer, director and theorist. To assess just how different the first film version of *Peter Pan* might have been, had Hollywood's early enthusiasm for his active involvement been sustained, closer analysis of the scenario is necessary. In what ways did Barrie seek to change the plot of the play and how far did he wish to push back the technical boundaries – visual, spatial and auditory – implied by the new mode?

Unexpectedly, it is with a call for more sound effects that the scenario begins. While the play of *Peter Pan* had used different tunes to distinguish pirates from Indians and both from the crocodile,

the film script specifically demands that 'Other special music should be written so that all the music accompanying the play becomes really part of it'. (f.1)

While the lack of the spoken word is a crucial weakness of the Silent Film, Barrie's direction of *The Real Thing at Last* warned him against taking that title at literal value. As James Donald notes, 'The issue was not sound as such. Musical accompaniment – from full score to improvised piano accompaniment existed, sometimes accompanied by a lecture commenting on the film or manager filling in while reels changed.' Rather, its vulnerability lay in the 'lack of synchronized speech and the increased reliance on the spoken word it implied.'²⁷ Barrie, therefore, develops the musical accompaniment in the film. All the character-groups from pirates to mermaids have their own signature tunes, as do the major individual characters. This serves to distinguish one from another. These tunes may also anticipate the arrival of the more fearsome among them – notably Hook and the Crocodile.

Throughout, Barrie strives to achieve musically the sort of effects more easily gained by dialogue in drama. Just as the signature tunes dramatically distinguish groups and characters, so contrasts between music and silence mark out some of the more melodramatic actions. The final transition from apparent Pirate victory to Peter's assuming of power is signed in this way:

Hook and pirates sing another verse which evidently, from the action, is about the cat... and the music itself stops abruptly. The sudden silence should be among the most impressive moments in the ship scene. (f.56)

As a play which studies a whole range of non-verbal kinds of communication, *Peter Pan* is ideal for silent adaptation. If the major weakness of silent film is the lack of synchronized dialogue what better source can there be than a work which offers so many alternatives to words – from drumming through bells and mime to smoke signals?

If Barrie was aware that Silent Film was, in this sense, a misnomer, he also knew that those visual and spatial perceptions which Berkeley held to be the foundation of knowledge, were precisely the areas in which screen effects held an advantage over stage. Accordingly, he accentuates the positive by diminishing the negative:

The aim has been to have as few words as possible. There are very few words in the last half hour or so of this film, and there are also about fifteen minutes of the lagoon scene without any words. (f.1)

If the caption writers are thus promised a lighter load, practically everyone else from director to technicians will find their skills severely challenged.

The opening scene in the scenario accentuates this determination to make full use of those techniques, which the theatre cannot encompass. Where the Labrador dog, Nana, had been played by an actor within a confined stage setting, now different perspectives represent her in reality and appearance. First shown as a real dog, when close-ups of her bathing the children are required, the 'real' image becomes 'representational' – 'real dog substituted in street scenes - but Nana actor in dog's skin'. (f.4) The same substitution technique will be employed for more complex purposes later. Images and analogies, for example, can be realized and then imitated. The Lost Boys, for example, are described as living 'very like baby bears'. Pictures of 'real bears' follow this and then the lost boys mimic their actions. (f.36)

Barrie also uses time-lapse photography to anticipate the progression from childhood to adulthood.

The idea is to apply to the growth of a child from baby-hood to manhood the same sort of cinema treatment that is sometimes given to illustrate the growth of flowers and plants. (f.12)

The equivalent dramatic episode in which the Darling children 'acted out' these events is dropped from the film script.

On two occasions, Barrie requests an effect he had earlier used in his own films. When Hook is struck and sees stars, the trees around him move in order to convey his disorientation. The script confirms its author's experience in such matters by adding 'The same sort of curious effect as got in my private film of Macbeth'. (f. 24) When Peter defeats the pirates, the triumphal procession, which follows, involves the trees and flowers bowing and curtsying to the boy. This animated sequence also involves the forest marching – just as a more modest wood had accompanied Macduff to Dunsinane in *The Real Thing at Last*:

A peculiar effect should be tried for here which may be got by the same mechanical means as the trees moving in earlier scene when Peter cut off Hook's arm. The effect wanted is that, as Peter passes along a sort of path, flowers come moving after him in a long procession. (f.30)

The fact that images of Pan as goat-God precede even the nursery scene in the proposed film version is of crucial importance for an understanding of both medium and message:

The first picture is of Peter riding gaily on a goat through a wood, playing on his pipes (a reproduction of the painting is in my possession). He suddenly flies on to a tree in the inconsequential way of birds... He as suddenly realights on his goat and rides away playing his pipes, his legs sticking out cockily... The flying must be far better and more elaborate in the acted play and should cover, of course, a far wider expanse. This incident should show at once that the film can do things for 'Peter Pan' which the ordinary stage cannot do. It should strike a note of wonder in the first picture, and whet the appetite for marvels. (f.2)

This opening cameo bases one visual art on another and so offers a cinematic equivalent for Pan's dramatic Napoleonic 'Triumph' as dictated by Orchardson. But it is also the first of many signs that Barrie is keen to address his massive new audience. As Ruth Vasey notes, Silent Film as 'the first global medium of entertainment' had to 'satisfy audiences of vastly different cultural, religious and political persuasions with essentially the same diet of images and narratives'.²⁸ This was the challenge Barrie accepted.

With Pan as the goat-God, he returns to the more self-consciously allegorical structuring of the play in its first manuscript form. There, as in his preparatory Notes, the mythic power of Pan for good or evil had been stressed. Only when the drama's attraction for children became evident, did he delete some of the darker elements in the original version. Aware that he would now be addressing a primarily adult, film audience in a later and more cynical age, he returned to his original conception.²⁹

Pan, with its series of childishly imagined battle scenes, was intended to raise in modern, Darwinian terms the age-old question of why a supposedly benevolent first cause should create a world defined by internecine strife. In the film, pagan and Christian views on this ontological conundrum are at once suggested. The pagan triumph of Pan as goat God modulates into 'a primeval wood' in which 'Adam and Eve leave their children on the ground.' (f.13)

More particularly, the sexual implications of Darwin's *Battle of the Species* are revived in the film version. In the manuscript and earliest typed drafts of the play, a sexual battle for Peter's favours had also been fought out among Wendy, Tinker Bell and Tiger Lily. As mother and bard figure, Wendy had to contend with a more flirtatious version of Tinker Bell than that which survives in later versions of the drama. Although that fairy had no existence beyond lights and sounds, her flirtatious behaviour and appearance were referred to in the earliest scripts – 'Tippy, if you don't get up and dress at once, I shall open the curtains and then we shall all see you in your negligée'.³⁰ It is this precocious tease, who is resurrected in the film, still speaking in bell fashion, but now with a physical appearance to match. The scenario invites us to see her in her 'exquisite tiny bedroom with her brushing hair etc, shown much more beautifully than is possible in the play' (f.37).

Tiger Lily's part as the 'cruel and beautiful' heroine had been significantly cut when the play began to define itself as a pantomime, in which overt sexuality became inappropriate. As Gerald Mast and others have argued, however, sex and violence were already basic Hollywood fare.³¹ With these considerations in mind, Barrie re-introduced the haughty sexuality of the Indian princess. Even the caption which introduces her confirms the transformation: 'Every brave would have had her to wife, but she received their advances coldly'. (f.20) And she again challenges Peter's innocence. In the manuscript of the play she had offered, literally, to throw herself at his feet:

Tiger Lily. Suppose Tiger Lily runs into wood – Peter Paleface catch her – what then?

Peter. (Bewildered): Paleface can never catch Indian girl, they run so fast.

Tiger Lily. If Peter Paleface chase Tiger-Lily – she no run very fast – she tumbles in a heap what then? (Peter puzzled. She addresses Indians) What then?

All Indians. She him's squaw. (Lilly MS)

In the equivalent section of the film, a caption announces that Peter cannot understand what the three of them want from him because the only form of love that he knows is that of a son. Three times, the same question is flashed on the screen. When asked, 'What can it be?' Wendy stamps her foot in exasperation and Tink retorts with a furious set of bell sounds. The question is then shown on the screen for the last time:

'What can it be, Tiger Lily?'

He is asking the same question of Tiger Lily. She prostrates herself before him in adoration etc. but he can't understand. She goes away sadly. He remains hopelessly puzzled. Then he skips away indifferently. (f.39)

If Everson is understandably surprised that the materialist, jazz-age audience of the nineteen twenties warmed to the more conservative Hollywood version of *Peter Pan*,³² it is clear that the same audience concerns occupied Barrie himself. He may not have liked Cecil B. de Mille's bypassing of the social questions addressed in *The Admirable Crichton*, but he did realise why that film had been so popular. Glamour and the cult of the actress were clearly powerful guarantees of financial success. It is because of this, that de Mille turns Barrie's play about democracy and hierarchy into a vehicle for studying the glamour of Gloria Swanson, so that 'pictures of the leading lady taking a bath' and the dream scenes in which 'she is glamorously chased by lions' or appears as 'an equally glamorous Babylonian slave' become the highlights of the piece. As Gerald Mast correctly notes, 'the tastelessness of the individual episodes is overwhelmed by the tastelessly irrelevant method of stitching them together.'³³

Barrie set about glamourising *Peter Pan* with some enthusiasm. Although Wendy's part was defined primarily by her motherly and storytelling qualities, there were other ways of winning over the box office. The conversion of the lagoon into a setting within which mermaids might parade their scantily attired beauty is the most obvious result of this quest. But new dramatic action is also invented. As malevolent tempters, the mermaids align themselves with the pirates. While Hook's main prey is Peter, their cruelty is mainly directed at Wendy – 'Then we see mermaids in their romantic cave. Wendy is their prisoner... Peter rescues Wendy wounded... A mermaid wakes up and follows them, looking wicked... The cruel mermaid comes swimming to the rock and is pulling Wendy underground.' (f. 34) In this way, the mermaids at once provide a mysterious, glamorous complement to Tiger Lily's more down to earth beauty and increase those sado-masochistic elements which are never far away from Barrie's view of sex.³⁴

Other kinds of visual spectacle are either introduced or developed from the play. Contemplating a bigger budget and untrammelled by the time constraints of continuous dramatic action, Barrie could ask for more ambitious effects. The flying, therefore, 'must be far better and more elaborate than in the acted play' (f.2) Peter's entries are to be more spectacular, 'He does not come in the simple way followed in the play. He comes down the rigging with extraordinary courage and agility.' (f.56) Nor are the battle and chase sequences, which film audiences had come to expect as part of any good adventure film, omitted. While artistically grotesque versions of both had been satirised in Barrie's charity films, this time he uses changed camera perspectives, dramatic background shots and intelligent alternations between picture and silhouette to provide variety as Hook fights Pan (ff.59-60) or the horrified Darlings chase along a snow covered street in hopeless pursuit of their flying children (ff.16-18).

Dramatic sets, built on stage by the actors within the continuous action of the play, could also be more ambitiously realised. Thus, Wendy's house in Act 2 can become a more realistic edifice in the film. Barrie's script explicitly calls attention to the greater freedom implied:

The house should not be a make-believe affair built of canvas as it has to be in the acted play. Here it should be a real house, though comic. (f.28)

A speeded up series of shots then shows the lost boys creating – in record time- ‘a beautiful little house of wood and moss, lop-sided and all wrong, but fascinating’. (f.28)

Dramatic soliloquies are sometimes replaced by the ‘Vision’ method used in *The Real Thing*. When Hook is sitting above the underground house talking to Smee, he recalls the day when the crocodile swallowed a clock. Then, ‘in a vision’, we see the incident happening. ‘Distinctively different scenery’ accompanies each memory of the pirate’s past. Shots of Eton College and its rooms (f.61) are followed by images of the Thames, which are then superimposed upon the pirate ship (f. 64).

Barrie is determined that the last sight of the Never Land must outdo in splendour all that has preceded it:

Then we have the final picture, which should always be the most beautiful. It is the last moment of the acted play, but much can be done with it that is impossible in the play. (f.37)

Characteristically, Barrie presents a sadly thoughtful conclusion. Pan’s eternal isolation as pagan god and eternal child is enacted by building up the surface business of the Never Land and then withdrawing it.

As the moon rises, bell talk can be heard. The fairies have exchanged their theatrical nests for cinematic houses. These light up and they come out in groups to ‘gossip, quarrel and play’ in animated fashion. Meanwhile Peter’s own house ‘changes site.’ As it moves around, we see again the various centres of action in the Never Land. This allows all the inhabitants to take a last bow in true pantomime fashion with the glamorous mermaids on their lagoon having the longest, most lingering photographic session of all. Among the many possible endings offered in the various dramatised versions of the play, Barrie chooses the one in which Wendy’s daughter, Jane, returns to the island in her mother’s place.³⁵ A massive cast of fairies, animals, mermaids and pirates, all waving their handkerchiefs, finally gather round the two central characters. Then, each and all begin to disappear. Last to vanish is Jane-Wendy. Playing his pipe, Peter, first in full figure, then in silhouette, is left alone. (ff.73-5)

If this proves his audience awareness, the international dimension of that challenge had also to be faced. A successful foreign market was vital to Hollywood’s continued viability. The industry had been slow to learn this lesson, but was profiting from its errors by the time *Peter Pan* was being considered. Indeed, Paramount’s version filmed Peter running up about twenty different national flags over Captain Hook’s pirate ship as part of a policy aimed at ‘[taking] on some of the cultural coloring of their customer nations.’³⁶

Yet, Barrie makes his film more obviously English than his play. The opening shots are of ‘a London street’, while the first captions establish Mr. Darling as a ‘London clerk’ in ‘a pleasant London sitting room’. This may be because Barrie felt that only American nationalism was under current attack and hoped that England might provide convenient neutral ground. That theory is given some credence by the instruction that Mr. Darling’s newspaper must ‘not be an American one’. (f3) The return from the island to this domestic setting is marked out by a conscious re-invoking of the same images. This visually underlines the cyclical, regenerative message of the Romance form but also re-establishes the English capital as the domestic centre of the drama. In the same concluding movement, the story told in the earliest dramatic versions is revived. The Lost Boys have been adopted by London families. In the film, they also have become part of the capital’s business world, as shots of their offices – ‘Messrs Twins and Tootles’; ‘Darling Bros. Solicitor’ (ff.69-70) – confirm.

Whether this non-American setting was one of the features, which caused the impresarios in Hollywood to go their own way is not known. Certainly, the Paramount version is much less stridently English. Yet, Barrie may have been right in thinking that London as an un-American choice of setting would have satisfied foreign critics while retaining enough romance to keep his Stateside audience interested.

He had also covered his bets! The two transitional journeys into and out of the Never Never Land broaden to embrace America and the wider world. As the Darling family in their snow-covered London street look up at their flying family, Barrie asks for the children's silhouettes to pass above the Houses of Parliament, cross the Atlantic and land on the Statue of Liberty, which then 'comes to life and mothers them'. America is crossed by a northern route with the island finally being sited in the Pacific. As the sun goes down and they pass out of the real world into that of the creative imagination, 'a map, not a modern map but the old-fashioned pictorial kind' (ff.18-19) confronts them. This, they split, falling in darkness on to an island, where animals and redskins 'in Fenimore Cooper manner' await them (f.20).

The return is equally fanciful. After Hook is defeated, the boys continue the game. As darkness falls, the boat heads, of its own accord, out into the open sea:

Last image of boys on ship, playing pirates and Peter lashed to the wheel, spray splashing on him, and the ship heading out to the channel into an open and angry sea. It can be black-dark if this will help the rolling of the vessel; but if it rolls above on deck we must get a similar effect in the foc'sle. (f.64)

If this image recalls both the action and the metaphysical context of *The Tempest*, images of 'Westminster and the Thames' soon narrow into a picture of the Darlings' house once more. (f.65)

As the journeys to and from London are both undertaken at night, exiting in late evening and returning at dawn, the idea that the Island experiences can be dismissed as no more than a midwinter night's dream is even more powerfully enforced in the scenario than in the play. At the same time, the image of Peter heroically tied to the mast of his ship, so that he cannot abandon it whatever the storms of life may bring, returns us not only to Bloomsbury and reality, but to the wider, allegorical issues posed initially.

Therefore, when Denis Mackail records that the 1924 film of *Peter Pan*, which reached London in 1925, was, for Barrie, 'the wrong kind of success',³⁷ there is no lack of evidence to explain that situation. As someone who had toiled over different versions of his screen scenario and who had always coveted the godlike role of author-director,³⁸ he found the rejection of his script and his own exclusion from the film-making process doubly annoying. Wounded pride and his extreme commitment to modal differentiation certainly coloured his own view of the film which Hollywood did provide. Although it is undeniably more conservative than Barrie wished, it is not so resolutely imitative of the play as he made it out to be. It has a number of fantastic movements among which the pictures of the mermaids sunning themselves on a Catalonian lagoon and the return journey of the Darlings on a flying galleon owe a clear debt to the spirit and letter of Barrie's proposals. Others, such as the time-lapse building of Wendy's house and the shaking of the fairies out of the bushes, continue rather than deny the principle of differentiating cinematic from theatrical effects.³⁹

This article, therefore, does not seek to overemphasise the differences between Barrie's scenario and Hollywood's. But it *is* intended to call attention to the philosophical, critical and artistic convictions which caused the Scottish playwright to view the situation in this light while also losing

faith in the silent film industry and interest in the silent film form. The lack of detailed academic discussion of either means that hitherto a full picture of the Kirriemuir writer's position has failed to emerge.

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Endnotes.

¹ I am grateful to the trustees of the Beinecke Research Library, University of Yale, and to the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, who funded the research for this article.

² Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (London: Bodley Head, 1964), p. 291.

³ Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (London: Bodley Head, 1964), p. 292.

⁴ Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (London: Bodley Head, 1964), p. 293.

⁵ Denis George Mackail, *The Story of J. M. B.* (London: 1941), p. 555.

⁶ See especially Masson's 'Theories of Poetry' in *Essays Biographical and Critical* (Cambridge, 1856), pp. 409-46. 'That mighty licence in the fantastic, that measured riot, that right of whimsy'. (-. 419) Whimsy for Masson and Barrie has the same force as the Secondary Imagination for Coleridge. Barrie's notes confirm Fraser's message.

⁷ J. M. Barrie, *An Edinburgh XI* (1889) in *The Uniform Edition of the Works of J. M. Barrie* (London: 1931), p. 66.

⁸ *Selections from Berkeley* (ed.) Alexander Campbell Fraser, 3rd ed. (Oxford: 1884), p. 153.

⁹ *University Notebooks of J.M. Barrie* (National Library of Scotland, Advocates MSS 6648-57). These notes, contained in MS 6650 contain more erudite side comments and personal questions than those for his other courses.

¹⁰ William K.. Everson, *American Silent Film* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 294.

¹¹ William K.. Everson, *American Silent Film* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 294.

¹² Irene Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Story* (London: 1949), p. 67.

¹³ J. M. Barrie, *The Greenwood Hat* (London: 1937). Written in 1930, at the age of sixty, this book was Barrie's only attempt at autobiography.

¹⁴ Hugh Walpole, 'Preface' to *McConnachie and J. M. B.* (London: 1938), p. vii.

- ¹⁵ William K. Everson, *American Silent Film* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 294.
- ¹⁶ See E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (trans. Willard R. Trask) (London: 1952), pp. 36-78.
- ¹⁷ Adv. MS 6650, f.46v.
- ¹⁸ Joseph Harker, *Studio and Stage* (London: 1924), p. 239.
- ¹⁹ P. P. Howe, *Dramatic Portraits* (London: 1913), p. 120.
- ²⁰ H. M. Walbrook, *J. M. Barrie and the Theatre* (London: 1922), p. 35.
- ²¹ R. D. S. Jack, *The Road to the Never Land: a Reassessment of J.M. Barrie's Dramatic Art* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991), p. 164.
- ²² Noel Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 121.
- ²³ An earlier soirée experiment, *The Cinema Supper*, at the Savoy Theatre on Friday, 3 July, 1914, is also relevant for Barrie's experiments with film, idealism and reality, as is the one act play *Pages from Dumas* (c.1916), which depicts a rehearsal for a film version of *The Three Musketeers*.
- ²⁴ My copy text for *The Real Thing at Last* is MS. R43.1 in the Barrie Collection, Beinecke Research Library, University of Yale.
- ²⁵ These were written in 1920 – see Barrie Collection, Yale P45/1920. My copy text is P45/1921B(4). This is very close too, but not identical with, the text printed in Roger Lancelyn Green, *Fifty years of Peter Pan* (London, 1954), pp. 171-218. Versions of his 1920 draft are also held in this collection.
- ²⁶ Barrie Collection, Yale, MS.A2: Maude Adams, 14 November 1920.
- ²⁷ James Donald, Anne Friedburg and Laura Marcus (ed), *Close Up, 1927-33: Cinema and Modernism* (London: Cassell, 1998), p. 79.
- ²⁸ Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p. 4.
- ²⁹ The holograph MS of *Peter Pan* is held in the Lilly Library, University of Indiana. The 466 preparatory 'Fairy' Notes are MS P45/1903 in the Barrie Collection at Yale.
- ³⁰ R. D. S. Jack, 'The Manuscript of Peter Pan' in *Children's Literature*, vol. 18 (New Haven, Conn.: Children's Literature, 1990), pp. 101-13.
- ³¹ Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 109. He links De Mille's *Male and Female with Stroheim's Blind Husbands* – 1919. Both films were released in 1919; both capitalised on the new audience interest in the doings of the rich and both emphasised the importance of sex in human relationships.
- ³² William K. Everson, *American Silent Film* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 294.

³³ Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 109.

³⁴ The idea of sex as a physical and mental contest derives from Darwin, but Barrie's use of slave/master images and his frequent descriptions of women being won by masterful ['magersome'] men and 'the cane' develop these theories rather darkly. See R. D. S. Jack, *The Road to the Never Land: a Reassessment of J. M. Barrie's Dramatic Art* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991), pp. 60-2.

³⁵ See 'When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought', in J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan and Other Plays* (ed) Peter Hollindale (Oxford: 1995), pp. 155-63.

³⁶ Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin, 2000), p. 69.

³⁷ Denis George Mackail, *The Story of J. M. B.* (London: 1941), p. 555.

³⁸ 'The Blot on Peter Pan' in *The Treasure Ship* (ed) Cynthia Asquith (London: 1927) provides the fullest fictional statement of this belief.

³⁹ I am grateful to Professor Peter Frisch for advice on the film and for assistance in this part of the argument.