

The Cock that Crowed and Crowed and Crowed: Thomas Carlyle and J. M. Barrie

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THAT THOMAS CARLYLE HAD A MAJOR IMPACT ON nineteenth-century writers, philosophers, and politicians is undisputed. His writings influenced—indeed, inspired—countless novelists, including Dickens, Hardy, George Eliot, Joseph Conrad, and Virginia Woolf. But Carlyle’s prophetic calls to reform in his grandiloquent, righteous prose were heard not only by the exclusive literary set, but also by many common readers, who set their *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* next to their family Bible. One such devoted reader was Mrs. David Barrie, née Margaret Ogilvy, mother to J. M. Barrie. Her reading aloud from Carlyle had an enduring effect, even cast a giant shadow, upon the future creator of *Peter Pan*.

The Barrie household was an industrious one, with the father David heading up a group of weavers and mother Margaret running a household of eight children (plus two who did not survive childhood). At night, the parents and children sat down by the fire to read. In their village of Kirremuir in western Scotland, it was not unusual for the weavers to be avid readers; some even read their books while bent over their looms. Margaret’s reading, though, even in this atmosphere seemed to be exceptional. In his biography of his mother, *Margaret Ogilvy*, Barrie explains that “[her] delight in Carlyle was so well known that various good people would send her books that contained a page about him; . . . and given a date she was often able to tell you what they were doing in Cheyne Row that day” (283). Perhaps the reason the Barries were especially enamored of the Carlyles—and Burns, too, of course—is because both

families hailed from the same area of Scotland. In later years, more substantive similarities came to exist between Thomas and James (J. M.), which would bring Margaret to fantasize that Carlyle was James's literary, if not biological, father.¹

Peter Pan, first performed on stage in 1904, and published as the novel *Peter and Wendy* in 1911, is still performed to live audiences and is often adapted, offering us prequels and sequels, among many other revisions including, of course, Walt Disney's. What is not generally known is that during his lifetime Barrie also wrote several novels and was best known for being a playwright. For at least three decades his many plays earned him critical and financial success: he had by the 1930s accumulated more wealth from his plays than any other artist up to that time, and the critics applauded as well. He was friends with Thomas Hardy, Henry James, George Meredith, and Arthur Conan Doyle, to name just a few luminaries.²

¹ Although Barrie wrote a biography of his mother, and was endlessly devoted to her, he mentions his father very rarely; readers have long assumed that his father must have been weak, dominated by his wife. But biographer Lisa Chaney corrects this assumption, reporting that Barrie's father was an enterprising weaver who eventually supervised other weavers, changing his status to "linen manufacturer" and raising the family's social and financial status (14). Barrie's biography of his mother, *Margaret Ogilvy* (1896), shows that, in his view, his mother was always a mother, never a wife. Barrie sets a scene in which he discusses Carlyle with his mother:

But there were times, [Barrie's mother] held, when Carlyle must have made his wife a glorious woman. "As when?" I might inquire. When she keeked in at his study door and said to herself, "The whole World is ringing with his fame, and he is my man!" "And then," I might point out, "he would roar to her to shut the door." "Pooh," said my mother, "a man's roar is neither here nor there." But her verdict as a whole was, "I would rather have been his mother than his wife."
(*Margaret Ogilvy* 284)

² Several nonfiction books of the last decade have marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the race to the South Pole, with the Norwegian Roald Amundsen beating the Englishman Captain Robert Fulton Scott by thirty-four days (Amundsen on 14 December 1911 and Scott on 17 January 1912). What few know is the unlikely friendship between Barrie and Scott; Barrie was even named godfather to Scott's only son. Barrie half-considered going along on the disastrous expedition, in which Scott and his men, after reaching the South Pole and recording masses of scientific data (which Amundsen did not do), died of hunger and cold; the world did not hear of his death until a year later. Among Scott's papers found in his tent was a farewell note to

However, his most legendary character, Peter Pan, the boy who won't/can't grow up, has diminished Barrie's reputation, to the extent that Neverland has come to mean only a laughable fantasy or, worse, the house and gardens of Michael Jackson, the iconic man/boy of modern times.

Barrie's writings are about love and loyalty, grief, remorse, second chances, and the nebulous border between fantasy and reality. He also, in his plays, championed women's causes (*The Twelve Pound Look*, 1914) and criticized class distinctions (*The Admirable Crichton*, 1902, places a butler and his aristocratic employers on a deserted island, where roles are reversed and the butler deservedly becomes the master). Barrie was a very hard worker, a trait he learned undoubtedly from his parents but also from Carlyle.³ Biographer Andrew Birkin relates that while attending Dumfries Academy, Barrie and his friend James McMillan "would go for long walks in the neighboring countryside, seeking out their hero, Thomas Carlyle . . ." (10). Barrie's writings demonstrate that he deliberately fashioned himself after Carlyle; though he recognized that he could never equal "the great man," he could trudge down the same path that Carlyle had emblazoned before him. Like Carlyle, he had an excessive love for his mother (both mothers were named Margaret); like Carlyle, he graduated from Edinburgh University and then went on to London for greater literary success; like Carlyle, he could be loquacious one minute and taciturn the next; like Carlyle, he was obsessed with the question of genius; like Carlyle, he was brilliant at bringing the past to life by making individual people walk and talk as if they were alive.

There is no need for further speculation regarding the influence of Carlyle on Barrie, for he writes of it himself in his

Barrie, apparently written during Scott's last days, asking him to help care for his wife and son and calling Barrie his "dear friend"; see Lisa Chaney, 296.

³In his address to the students at St. Andrews University, Barrie, being contrary, discussed how artists such as he do not do real work because they "are merely doing what you are clamorous to be at; it is not real work unless you would rather be doing something else. . . . Carlyle . . . has always been accepted as the arch-apostle of toil, and has registered his many woes. But it will not do. Despite sickness, poortith, want and all, he was grinding all his life at the one job he reveled in. An extraordinarily happy man, though there is no direct proof that he thought so" (25).

memoir *The Greenwood Hat* (1937), privately printed in 1930 and then published in 1937. The book, subtitled *Being a Memoir of James Anon 1885–1887*, is described by Barrie in a footnote: “The method followed throughout the book is to begin each chapter with an old article, and to follow it with a commentary of present date” (10). The Hat in *The Greenwood Hat* refers to that silk hat Barrie wore as a sign of respect during his early days in London. He estimates that in his first two years there, he wrote about 400 pieces, 70 of which were published by Greenwood, and at least that many more accepted by other periodicals (269); since none of these essays was signed by Barrie, all of them were attributed to “Anon.” Quite a few of these published articles, stories based on his mother’s recollections of her life in a Scottish village, were collected into books, including *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1889), which garnered solid reviews and began to establish his reputation long before *Peter Pan* was ever heard of. *The Greenwood Hat* serves aptly as a set of bookends for Barrie’s literary career, since the essays were written during the beginning of his life in London (1885–87) followed by commentary written during his last decade. Two sections from the memoir are of particular worth to any reader of Carlyle, and offer a clear indication of how deeply Barrie was engaged with his literary hero.

“A Small Lath”—Carlyle and the Carlyles⁴

Cock-crowing as a disturbance to the sedentary man’s peace came up again for hearing; and we agreed as usual that the only way to stop it was to kill the cock. However, an inventor now steps in and says Not at all. Stop the crowing is his plan.

It can be done very easily. All that is required is “a small lath suspended about eighteen inches above the perch.” A cock cannot crow without stretching his neck, and when he stretches his neck his comb strikes sharply against the lath. Cocks cannot endure having their combs touched; and so this simple contrivance reduces them to silence. Had the invention been known of in

⁴This first section, Barrie claims, was published originally between 1885 and 1887.

Thomas Carlyle's time, the lath in his neighbour's back premises would have been the lever of Archimedes, and it would have rested on a henhouse spar. Alas, ah me.

It was not the crowing itself that turned Carlyle into a dyspeptic, but the awful intervals of silence while he waited. The days were too short to banish the horrors of the night; an unseen cock sat on his shoulder as he wrote; it strutted behind him in his Chelsea walks, and was never so threatening as when silent. On such occasions he would have given folios to hear it crow. It blackened his existence, and when he had visitors it took their form. Most of the savage sayings Mr. Froude has chronicled were really addressed to the cock.

What a different man Carlyle would have been had his neighbour's henhouse had a small lath. Instead of hundreds of books about him, there would have been an autobiography, "My Sunny Self, by T. Carlyle." Mr. Froude would have been asked to edit it; but, after looking through the materials placed at his disposal, would have said that they were hopelessly good-natured. The genial work would have consisted largely of extracts from the sage's diaries, private letters, and reminiscences of friends. We see his cheery face as he writes:—"June 24, 185-. Had just sat down to my desk, unwieldy lump of misshapen ash painted mahogany, false faced, yet inexpressibly dear, when Leigh Hunt's head in the doorway. Away with musty records. No more digging for mummies; hand forth, head forward to welcome heartiest friend of me. Leigh Hunt, innocent, guileless, scintillating creature, truly preferring dandelions to guineas. Ah, we have little growth of that kind in windy Scotland. He stays to tea, twittering enchantingly. How he draws Jeanie out, and how merrily their words clash—self rubbing hands and eyeing the sparks. When Hunt goes Jeanie comes into my room and tats (mysterious play with wooden spikes called tatting-needles), while her husband smokes the pipe of peace; and we agree that Hunt's great charm is his affection for his species: best of human qualities; light, bright feather of a man, yet dagont loveable."⁵ A little further

⁵ Readers might recall Carlyle's description of Hunt in *Reminiscences*: "His talk contemptibly small, indicating wondrous ignorance and shallowness, . . . screwed into frosty artificialities, ghastly make-believe of wit; in fact, more

on, "December 23, 186-. Jeanie Welsh, Jeanie Welsh, look upon the man you promised to love, honour, and obey. Here must I huddle in a corner far from the writing tools, because the whole house, no less, is needed for a Children's Party. And am I truly, then, to crawl on all fours beneath a hearth-rug to amuse these youngsters? Ah, well, so shall it be, Jeanie woman, you grand divert of me."

Had these been fair samples of the book, countless newspaper articles would have had to be written on other subjects. The "Saturday Review" would have slated somebody else; the "Spectator" have preached on other texts; scores of writers would have been hacked to pieces who now enjoy a high reputation; thousands who have got their amusement from the "Reminiscences" or the "Letters" would have had to patronize the theatre. Numbers of young men, instead of falling into the sere, would have frequented "At Homes" and been pierced by maidens. Some would have gone in for racing and made a fortune; others would have gone in for racing and been welshed.⁶ Those who ran round to the circulating library in slippers to get the third volume, and caught cold and died, would be flourishing mothers and doting dads.

So much talk was there about whether Mr. Froude had been discreet that in the news-sheets "Another insult to the British Flag" was printed in small type and never taken seriously. In other circumstances the country would have been roused, and there would have been a war. France would have taken the opportunity to march into Germany; Germany would have bribed Russia by offering to assist her to our Indian Empire. It is probable that our dogs would never have been muzzled; exhibitions at South Kensington might have remained in the egg; half the smokers of Great Britain might have perished of tobacco grown in Herefordshire.

But those things were not to be; no one had thought of the lath.⁷

like 'diluted insanity' (as I defined it) than anything of real jocosity, humor, or geniality" (250).

⁶If a pun on Jane Welsh, then a delightful one.

⁷Here the first section ends. The next was written up to fifty years later. Note that Barrie speaks of "Anon" as if he were another person altogether, instead of a former self.

When in later days circumstances were “easier,” and my splendid father made his grand visit to London (he could read the Bible with such awful reverence as I have never heard from a pulpit), the first place we sought out together was neither Westminster Abbey nor the Tower, but Carlyle’s house in Cheyne Row. In our Scottish home the name that bulked largest next to Burns was Carlyle. It is not surprising, therefore, that before our Anon had been long in Grenville Street, Carlyle was appearing in various guises in the “St. James’s.” I can recall Edinburgh days when I was in full sail in Carlylese, quite the “sedulous ape,” indeed he was the only writer I ever tried to imitate. I reveled in reading R. L. S.⁸ on style, but it depressed me also, and I had a childish notion (which I passed on to Anon) that style is, in a sentence, the way in which you paint your picture. The proper definition is of course far more difficult than that. Nevertheless, Anon inherited a revered approach to Carlyle, and I am surprised to see that in the first of various papers on the great man he dared to be somewhat playful. One would have expected to find him, so to speak, approaching Carlyle in the Hat.⁹

When I was at school in Dumfries I often saw Carlyle in cloak, sombrero and staff, mooning along our country roads, a tortured mind painfully alone even to the eyes of a boy. He was visiting his brother-in-law, Dr. Aitken, retired, and I always took off my cap to him. I daresay I paid this homage fifty times, but never was there any response. Once I seized a babe, who was my niece, and ran with her in my arms to a spot which I saw he was approaching; my object that in future years she should be able to say she had once touched the great Carlyle. I did bring them within touching distance, but there my courage failed me, and the two passed each other to meet no more. He may have thought me one of the tribe

⁸Robert Louis Stevenson, who claimed famously in *Memories and Portraits* (1887) that he became a great writer because he “played the sedulous ape” to those who influenced him (59).

⁹Barrie refers to a silk hat, bought on his arrival in London in March 1885, which he wore only to his meetings with Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *St. James’s Gazette*.

who tried to get a word from him for storage by asking, for instance, if this was the road to Lockmaben, when he would undo them by pointing out the way with his staff and silently wander on.

This is a recollection of many years ago, and I know not whether visitors still come from afar to gaze at his birthplace in Ecclefechan, which is not far from Dumfries. In my boyhood they went in numbers. There was, for instance, an American clergyman who reverently sipped of the polluted water of the burn and carried off a stone from it as a relic in his pocket-handkerchief. Carlyle's brother James I got to know a little in Ecclefechan and at his son's farm of Priestlands, a shorter man than Thomas, and not near so like him as the son promised to be, but with similar keen eyes, shaggy hair, and rugged lines. My brother was school inspecting at Ecclefechan when I first met James Carlyle in a comparatively talkative mood (for they could all be as taciturn as the great one), and he said to me with a grand burr, "You make a terrible to-do nowadays about education by what was the case in my young days. One day at the school when I was a nine-year-old my teacher was hearing me say my catechers (catechism), and I said 'he believes' instead of 'he believeth.' He knocked me down and pulled my lugs [*sic*] and banged me on the desks; and I ran out and lay at the foot of a hedge among dockens and nettles for three whole days." Three whole days seems a long time for a nine-year-old, but they were queer ones, the Carlyles. Grimly attached as they certainly were, they were famed among grim neighbours for the way they "took each other off" round their ingle-neuk, and in my youth there were still octogenarians able to recall red fires, granite faces, and fierce talk. "You need not expect us to go out of our way to belaud the Carlyles," more than one patriarch said, but they had some of the Carlylean humour themselves, and seem often to have accosted Thomas to find out whether he was genial to-day, or ready to flay them. One story told was at the expense of a relative, a tradesman in the little town, notorious for a habit of standing in his doorway thoughtfully scratching his elbows. He propounded a poser one day, "And what would you say, Mr. Carlyle, is the greatest pleasure in life?" Mr. Carlyle was, as we all know, profoundly learned on the subject,

and he replied, "To scratch the place that's itchy." He used a better word than itchy, but only Scots would understand. (33-40)

This comic sketch from *The Greenwood Hat* clearly shows Barrie's understanding of Carlyle as a person, gleaned from his reading of James Anthony Froude's biography of Carlyle, but primarily from reading Carlyle's own writings, from interviewing acquaintances and family, and, perhaps, from being a Dumfries Scot himself. It's difficult to tell if Barrie is sympathetic or not, since the style of writing is typically Barrie—witty, playful, ironic—which in its portrait of a totally inconceivable Carlyle nevertheless seems spot on. This sketch, though irreverent, still conveys Barrie's respect for "the great Carlyle."

Another chapter of *The Greenwood Hat*, entitled "Was He a Genius?," again brings Carlyle to the forefront. Barrie argues "that Carlyle was wrong in defining G[enius] as an infinite capacity for taking pains" (175). He discusses the distinction between genius and talent: "that G[enius] is power without effort, and talent power with effort" (176). Barrie claims that he has power without effort, and says, irreverently, that "there seems to me something pathetic as well as praiseworthy in the way Carlyle sat up through the long nights acquiring power with effort. As an ambitious man he had doubtless no other course open to him . . ." (176). He admits that one's own definition of genius is colored by one's own temperament, and Carlyle's definition "certainly was prejudiced" by his own experiences. "If you prefer to think that G[enius] is power with effort instead of without effort, then by all means acknowledge Carlyle a G[enius] and leave me out" (177-78). Eventually Barrie manages to declare himself a genius by the logical process of eliminating all definitions of genius that do not specifically fit his own description tailored to his own "genius."

Irreverence is a hallmark of Barrie's writings, particularly pointed towards Carlyle. And yet these many references convey his unshakeable devotion to his literary mentor. Cynthia Asquith, Barrie's secretary for the last two decades of his life, declares that just because "Barrie was capable of hero-worship, it mustn't be supposed that this propensity could ever suspend his sense of humour. On the contrary, the bigger the man, the more delightfully funny he found his foibles. The admiration

he felt for Hardy [for example]—veneration, it might well be called—did not stop Barrie smiling at him” (106–07). Unlike Froude, who exposed Carlyle’s failings at an attempt to reach “the truth” and thus toppled the man and his heroic image, Barrie maintains the veneration, keeping Carlyle on his pedestal, but makes him human, too, like Pygmalion watching his statue of Galatea turn into flesh and blood. Carlyle is unreachable but human, with Barrie knowing that the most he can ever dare to do, or would ever want to do, is to yell at it, or to harass it, or to heckle it—or to bite it, so that Carlyle would have to finally turn his attention to that little itch and scratch it. In this way, Barrie would no longer be just the short, harmless man who thought himself invisible, because he had gained the attention of the great Carlyle.¹⁰

Barrie’s attitude toward Carlyle, which both reveres and lampoons, is best seen in a short novel called *Better Dead*, a satire that pokes fun of himself as well as Carlyle. The fictional Andrew Riach, recently graduated from Edinburgh University with an M.A., travels to London with an inflated sense of his worth and prospects. “Here was a young Scotchman, able, pure, of noble ambition, and a first medallist in metaphysics. Genius was written on his brow. He may have written it himself, but it was there” (199). He wrongly assumes he will easily get a position as private secretary to a prominent politician, and quickly goes through the money he has brought for new clothes and rent. Desperate, he takes temporary jobs: he is paid by an actor to faint in a theatre, supposedly overcome by the performance; and he is given ten shillings to stage an assault on “a young lady and her aunt with a view to robbery, in a quiet thoroughfare, by arrangement with a young gentleman,

¹⁰ Chaney argues that Barrie felt invisible after his brother David’s untimely death. Disagreeing with other biographers, Chaney further posits that not just the death but rather Barrie’s mother’s grief is what marred his life: “Margaret’s traumatic grief, her turning inward, away from all of her children including her youngest son [Barrie], is best understood when we recognize that it was not, as James Barrie believed, through David’s death that his mother’s attention was wrested from him. The terrible, unbearable truth for Jamie was that it had always been absent. Margaret Barrie had never really seen her youngest son. Her eyes were befogged with her image of David. As a result, . . . the little James had always felt himself inferior, essentially rejected by his mother; the one person whose attention he craved above all else” (21).

who rescued them and made him run” in order to impress the young lady with his courage (203).

Feeling suicidal, he considers jumping off a bridge, when he is accosted by a stranger who tries to murder him. Riach manages to talk the would-be murderer out of killing him, and asks why he was the target of assassination. The stranger tells him of the S.D.W.S.P., “the Society for Doing Without Some People,” a group of assassins paid to eliminate “numbers of spurious existences” who are “a nuisance to themselves” (217). Riach realizes to his dismay that he has been labeled one of these “spurious existences.” “The grand function of the Society,” explains the stranger, “is to find out the persons who have a claim on it, and in the interests of humanity to lay their condition before them. After that it is in the majority of cases for themselves to decide whether they will go or stay on,” though some targets may have to be persuaded or pushed into being “weed[ed] out” (218). Almost anyone can be targeted as a nuisance; however, there are some honorary members, who are off limits for extraction, as the stranger explains:

“To do the honorary list justice,” said his [Andrew’s] companion, “it gave us one fine fellow in our honorary president. He is dead now.”

Andrew looked up.

“No, we had nothing to do with it. It was Thomas Carlyle.”

Andrew raised his hat.

“Though he was over eighty years of age,” continued the stranger. “Carlyle would hardly rest content with merely giving us his countenance. He wanted to be a working member. It was he who mentioned Froude’s name to us.”

“For honorary membership?”

“Not at all. Froude would hardly have completed the ‘Reminiscences’ had it not been that we could never make up our minds between him and Freeman.” (220)¹¹

During a probationary period of three months, and after

¹¹ Edward Augustus Freeman (1823–92; *ODNB*) engaged in a vicious public attack against Froude’s methods and integrity as a historian.

his thesis is approved by the Society, Riach sets out on his first project, to convince Mr. Labouchere,¹² a well-known politician and “a great satirist, combining instruction with amusement, a sort of comic Carlyle,” that it would be better to die right now rather than to wait until his reputation had waned to the point of embarrassment (247). Labouchere throws him out, and Riach’s new career flounders. At the end of his probation, Riach addresses the Society with his proposal that any man over the age of forty-five should be eliminated. Since most of the Society’s members are already past this age, they chase him out of the building, attempting to wring his neck. Riach escapes back to his small village in Scotland, where, humbled, he becomes rector of the grammar school and marries the minister’s daughter.

Better Dead pokes fun at Carlyle’s famous irascibility, but Barrie lampoons himself through the character of Andrew Riach, looking backward at his own foolish notions of easy access to the world of success. But unlike Riach, Barrie continued to work diligently until he got his foot in the door at the *St. James’s Gazette*, which published a shorter, earlier *Better Dead*, and which allowed his full talents to be acknowledged by the reading public. *The Little Minister* (1891), *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), and *Tommy and Grizel* (1900)—as well as, of course, *Peter Pan*—made him one of the wealthiest and well-respected men in Great Britain by the time of his death in 1937.

To return to the book-ends of Barrie’s career, it is clear from a reading of *The Greenwood Hat* that the impact of Carlyle on Barrie was deeply felt throughout his life, since he not only deliberately chose, out of the hundreds available, to include original articles that discuss Carlyle but also wrote reflections on these that indicate the continuing influence. In fact, the very organization of *The Greenwood Hat* is a salute to *Sartor Resartus*. Barrie conceived of it, he claims, when he came upon

¹² Henry Du Pré Labouchere (1831–1912; *ODNB*) was a radical member of the House of Commons sporadically and then continually from 1880 to 1905. He was also a theatre owner, journalist, and editor, notably of *The Truth*, which purported to sniff out scandals but was also sued for libel several times. Although a friend of Oscar Wilde, he later introduced the bill insinuating homosexuality that helped sentence Wilde to jail.

an empty hatbox which had once contained the famous silk hat but now was filled with copies of some of these earlier essays, written by his shy, more retiring persona of "Anon." The process of sifting through the original essays is exactly what the Editor of *Sartor Resartus* does with Teufelsdröckh's papers. Even more telling is the essay "The Biographer at Bay," which seems to be a parody of Froude's description of how difficult it was to write the biography of Carlyle, as he explains in *Reminiscences*. Carlyle did not want a biography, but knew one was inevitable; he changed his mind and put Froude into the uncomfortable position of preparing a biography with no promise that it would be published. The materials published in *Reminiscences* are "without his [Carlyle's] last touches, not edited by himself, not corrected by himself, perhaps most of it not intended for publication" (vii): "He still left me to my own discretion; on myself, therefore, the responsibility rests entirely for their publication" (203), not anticipating the firestorm that resulted when *Reminiscences* was finally published. Supposedly expressing sympathy for Carlyle's long remorseful life after the death of Jane, Froude says that Carlyle "lingered on, however, year after year" (vi); but was Froude also possibly expressing his frustration that Carlyle's death would at last put an end to all the confusion, as well as reward him with the expected publication profits?

In Barrie's essay "The Biographer at Bay," the narrator, "Anon," gives a supposed first-person account of the travails he has endured while writing a biography of George Meredith (a close friend to Barrie), caused mainly by Meredith's stubborn refusal to give up the ghost:

He was an old man then, and infirm, so there was a sort of informal understanding between us that, alas, he would not last long. I worked night and day in the arrangement of his letters, autobiographical notes and other remains, forming them into a most interesting biography, which he was desirous to revise himself. For five years it has been ready for the Press; but he insists that the publication must be posthumous. He has had several illnesses; but he shakes them all off; and the publishers wrote to me last week saying he looks so sprightly that they have given him up for another year. Of course I admire him as much as ever, but at the same time this is evidently to

be a splendid season for memoirs, and I have mouths to feed and little feet to shoe. . . . When the memoir does appear it will be found that he is the hero whom I have always worshipped. (162–63)

The entire essay is a mock lament, a not-very-convincing assertion that the great man is still great, but undercut by the frequent desire that Meredith should just die and let the biography be published. He complains that the longer Meredith lives and travels in society, appearing to be as healthy as can be, the biography “is losing both in freshness and truthfulness” (165). Even worse, Meredith is “becoming garrulous” and is telling his best stories that were supposed to be revealed for the first time in the biography:

Then there is his interview with Carlyle at Craigenputtock, which I had been trusting reviews would quote. He was in Dumfries many years ago, and drove to Craigenputtock to meet the sage, whom he did not happen to know personally. He thought, however, that his name would be sufficient introduction. On reaching the farm he saw Carlyle sitting on a dyke. The sage would not let him approach, saying he had never heard of him, and finally chased him round the duck pond. He learned afterwards from the schoolmaster that this was one of Carlyle’s “bad days,” and also that a labourer in the parish was paid by the genial author of “Sartor Resartus” £5 per annum to take admiring visitors to another farm and pretend that it was Craigenputtock. (165–66)

As the years drag on, and Meredith is still alive and kicking, Anon “cannot help looking reproachfully” at Meredith. After a while, Meredith begins to resent and even fear Anon’s constant attendance and calls him “a hypocrite” when Anon says he hopes Meredith’s health will improve (167). Once, when Meredith is sick in bed, Anon says, “the object of my devotion sent me a magazine containing an article on centenarians. This, I confess, pained me; and, forcing my way into his bedroom, I said more than I ought to have said. Never should I forget his greatness. Since then he is nervous if we are left alone together” (168).

In a letter to Sir James Stephen, circulated in pamphlet form in 1886 (republished in *My Relations with Carlyle*), Froude writes that he has “been exposed to much criticism for my

conduct about Mr. Carlyle's papers . . ." (42), a sentiment that comes to full expression in *My Relations with Carlyle*: "I was not prepared for attacks on my character as a gentleman and a man of honour. I acquit Carlyle of having meant this. He was incapable of treachery, least of all to me" (28–29). Mocking Froude's sentiments, Anon in "The Biographer at Bay" explains that once he was admired by his friends for having the honor to write Meredith's biography. But as time goes on with no volume forthcoming, "I have taken a lower place in their estimation" (167). In phrasing similar to Froude's, he says, "They know that the fault is not mine (nor do I call it his); but nevertheless I suffer for it" (167).

Barrie's commentary accompanying "The Biographer at Bay," written decades later, is, in contrast, a true homage to George Meredith. He tells of how he gave Meredith the "entirely fanciful" piece to read, and of Meredith's appreciative reaction: he "walked up and down in Flint Cottage reading it and mockingly assuming the leading role. I remember his putting the paper-knife into my hand to stab him with" (168). Although Barrie was actually asked to write Meredith's biography, he declined. "Meredith had told me that he wished nothing of the kind to be done, and in his last weeks he saw to it that bonfires of his 'literary remains' should smoulder in his garden" (170), similar to what Carlyle had originally wished for his own papers. At the time of Meredith's death, Barrie had written an endearing, heartfelt elegy, reprinted in his commentary on "The Biographer at Bay," that describes Meredith becoming young again, surrounded by his children (literary creations) and meeting other departed literati. "When a great man dies—and this was one of the greatest since Shakespeare—the immortals await him at the top of the nearest hill" (174). There is no sham here, just open reverence.

"The Biographer at Bay" is just a sample of how Barrie criticizes Froude. Barrie's familiarity with the Froude-Carlyle controversy is inarguable. For example, in Barrie's *Better Dead*, the "Society for Doing Without Some People" considers Froude a possible target for assassination. It should be clear at this point that even though Barrie "dared to be somewhat playful" ("A Small Lath" 37) in his many discussions of Carlyle, he nevertheless very much revered him. He also clearly

understood and sympathized with him, especially regarding Froude's insinuations about the private affairs of the Carlyles. In "Our New Servant," an early piece set in rural Scotland, the narrator Anon tells of his and his wife's travails with a new servant, Isabella, who is so much more cultured and well read than they are that they are embarrassed to continue with their usual leisure activities. The wife says about the new servant, "Books are her chief subject of conversation. She told me the other night that, in her opinion, Froude did not understand Carlyle" (106).

Barrie often wrote under the guise of a pseudonym, or using a different persona, or even denying himself as author: the play *Peter Pan* famously has a dedication to the Llewellyn Davies boys as being the true authors, or at least "the spark" from them (Tatar 215). Lisa Chaney refers to Barrie as "a divided personality" (210), and Asquith, labeling him "an extraordinarily plural personality" (18), recounts that Barrie had an amazing talent for entering "'into the minds of other people.' So he wrote his experiences in multitudinous adopted characters—as a 'medical man'; an M.P.; a policeman; a blacksmith; a civil engineer in India; a professional beauty; a vagrant . . . [; and] 'even a bishop'" (25–26). He was a born actor, and could assume the demeanor of any character he pleased. He convinced Asquith, who was writing a series of articles on "The Woman's Point of View," to submit an essay he had written himself under her name; apparently the hoax was never discovered (39). Late in life, he made an agreement with Princess Margaret that she should receive a penny for each performance of his last play *The Boy David*, since he considered her a collaborator on the project (193–94).¹³ This unusual trait, to assume another identity so completely, appeared early in his childhood and, as one might expect, is closely allied to changing clothes. When the favored son David died at age 13 (Barrie was 6) in a skating accident, and nothing could assuage his mother's grief, Barrie would imitate his dead brother, putting on David's clothes and talking and whistling as he once did,

¹³ As suggested by Holly Virginia Blackford, Barrie saw his role as a recorder of stories; someone else might have the idea, but he is the one who writes it down, almost as if he is implanted with a seed, but he is the one to birth the story (131).

striving to get his mother's love and attention. In *Sentimental Tommy*, Barrie's narrator describes Tommy, Barrie's avatar: "[M]ost conspicuous of his traits was the faculty of stepping into other people's shoes and remaining there until he became someone else" (207); "he has a devouring desire to try on other folks' feelings, as if they were so many suits of clothes" (372). In *The Greenwood Hat*, Barrie relates a story of himself: "When I was a very small boy, another as small was woeful because he could not join in our rough play lest he damaged the 'mourning blacks' in which he was attired. So I nobly exchanged clothing with him for an hour, and in mine he disported forgetfully while I sat on a stone in his and lamented, though I knew not for whom" (1-2; a similar version is in *Sentimental* 371). And again in *The Greenwood Hat*, Barrie, as "Anon," must wear the silk hat when he visits the *St. James's Gazette* office, as if the hat itself gives him the necessary gravitas (and height) needed to address Frederick Greenwood with confidence. Overly cautious or diffident or just contrary, by donning the clothes of a fictional character, Barrie is able to reveal his true opinions. Without offering a frothy psychoanalysis of Barrie through his writings, it is possible to detect through Barrie's various personas, which he refers to as "[m]y puppets" (*Courage* 7), like the impertinent maid who declared that Froude misunderstood Carlyle, a motif of what can readily be called "a defense of Carlyle."

In physical appearance, Carlyle and Barrie could not have looked more dissimilar: one was tall, hirsute, commanding, and the other short, lean, and shy. Still, that Barrie felt a particular kinship with Carlyle, not just because they had similar personal backgrounds or because Barrie had been steeped in Carlylese his whole life. Carlyle was considered a genius, but so, too, was Barrie. Barrie was forced to give up writing with his right hand, to use his left, just as Carlyle's right hand became unusable. Despite all his public recognition, Barrie felt inadequate, perhaps due to his short stature or his failure, as he says, to become a man—but perhaps because he suspected that no matter how hard he tried, he could not take the place of his dead brother David in his mother's eyes. But Carlyle could; his mother Margaret dreamed of being Carlyle's proud mother. It is my contention that Barrie spent his life attempting to measure up to Carlyle's standards, to be remembered as a

great literary figure (and he was, during his own time), to work dutifully before the night cometh (which he did). But there is one last similarity between himself and Carlyle in which he felt particular kinship, which perhaps, ironically, made him feel less inadequate—that of supposed impotency.

There is no need to rehearse here the history of the Froude-Carlyle controversy. What Froude insinuated about Carlyle's virility is commonly known and widely available. But J. M. Barrie, who had read as much by Carlyle and about Carlyle as anyone else, and who was himself a well-known figure, was deeply affected by the controversy. Barrie admitted in his writings, especially in *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel*, which he referred to as biographies of a literary artist (e.g. Barrie), that he was indeed the boy who never grew up. Barrie was a constant flirt with women, but he complained forlornly that he was harmless and even invisible to them. He did marry the actress Mary Ansell, but they divorced after fifteen years, when her extramarital affair became known publically. Although Chaney declares that "Barrie's marriage was almost certainly not consummated" (277), no one can say for sure; neither revealed such private matters, even in Ansell's odd memoir *Dogs and Men*, where she claims that she is uncomfortable around babies (2), and, though "[a] man had to be clever, really clever, to please" her, she preferred dogs and their instinctive devotion (4). So instead of any confession of inadequacy or disappointment, we have their childless marriage (as was her second marriage), her affair and the Barries' subsequent divorce, the appeal from powerful friends to keep the divorce (and scandal) out of the newspapers, and the suggestions in his early writing that his was a spiritual, transcendental type of sexual desire, one that needed no actual physical manifestation. In *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), Tommy finally proposes marriage to his childhood friend Grizel, but they soon break off the engagement, with him explaining: "Grizel, I seem to be different from all other men. There seems to be some curse upon me that makes me unable to love as they do. I want to love, dear one; you are the only woman I ever wanted to love; but apparently I can't" (223). They finally are wed, but only after she has a mental breakdown and he sacrifices his literary career to take care of her. When she recovers, she realizes their marriage is not

real: “Tommy trying to become a lover by taking thought, and Grizel not letting on that it could not be done in that way. She thought it was very sweet of him to try so hard—sweeter of him than if he really had loved her, though not, of course, quite so sweet to her. He was a boy only. She knew that, despite all he had gone through, he was still a boy. And boys cannot love. Oh, who would be so cruel as to ask a boy to love?” (242). The narrator has Grizel lamenting her childlessness, but this unfulfilled desire is not due to Tommy’s inability to sire a child: “That boy Tommy never knew why she did not want to have a child. He thought that for the present she was afraid; but the reason was that she believed it would be wicked when he did not love her as she loved him” (246). Every time that Tommy is forced to act more like other men—and he implies that he can if he must—his wings are clipped, and he wants more than anything to stay free. The narrator of *Tommy and Grizel* claims to be writing a biography, mainly of Tommy, but he is always mindful of Grizel’s pleas to “Take care; if you hurt him you will hurt me” (52). (We can almost hear Jane Welsh prophetically pleading with Froude that to smear Carlyle is to smear her as well.) These passages suggest that Barrie was not impotent, but that he *chose* not to engage in sexual relations, that a true love did not require such acts to sustain it. But it is important to remember that, like Tommy Sandys in *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel*, he makes up stories so affecting that he believes them himself; Barrie is not the most reliable of narrators, even of his own life.

Carlyle’s supposed impotence was a greater problem for his admirers, because the idea contrasted too rudely with such an icon of masculine surety and power. How could the oracular seer be so blind to his wife’s needs; and how could the omnipotent prophet also be an impotent husband? However, just as Barrie (probably) eschewed sexual relations, as Trev Lynn Broughton argues, Carlyle could have practiced a “doctrine of muscular celibacy,” in which “chastity was not a preparation *for* love, or even an alternative *to* love: for Carlyle the silent discipline of chastity seems to have been the only meaningful expression *of* love” (“Impotence” 508, 507); “celibacy represented the logical extreme of manliness fantasized as self-discipline” (509). Thus the Carlyles could have enjoyed/endured a friendship/marriage

not because he was impotent, but because he was so potent that he (and she) was disciplined enough to forego physical consummation. No wonder Barrie, through the guise of one of his characters, declares that “Froude did not understand Carlyle.”

Drawing on current theories about Victorian masculinities, Broughton discusses how the historical and contextual baggage of the word “impotence” had changed even within the Victorian time period: Is it just a fertility issue? A sexual disorder? Could it be measured (literally)? Is it inherent and thus untreatable? Is it caused by excessive masturbation? Is marriage a cure for impotence? Ultimately, impotence “tended to be regarded as a moral symptom rather than a medical diagnosis” (512). That is, the perception of impotence did imply a lapse in moral character, and was manifest not just in impotence but in the well-known Carlylean temperament of irritability and even disability (e.g. the tremors in his right hand). By the early twentieth century, the “inefficient bridegroom” was culpable if his wife sought relations elsewhere, especially if he entered the marriage knowing what his “constitution” was; so even though Froude was indeed accusing Carlyle of moral lapse, he tried to excuse him by claiming that Carlyle did not know his own constitution when he married Jane Welsh.¹⁴

Although his marriage was childless, Barrie did so want to be a father, and he did eventually adopt the five Llewellyn Davies boys in 1910, after their parents, who were close friends of his, died one after the other of cancer. The oldest boys had been Barrie’s playmates when younger and had inspired the creation of Peter Pan (even one boy was named Peter). Like many artists, Barrie often compared his literary creations to childbirth. Similarly, although the Carlyles did not adopt children, in *Reminiscences*, Carlyle bemoans their childlessness, “No daughter or son of hers [Jane’s] was to sit there; so it had been appointed us, my darling. I have no book a thousandth part so beautiful as thou; but these were our only “children”—and, in a true sense, these were verily ours; and will perhaps live some time in the world after we are both gone” (285).

Barrie saw Carlyle as his mentor, his hero, his literary father.

¹⁴ See Trev Lynn Broughton, 514–23.

But sons rebel against their fathers as they compete with them for maternal affection and attention. The Oedipal scenario is played out in obvious form in *Peter Pan*, where phallic symbols are aplenty. Captain Hook and Peter are sword-fighting enemies, corrupt adulthood vs. innocent childhood, both intent upon winning Wendy as mother. It is a veiled Carlyle and Barrie who are actually fighting.

Peter Pan has a small but effective sword with which he kills pirates, and with which he had previously chopped off the hand of Captain Hook. He threw the hand to the monstrous crocodile, whose presence as a stalking Death figure is always apparent because of the still-ticking clock he (or she; the gender is not consistent) has swallowed. The crocodile follows Hook, waiting to get at the rest of his body, causing Hook to be understandably paranoid. Hook does not die by Peter's sword; instead, he anticipates Peter's fatal stroke and throws himself overboard so that the crocodile can finally be satisfied.¹⁵ Captain Hook is not defenseless; he has a sword, too, but his hook, in place of his hand, is the noticeable phallic symbol (along with his doubled cigar holder) which, suggestively, is curved. The hook is dangerous, and the narrator explains how it can be used to great effect to murder, and yet the narrator several times refers to Captain Hook as a flower that has bended, which, together with the bent hook and his effeminate sartorial style, conveys a definite image of castration or at least impotency. Peter, in contrast, still has his baby teeth; he is full of potential, and this is what makes him a significant enemy. He has not matured or become wasted, not become a man. (From its inception, the same actor has played the dual roles of Hook and Mr. Darling, so even if Hook dies, the only other adult male for a role model is cowardly, self-absorbed, and immature, who punishes himself for his children's absence by living in a doghouse). For Barrie, seemingly, the immature boy is more virile, more powerful, than the adult man because adulthood itself is impotent.¹⁶ To never grow up means to never grow old

¹⁵ Barrie was constantly tinkering with his plays. Kirsten Stirling points out that in previous versions of the play (finally published in 1928), Hook often returns, keeping the ending indeterminate and making way for sequels in which Hook carries on the role of villain (118).

¹⁶ Blackford posits the argument that Peter Pan is a Byronic hero, a vampire—

and, just like Peter Pan, never to die. But it is also true that the only person who will not or cannot grow up, like Peter Pan—who wears skeleton leaves and lives in a tomb-like underground cavern—is a person who is already dead. Like Barrie's older brother David, who died at the age of thirteen, only a child who dies is forever a child.

Barrie suggests in his writings that he feels unacknowledged, underappreciated, invisible. One of the ways he attempted to ensure his legacy was to pay for a statue not of himself but of Peter Pan to be placed in Kensington Gardens, where it still resides—as if to rival the statue of Carlyle in Chelsea. He will never overpower his hero but he can imitate; he can irritate, he can bite, he can crow and crow and crow. Peter Pan is famous for crowing. Hook calls him a “doodle-do,” and what is best remembered about him is his “cockiness.” Pan calls up the mischievous god of nature, but as Maria Tatar has noticed, the name Peter recalls the apostle Peter, he who is a rock, but also he who rejects Christ three times when the cock crows (xlix). At this point, two scenes made famous by Froude in his accusations against Carlyle become relevant: Carlyle destroying the flower-garden the morning after his supposed unconsummated marriage night, and later the “demon fowls,” those “macaws, Cochin Chinas, endless concert of crowing, cackling, shrieking roosters . . . which cut us off from sleep or peace, at times altogether, and were like to drive me mad” (*Reminiscences* 283).¹⁷

thus the entrancing teeth—and a Hades, kidnapping Persephone/Wendy to Hell, where she will have a sexual awakening, after which she will be able to return to her mother Demeter/Mrs. Darling's world as a woman (119–32). Peter Pan, then, is the child-lover who must be abandoned and returned to cyclically (as do Wendy's daughter and granddaughter), as he serves as “a strong symbol of passion that cannot be consummated” (119).

¹⁷ Chickens in general seem to have been a problem for Carlyle for years. David Wilson recounts a story of a visit of Carlyle in 1820 to his family to recover from illness, but where he continued to be ill: “The only flesh he could digest was that of chickens, and she [his mother] often provided it, ‘almost daily,’ this summer, as his young sisters remarked. . . . The custom thereabouts was for the children to chase and watch and kill whatever bird the farmer's wife had indicated for execution; and they thought nothing of the screeching that invaded every room and disturbed their brother at his books indoors. It seemed queer to the young barbarians that he objected to the suffering of the birds which he was about to eat! So they never heeded his remonstrances, and made the fowls screech more

). In a screenplay for a proposed silent film adaptation of *Peter Pan*, Barrie writes of character motivation: “*What maddened Hook beyond endurance was Peter’s cockiness. In the night-time it disturbed him like an insect.*” The audience sees Hook “*having a nightmare about Peter, brandishing his hook and scratching as if tortured by an insect*” (Tatar 300–01). If all Barrie could do is irritate Carlyle, to make him acknowledge his existence, to scratch the itch, then he achieves it by crowing.¹⁸ As numerous critics have pointed out, *Peter Pan* displays the anxiety, the ambivalence of Barrie’s attitude towards adulthood, masculinity, and Victorian hero-worship. He is anxious because his role model for masculinity, Carlyle, perhaps is only a sham (shadow?) of a man; or, rather, Carlyle is so great that he has superseded earthly concerns and is already apotheosized. It is this ambivalence that worries Barrie, and instead of killing off Hook, he corners him and allows Hook to maintain the all-important “good form” so that Hook can succumb to death on his own terms. Significantly, after Hook dies, Peter Pan *becomes* Hook, speaking roughly to his mates, sporting a cigar, pretending to have a hook and *wearing Hook’s clothes* as he paces the deck of the *Jolly Roger*.¹⁹

than ever, and mother never bothered, till one day he said: “If you cannot stop the screeching, mother, I can stop the eating. I won’t eat another chicken if it’s killed in that way.” “Eh!” cried his mother amazed, “What’ll thou eat then?” and presently she added in mockery: ‘thou’s gey ill to deal wi’,’ to the huge delight of the listening youngsters who thought she petted him too much, and never let it be forgotten. It became a family joke, misleading to a simple stranger” (qtd. in Dunn 188). Jane also seems to have been troubled by poultry: Geraldine Jewsbury relates a story Jane had told her about “a horrid turkey-cock” that continued to threaten her until “she suddenly darted at him, and seized him by the throat, and swung him round”—no more turkey-cock (*Reminiscences* 204).

¹⁸ In “A Small Lath” Barrie writes of how it was not the crowing but the silence that most irritated Carlyle. Blackford asserts coincidentally: “Hook is actually afraid not of the ticking clock but of the day when the clock winds down, signifying his death. The repetitious ticking of the clock—mythical [cyclical] rather than linear time . . .—keeps him safe. It is linear time—the end to time—that is a source of fear” (121).

¹⁹ Since *Peter Pan* is based on the traditional pantomime in which cross-dressing is a large part of the humor, Stirling also explains that the title character played by a young woman, Hook and Mr. Darling played by the same actor, Hook played by a buxom woman, and Mrs. Darling played by a burly man were all possible casting choices, but only the first two possibilities survived

Barrie wanted to know what it was like to be Carlyle, with all the fame and admiration that went along with the iconic figure. Like Carlyle, Barrie *was* famous and he *was* widely admired. Furthermore, he alone understood Carlyle in his greatness and in his folly, his grandeur and his flaws. He put on Carlyle's clothes and walked and talked as he thought Carlyle had. Still, he always suspected that he was harmless, almost invisible, a shadow of a great man.

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