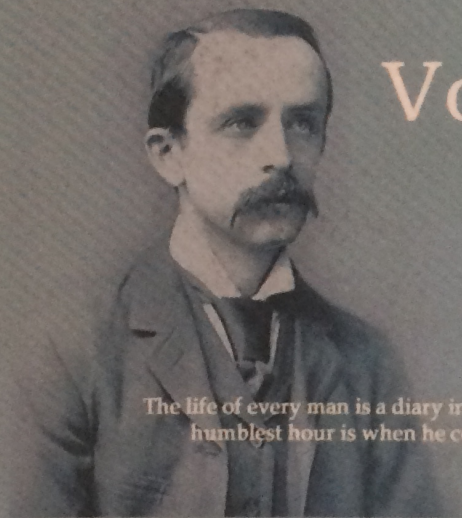


ANON:

The J.M. Barrie
Literary Society Journal

Volume 2: 2019



J.M. Barrie

The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another; and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it.

Making Connections

Contents.

Introduction; p4

Barrie's Innuendos (Dr. Sarah Green); p7

Dramatic Connections

Barrie's Front Cloth (Dr. Ros Ridley); p13

Barrie and Ibsen (Elena Silvestri Cecinelli); p21

The Coming Dramatist (J.M.Barrie, 1889); p25

Brought back from Elysium (J.M.Barrie, 1890); p29

Elysium and beyond (Cally Phillips); p45

Frohman : A Tribute (J.M. Barrie, 1915); p50

Literary Connections

Peter Pan and Russia (Dr. Marina Ivankiva); p54

Hammerton and Barrie (Dr Andrew Nash); p59

'Dear Mr Barrie'...Annie S. Swan (Gillian Neale); p71

Barrie on Meredith (1888); p78

Barrie on Stevenson (1889); p82

Barrie on Kipling (1891); p89

Mr Crockett's first Meeting (1896); p101

Reading Between the Lines (Cally Phillips); p105

About the society; p110

About the contributors; p112

Society Publications;114

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J.M.Barrie in Imperial and Soviet Russia.

Marina Ivankiva.

The story of J.M. Barrie in Russia is rather dramatic, as his integration into Russian culture in the 20th century was complicated by various reasons: political, ideological, and aesthetic. At the same time it may exemplify the history of my country before and after the Revolution of 1917 and explain why few people know J.M.Barrie nowadays. Barrie's adventures in Russia may be divided into two chapters: Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia, or before and after the February Revolution of 1917.

Imperial Russia

Russians first properly heard about J.M. Barrie and Peter Pan in 1911 due to Isaak Shklovsky (1864-1935)¹, a journalist and publicist who lived in London and wrote for the monthly magazine "Russkoe Bogatstvo" ("Russian Wealth"). Shklovsky had been living in London since 1896 and wrote articles on different aspects of the life in the UK. He was considered to be an influential expert on Great Britain, and it was he who introduced Russians to British culture, traditions, technologies, etc. His February 1911 review was dedicated to London theatrical life. A part of the review was about "*Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*" where the author retold the plotline of the play calling it "a beautiful piece with wonderful setting and outstanding performance." He praised Barrie "a very

¹ Isaak Shklovsky was an uncle of the prominent Russian and Soviet literary critic and the main figure associated with Russian formalism Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984).

talented playwright unknown to the Russian audience".

Despite Shklovsky's acclaim, the play would have to wait for almost fifty years to be staged in Russia in the late 1960s. Yet Russian readers could enjoy Barrie's prose: "Little White Bird" was translated by Augusta Domaskaya (1875-1959) and published in six issues of the Petrograd monthly literary, scientific, and political magazine "Letopis" ("Chronicle") in 1917, the same year the Revolution happened and the magazine closed. Unfortunately I could not find any reviews or readers' feedbacks but the fact that the novel appeared in book the following year in 1918 makes me think that it was a success. It was published by "Parus" ("Sail"), a publishing house founded by famous Russian writer Maxim Gorky.

The second book appeared in Berlin in 1922 in the emigrant Russian publishing house "Ogon'ki" ("Sparks"). Since then it has not been translated or published in Russia again which makes the 1918 and 1922 editions rare books with only three books in Russian libraries and three abroad. As for the six chapters which form the novel known as "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens", they were translated and published in different anthologies of English fairy tales only in 1986 during the Perestroika. The fact that J.M. Barrie was published by emigrant editors during The Russian Civil War must have played a significant role in his fate during Soviet times.

The final Imperial publication of J.M. Barrie was in 1918 when a Moscow-based publishing house "Detskaya kniga" ("Children's Book") published "Peter Pan Picture Book", a translation of the 1907 British edition of the same name. The original book was written by Daniel O'Connor and illustrated with 28 watercolours made by Alice Woodward. These beautiful colour illustrations turned black-and-white in the Russian edition, which was quite symbolic: Russia was entering one of the darkest periods of its history and there was no place for J.M. Barrie there.

Soviet Period.

Soviet Russia was cruel to J.M. Barrie. In 1930 edition of Soviet "Literary Encyclopedia" he was labelled "petty bourgeois writer of England, English colonies, and America" and lashed as "a detached from reality, limited and selfish author who idealizes reality and whose ideology is very close to that of the most conservative wing of petty bourgeoisie." Such definition made any further translations or publications impossible and Barrie was banned and doomed for many years ahead.

Indeed the next time we hear of him is in 1967 when a Soviet children's writer and poet Boris Zakhoder (1918-2000) translated the play "Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up". Soviet children could finally see it on the stage... in a shortened and simplified (or censored if you like) version.

In the second half of the 20th century J.M. Barrie was censored greatly. It took Nina Demurova (born 1930) more than ten years of struggle and fights with censors to finally bring her dream come true and publish "Peter Pan and Wendy" in 1967. The story of her work on Peter Pan sounds like a thriller and deserves a film adaptation. It started in the 1950s when after getting her degree Demurova worked as an interpreter in India. One day she bought two books: "Pride and Prejudice" and "Peter Pan and Wendy" in a little market in Deli. She brought the books back to Moscow and started to translate. "Peter Pan and Wendy" was Demurova's first literary translation but it took her twelve long years to get the permission for publication. In one of her interviews Demurova remembered the main censors' claims: children can't fly and it looks suspicious that they do in the story, dog nurse Nana is not realistic at all, little girl maid is the symbol of capitalistic exploitation of children, Captain Hook's contemplations on whether he is a gentleman contradict to Soviet class system. These claims sound ridiculous now; at that time censors did not recommend the story for Soviet

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children. Demurova did not give up and kept trying to get Peter Pan published. Finally, after twelve years of negotiations with minor corrections Soviet children could read "Peter Pan and Wendy". Until now this translation is considered to be the best in Russian language.

Although the book finally found the readers it didn't have the original illustrations. It was not until 2000s that Peter Pan was published with authorized illustrations. And even the 1953 Disney cartoon "Peter Pan" was officially and legally dubbed into Russian only in 2002. It was Soviet artists and filmmakers who worked out Russian iconography of Peter Pan universe. Demurova's translation was illustrated by Ilya Kabakov (born 1930), a book illustrator and artist, who managed to combine official with underground conceptual art.² The 1971 edition of Zakhoder's translation of the play was illustrated by May Miturich (1925-2008). His works might surprise you as they have nothing to do with neither classical illustrations of Bedford or Rackham, nor with Disney cartoon.³ The final Soviet interpretation was a 1987 film "Peter Pan" directed by Leonid Nechaev. It was a two episode thorough adaptation with fifteen original songs that were later released as a record.

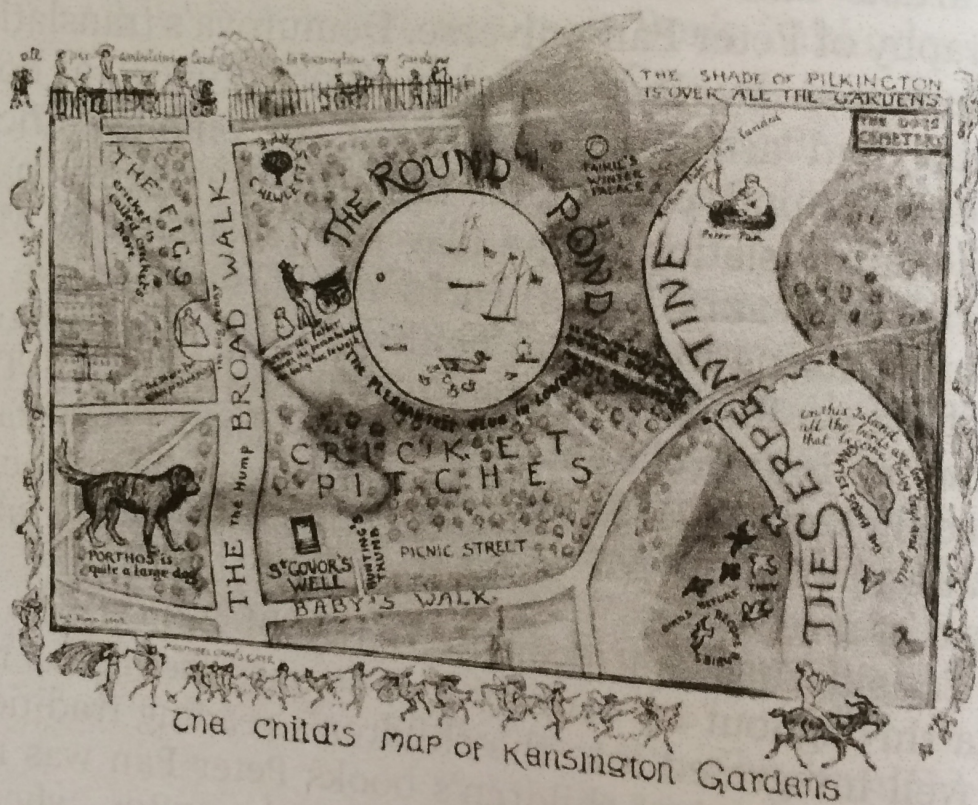
Considering this dramatic story of J.B. Barrie in Russia throughout 20 century it is no surprise he has not been well integrated into the children's reading tradition. Unlike other classical children's books Peter Pan was not passed on through the generations. In the 1980s, when I was a child my friend, whose family was lucky enough to have a record player, played me the records from the Soviet adaptation and I was in love with the songs. I never watched the film itself or read the stories though. My

² Illustrations are available online here
<http://www.barius.ru/biblioteka/book/3262>

³ The book online <http://www.fairyroom.ru/?p=21407>

parents, both born in 1955, simply didn't know about J.M. Barrie and Peter Pan and couldn't introduce me to the books.

Film and animated Peter Pan adaptations left the books behind for Russian speaking audience. And it is Peter Pan who we know rather than J.M. Barrie, whose name still calls puzzled looks.



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