Victorian Domesticity and the Perpetuation of Childhood: an Examination of Gender Roles and the Family Unit in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*

A Thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

By
Abigail Ina Nusbaum
1 April 2014

Table of Contents

Introduction: Playing with Childhood…….3

Chapter 1: The Mother and the Fairy…….22

Chapter 2: The Man and the Pirate……38

Chapter 3: Little Mother……53

Chapter 4: Peter Pan……..73

Conclusion: That One Joy……..91

Works Cited……...94

Introduction

Playing with Childhood

Peter Pan has long been considered a children's classic whose title character could be a figure from mythology instead of the relatively young invention he is at only a century old. The pirates and fairies and children who fly enthrall child audiences, both on stage and on the page. And the bittersweet eternity for a boy who never grows up leaves adult readers pining for those days of innocent childhood. Yet Barrie's character is far from a picture of innocence. In his heartless yet charismatic way, Peter challenges those around him in their identities, and, in doing so, reveals both the successes and holes that existed within the Victorian beliefs regarding the family structure and the dangers of the subsequent collective obsession with childhood.

A review of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* dated January 4, 1913, calls the production "fantastic and beautiful…[showing] no passage of time" (Mew 14). Nearly a decade after its first performance in 1904 and a year after the initial release of the story in its novel form, *Peter and Wendy*, the fantasy never failed to continue to hold its audience, adult and child alike, captive in its dreamlike qualities. Shortly after the release of the novel in 1911, one reviewer called the text "our nearest approach to a legend," and said that "we feel as if we had all written it" (G. K. C. 314). The quality of *Peter Pan* is in the experiential relatability of it, the first audiences might have said. Some did find room for improvement in the work, with one playgoer in 1905 saying "plot there is practically none, loose ends there are a many, but who recks of this as he watches and laughs over this wild panorama of whimsies?" The same reviewer ends by saying, "All who wish to laugh and be merry without being troubled to see the reason why, must take the acquaintance of 'Peter Pan'" (W. T. S. 19-20). Though most readers and viewers in the first decade of Peter's life may have been content simply to feel and experience Barrie's iconic work,

the quest to answer the question of the above review—why?—is a worthy opening to studies into the depths of Barrie's life, the text itself, and the society from which it sprang.

However, the answer to why this work, both the novel and the play, incites so much intrigue and interest is not a simple one to answer. The myriad of topics that may be explored in connection to the work is only surpassed by the number of lenses through which the work may be viewed. The inherent complexity of the work is due, in large part, to its subject matter—the process of growing up. This subject, by nature, is not stable or easily defined. Instead, *Peter Pan* is a story of transitions and movement. For this reason, any attempt to pin it down to a single category or mode of criticism is met with resistance from the text itself. Characters will not stay still long enough to be easily analyzed, and the children especially are growing up much too quickly to be labeled as one type or the other. Any study of the work will inherently be complex, covering an array of tedious topics and influences. The state of transition within the work carries an underlying tension—every transition must be from something and toward something else, and these elements hold the characters, and the audience, in between them. We feel the tension between the gender roles of grown men and women, the responsibility of parenthood within the home, the place of children within the nursery yet outside society, and the discomfort of watching a child grow up. We see girlhood versus boyhood, masculinity versus maternity, childhood versus adulthood, and, at the center of it all, the push and pull between fantasy and reality. The story of Peter Pan exists in the midst of all of these tensions, yet offers a solution to none of them. It is an exploration full of bias and resentment, yet a quest that must be undertaken in order to transition through life.

A study of the Victorian society in which Barrie grew up and first imagined Peter Pan, accompanied by a close reading of the text, reveals Barrie using the various characters'

interactions with the title character as cultural artifacts that illuminate and critique rigidly prescribed Victorian gender roles. This study will also show how the ideologies of the time resulted in the obsession with childhood which allowed men to remain boyish but mournful when girls became mothers. Barrie's work provides a journey through which the reader may follow the various characters, and Wendy especially, as they question and accept the prevailing roles of the time, moving through the process of mourning childhood in order to step into adulthood without the lingering vestiges of a lost childhood.

Liminal Spaces and the Sense of Lost Childhood

The importance of experiencing transitions is a natural and unavoidable necessity for the human race, and this process of transition takes place in liminal spaces. Arnold Van Gennep discusses these various spaces and the acts that take us through them in his work, *The Rites of Passage*. His premise is simply that society is made up of various groups which make up the structure of a culture. Every person is born into a specific group, and life is made up of a series of transitions from one group to the next. Sometimes these transitions are natural, biological even, such as puberty, and are seemingly forced upon the individual. Other transitions may be symbolic, demanded by the society or culture itself, such as academic or marriage ceremonies. And still others are transitions that the individual desires and chooses to move through of his own accord, usually far more personal in nature, like the choice of career path. But the participation in transition, regardless of what it is or how it occurs, is a requirement for a place within any society.

The spaces of culture, specifically within the middle-class, are rigidly defined within Victorian society by the ideology of separate spheres, making any attempt to transition from one space to another difficult and complex. For example, the ideology of separate spheres placed

men in the public sphere, working and providing for their families, while women were placed in the domestic sphere and valued primarily for their potential for maternity (Steinbach 125).[1] Thus the roles of men and women were clearly divided in the middle class between the public and private spheres, a division which was held as the ideal in both the lower and upper classes as well, though fairly unattainable for them due to the differing demands on each role within the other classes. However, the division between the spheres largely downplayed the role of the man and emphasized the role of the woman and the existence of the domestic sphere, resulting in a cult-like obsession with domesticity and maternity. This obsession is highlighted in a few works of the time, especially in Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House*, a long poem dedicated to raising the wife to a divine position within the home and details a husband's love for his domestic partner,[2] as well as John Ruskin's comments regarding the role of women in the home in his work, "Of Queen's Gardens."[3] The ideology of the time sought to define the spaces into

[1] Though this ideology was largely prevalent in the middle class only, Richard Altick points out that "[i]t was the middle-class orientation and code of values that lent the Victorian social climate its distinctive flavor" (28). As a result, any shift in the value system of the middle-class resulted in a shift of "the economic center of gravity" by the entire nation (29).

[2] And still with favour singled out,
  Marr'd less than man by mortal fall,
Her disposition is devout,
  Her countenance angelical;
The best things that the best believe
  Are in her face so kindly writ
The faithless, seeing her, conceive
  Not only heaven, but hope of it;
No idle thought her instinct shrouds,
  But fancy chequers settled sense,
Like alteration of the clouds
  On noonday's azure permanence;
Pure dignity, composure, ease
  Declare affections nobly fix'd,
And impulse sprung from due degrees
  Of sense and spirit sweetly mix'd. ("The Rose of the World" l. 9-24)

[3] "But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,--and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise: she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in the open world, must encounter all

which both boys and girls grow up.

Aside from biological changes which signal movement into adulthood, very little of Victorian society was geared towards the transition from childhood to adulthood. Within Victorian society, individuals and their gender-based roles were distinct from each other. The domestic sphere was one such space, and within it were other spaces, such as the nursery, specifically designated for childhood. For the Victorians, the nursery was a revered space.. Much of the action taking place within the domestic sphere was geared toward the children, focusing on their life in the nursery. Though the nursery was a well-defined space for childhood within Victorian society, the transition out of the nursery had no accompanying space, which created a problem when it came time for children to leave childhood behind. This movement from child to adult is a central one within Barrie's story, and the tension of the change exemplifies the lack of understanding as to how such a transition can occur. In Van Gennep's study, he acknowledges many stages of transition and the ceremonies, or rites, which move us from one to the other. But there is no universal rite that takes place between puberty and marriage: "Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death" (3). Though outside the domestic sphere schooling could provide some sense of identity in the midst of transition, the home offered none. The harsh contrast of adult expectations against a background of idealized nursery life was a startling reality for many growing up in the Victorian era. The abruptness of this transition leads to the feeling as though something has been missed, or lost, in the midst of the movement.

---

peril and trial. . . But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. This is the true nature of home" (68).

As a result of the lack of place for the transition from childhood to adulthood, the movement came to be characterized by a profound sense of loss, and Barrie's story is an exploration of how society deals with that loss, both successfully and not. Barrie particularly deals with the loss of childhood through the parallel images of Mrs. Darling and Wendy. Christine Roth argues that the sense of loss with Barrie's work is more significant for the woman, and that it is really a loss of girlhood, not simply childhood, at the center of Barrie's work. She says, "[T]he mother represents the little girl's loss, and the little girl represents the mother's former allure, and Barrie plays with the two female roles" (55). This mother-daughter pairing at the beginning of the work always leads us back to the knowledge that Wendy will grow up, though we may wish her to remain a child forever. Roth also points out that Wendy, within Barrie's work, is a perfect liminal figure in that she exemplifies the tempestuous transition from girlhood to motherhood (56). The exploration here is of those tensions in transition, an exploration of "the subtle boundaries that balance child and adult, innocent and knowing, civilized and savage" (Roth 57). And compounding the exploration is the wistful desire for childhood past, a knowledge and sadness regarding the inevitability of lost childhood.

As a response to the messy, yet necessary, transitions and the movement from space to space within society, Barrie provides two means for balancing the sense of loss that accompanies inevitable maturation: mourning and melancholia, as defined by Freud, and both are dramatized, though not solved, in the Peter Pan story. In order to deal appropriately with this obsession with childhood, Barrie constructs a fantasy world that fully enumerates the desires of those who grew up in the Victorian era and faced adulthood in the Edwardian. Barrie's structure allows some characters to indulge in childhood fantasy, but still requires a return to reality after they have gone through a process that fits quite well with Freud's concepts of mourning. The failure to

mourn properly results in a state of perpetual childhood and melancholia, exemplified in the struggles and adventures of Barrie's characters. Freud defines mourning as "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. . . .It is also well worth notice that, although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 243). The process of mourning, then, is not to be seen as negative at all. The children, and Wendy especially, are led through the process of mourning in order to emerge at the end of it prepared to move on from childhood, the object being mourned. The work thus provides a model of the process that the children of the Victorians must undertake to appropriately mourn the loss of childhood and then move forward towards adulthood in a healthy manner.

Functioning as an example of healthy processing of the pressures of adulthood, the desire to escape, the fantasy one encounters, and the choice to return to reality, the Peter Pan story also provides examples, though subtle, of unhealthy manners of mourning, or the lack thereof, which then lead to melancholia. While Barrie's work provides what Freud refers to as a "turning away from reality" and a "clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis" (244) that is the process of mourning, it also ends with Wendy, and to a degree, the other children, experiencing both the freedom and the inhibition that accompany the completed process (245). Yet melancholia is present in Barrie's work as well, most clearly in Mr. Darling, though it is not manifested in an obvious way, following the fashion of children's literature to offer social commentary in a more covert manner (Nelson 149). Freud defines melancholia in contrast to mourning, saying that the melancholic will display "an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which

has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (246). Indeed the striking difference between mourning and melancholia is the identification of the object that has been lost. In the mourning of childhood, we see and identify the coming loss for Wendy and the boys that they must ultimately accept. But Mr. Darling, by contrast, has seemingly never properly mourned the loss of his childhood and so has allowed the prevailing ideology of his time to take away his identity. The result of this failing is a regression back to childhood, the object which he has not properly mourned. In this way, then, the Peter Pan story allows for the temporary fantasy of escape into childhood, still demanding a return to reality where the children must grow up, but also including a subtle warning as to the fate of those adults who do not, or are not able to, mourn properly.

Within the Peter Pan story, Barrie provides us with strong cultural evidence of the movement towards obsession with childhood as a result of the strict ideology of separate spheres within Victorian society. Yet the story also shows how childhood may provide only a temporary escape from reality and seems to conclude that the real problems must be dealt with from within society, not from outside it. Barrie's work centers on the questions of boundaries and places, particularly the spaces we define as adult and child, masculine and feminine. As Nelson writes of *Peter Pan*, "we are fascinated because we never know who the villain is and what the crime. For the characters range along two different axes, adult-child and female-male; the oppositions thus keep changing without notice, much like the Lost Boys' battle with the Indians in which the Boys suddenly decide to be the Indians for the day and vice versa" (169). In the midst of the pleasurable fantasy defined largely by the Victorian view of childhood is a complex exploration and critique of the prevailing concepts with which Barrie grew up. The questions begin with the reality of adulthood and the strong desire to escape the harsh fate of men and women bound to

the social expectations of their time. The exploration continues in discovering childhood as a means of escape, a seeming safe place where adulthood is a far off, intangible concept from which we may be able to fly away. And the critique occurs in the identification of the problem that comes from believing in and desiring the eternal child. The obsession with the child inevitably leads to the selfish, unaware, forgetful Peter Pan. Yet the journey to Neverland must occur in order for the children, as well as the adult readership, to properly mourn childhood. In essence, we must allow the characters an escape from reality, allow them to indulge in their fantasies, but also see them through the process of mourning childhood before moving on into healthy adulthood.

Sense of Loss in Gender Roles

The sense of loss for the role of women within the domestic sphere is specific to their role as mothers—though women were more likely to have a role that required intimacy with children, they were not allowed to maintain any childish nature. Thus, the mother is in regular communion with childhood but unable to share in any of its joys. Steinbach clearly articulates how closely tied the woman was to domesticity as dictated by the ideology of the separate spheres. She says that the natural ability and instinct of women towards maternity carried with it the expectation that women would embrace motherhood first and foremost, and, eventually, above any other role (134). As Tosh points out, the stark separation of the domestic sphere from the public one pushed the role of the woman directly into that of mother, bypassing any other interests, including that of wife, in order to establish the centrality of maternity within the domestic sphere (12). In being raised to such great heights, the mother was nearly placed on the level of divine, or at least, moral authority. The mother became the moral center of the home, primarily focused on teaching her children. However, the emphasis on domesticity only grew in

proportion to the growing concern over and interest in children and childhood. Though motherhood is perhaps the closest position an adult may hold to childhood, the distinction between the two, for the Edwardians of Barrie's day, leads directly to a sense of great loss over childhood.

Mrs. Darling is the clear image of the Victorian woman, both in her maternal role and in her contrast to Wendy, still a girl yet on the brink of the transition to motherhood at the opening of the story. Mrs. Darling is defined strictly in maternal terms; we know very little of her as an adult woman. Instead, she is a mother-figure, but nothing more. Her place is squarely in the domestic sphere, but we see her most in the nursery. She is the reigning monarch of the childhood sphere within the domestic one, but the sphere is clearly not her own. She is the caretaker and the protectress, but she is not at home. Her first interests within the novel, just after her marriage to Mr. Darling, are highly maternal. While he wonders if they can afford to have a child, she implores him to let her keep Wendy, their newborn daughter (*PW* 70-71). She regularly seeks to clean out her children's minds, sorting through their thoughts in order to hide the unpleasant ones. Of all the characters within Barrie's work, she shares the closest level of intimacy with the children without taking on any qualities of childhood herself. Thus we see the inevitable fate of women who must always exist in close proximity to children but are also entirely separate from them.

Within the work we also see why girls are unable to escape growing up into mothers, unlike their male counterparts who, though they may put on the appearance of adulthood in the public sphere, revert to childish tendencies and are allowed to remain as such within the domestic sphere. For girls, the inevitable fate is not adult femininity or sexuality, but maternity. The spirit of the eternal child, embodied in Peter Pan, demands a mother figure. Despite

Wendy's insistence to the contrary, she is immediately deemed a lady and a mother by Peter and the Lost Boys (*PW* 122). The tone directed towards Wendy and Mrs. Darling is complex in that it expresses bitterness towards the necessity of their growing up, while still admiring them for making such a sacrifice, unlike the boys in the story. Roth writes, "In each mother-daughter pairing, the mothers are targets of harsh aggression and resentment, punished for growing into adult women while the father figures continue to live as part boys and part men" (56). So though the boys, and Peter especially, may have a strong desire for a female companion, the perpetuation of childhood demands that the girl in the nursery grow up to be a mother in order to keep the boys forever childish.

Within Barrie's work, Wendy is the key character moving through the transitional process of growing up. She is a liminal character, existing in the gap between childhood and motherhood. And it is her journey that the readers and audience must follow in order to understand the harsh necessity of her transition. Neverland provides the motivation and mechanism to push Wendy through this transition. By exiting and reentering society, Wendy is able to realize the futility of fighting her gendered role as mother. The cyclical pattern of Victorian maternity is central to the exploration of the story, and is even questioned and challenged by Wendy throughout her time in Neverland, but it is ultimately reinforced by the time Wendy returns to society and her place (for now) in the nursery. When we do finally see the grown-up Wendy, we are told that she is an utterly tragic figure in Peter's eyes (*PW* 223). Instead, Wendy's daughter, Jane, replaces her, going to Neverland for a short time to care for Peter and be his mother. Wendy weeps at her child leaving, but seems resigned to the knowledge that, when Jane returns, she will have an understanding and acceptance of her maternal role. Just as her mother did before her, Jane will move through the liminal space into the role of maternity.

Though the sense of loss of childhood for women is, by far, the more striking and tragic in Barrie's work, there is the sense of something being lost for men as well. The requirements placed on men in the domestic sphere simply did not necessitate the same level of sacrifice of childish nature that the role of women did. Men needed to take on a role in the public sphere, defined largely through their career, and to provide for the existence of the domestic sphere. Within the home, men did not have a clearly articulated, masculine role, and so were able to regress back into childish tendencies. This was due, in large part, to the growing absence of fatherhood as an aspect of the definition of masculinity (Tosh 79). The man was thus pushed to take on the identity of a child within the home, since that role and place was not only clearly defined, but also given high precedent over any other. The ideology of the separate spheres led to a loss of true, adult masculinity within the home, resulting in men regressing into childish behavior once they walked through their front door. The sense of loss here is simultaneously of a childhood free from adult responsibility as well as a truly adult position within the domestic sphere.

Mr. Darling is the picture of this loss of masculinity within the home. He has managed to provide a home for his family, but within that place he has no authority. And, as a result, he lacks the position necessary to maintaining an adult role within the domestic sphere. Though Mr. Darling apparently had to grow up in some ways in order to function as an adult in the public sphere, his existence within the home allows him to remain childish. Thus, he perpetuates his own childhood within the home. Though he must sacrifice by going to work and performing masculine duties in the workplace, he is allowed the escape back to childhood whenever he comes home in the evenings. Instead of being able to move through the transition necessary to accept adulthood as society defines it through the mourning of childhood, Mr. Darling has

become a melancholic, perpetually longing for something that no longer exists. In particular, Mr. Darling displays the facet of melancholia Freud describes as "an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 246). The strongest example of this minimizing of his own person is in his position at the end of the story: Mr. Darling has taken to sleeping in the dog kennel. The tone and portrayal of this action is quite positive, referencing the humility of Mr. Darling and his sadness over his children being gone. Nevertheless, he is the man of the house, residing in the dog's kennel while the dog is still nanny (*PW* 208-9). His actions and placement in the home as something like a pet exemplify the quick regression of Mr. Darling. He has no sense of authority as a man within his home, and his movement back toward childish behavior has led him further still. While his children have been led through the mourning process during their time in Neverland, he is stuck in a melancholic state, the result of the strict requirements of the separate spheres and the cultural obsession with childhood as escape.

The effect of the ideology of separate spheres on girls and boys creates a sense of loss for both, but in different and disproportionate ways. While Wendy must give herself entirely to a maternal role, the boys must simply acquiesce to growing up enough to take a role in the public sphere. It is as if the boys of Barrie's generation have resigned themselves to the harsh rigors of society's expectations in the public sphere because it means they can revert to childhood when in the home. Roth writes, "For Barrie…males could remain boyish forever; the identities of father and son, man and boy, civilized and savage existed simultaneously and harmoniously. Females, on the other hand, were divided between two generations in whom the paradoxical identities waged a constant war" (54). Indeed, there does seem to be a level of contentment with the fate of the boys in the Darling house. When the Lost Boys choose to return with Wendy, they are willing to grow up in order to have a place in society. They will gain a sense of place, having

moved through the transition process, and little will be demanded of them in the private sphere.

Children's Fantasy Literature and the Edwardian Perspective

The development of fantasy children's literature during the Victorian and Edwardian periods runs parallel to the growing obsession with childhood and the emphasis on the separate spheres. It is hard to distinguish whether the obsession with childhood spawned the development of the fantastical element in children's literature or if the literature was the source of the interest that developed throughout the period. Jacqueline Rose's groundbreaking work in *The Case of Peter Pan* claims that children's literature widens the gap between childhood and adulthood, promoting the need for a greater transition through adolescence and the elongated period of adolescence we are now seeing. However, Kimberly Reynolds points to the importance of children having their own realm of literature since such development is "one of the earliest ways in which the young encounter stories" (3). Children having a strong field of literature to call their own helps develop and cement a strong child-identity. However, an issue arises in that children do not write for children—adults write for children. As such, any development within the realm of children's literature is skewed by the adult author's personal perception of childhood. Reynolds writes, "Just as the children we once were continue to exist inside and to affect us, so writing produced for children continues to resonate over time and be implicated in the way societies are conceived, organized, and managed" (3-4). Thus, any literature written for children, fantasy or otherwise, will inherently contain the perspective and desires of its adult author or narrator. Usually these desires are directly associated with the author, but may also correlate to the author's society, either during childhood and adolescence, or during his or her adulthood. This is the tendency we see in Barrie's stories, the voice of the author and the culture coming through the narrator and beginning a conversation with the adult reader or audience over the tops

of children's heads.

Though the Victorian period is largely known for its strict social standards, the time between Victoria's ascendance to the throne of England and the beginning of World War I in 1914 saw the writing of the majority of children's fantasy fiction that is now seen as classic (Wullschlager 16). As a result, the works largely serve as exploration and subtle questioning of the society in which they were born. That said, many take place, or at least begin, in a familiar, realistic setting, and are infused with fantastical elements throughout the story. This is also true of drama of the time, according to Lerer, and *Peter Pan*, first performed in 1904, exemplifies the tone of such works:

> If Barrie's *Peter Pan* was the most successful play of 1904, a good deal of its success came, no doubt, from its evocative recall of such woodland fantasy, its blend of *The Tempest* and the tom-tom, its filtering of high Victorian school and domestic culture through the scrim of Edwardian nostalgia. *Peter Pan* is a play that looks back to a lost age of Victorian security. It seeks a meaning in fantastic rather than empirical or scientific life. It exposes the conventions of social life as conventions, and in the process calls attention to the gap between morality and propriety. (259)

Not only was Barrie's work clearly in line with the works of his time, but it may be seen as the clearest evidence of the prevailing leaning towards social critique through children's fantasy. So while the entirety of children's fantasy written during the Victorian and Edwardian eras gives a picture of the movement towards escape through the means of children's literature, Barrie's play and novel may be seen as an especially clear example of the body of work.

Thus, the movement into fantasy highlighted the opportunity for exploration, questioning,

and criticism of the prevailing social ideologies of the time. One key aspect of fantasy that allowed for this exploration was the creation of a utopia separate from reality. Nelson writes that what began as a means of escape from reality and exploration of other structures of thinking increasingly became a means of looking back on the reality from which one has escaped, which then provided the distance needed to offer criticism of the structures within reality (*Boys will be Girls* 171). So in constructing a fantasy land that either solved the problems of the time or eliminated them altogether, children's fantasy authors were actually able to offer a social critique of these problems, looking at the issues from the outside in as it were, much in the same way Peter peers in through the nursery window at the Darling children while they act out their domestic roles. Nelson also notes that the most frequent point of exploration and critique was the growing emphasis within Victorian society on the domestic sphere since, through the creation of a utopia, the authors were able to "question the utopia's major Victorian symbol, dividing gender from virtue and virtue from happiness" (171). The existence of a utopian fantasy set entirely outside the realistic society, which was usually still present within the works but not the central setting of the narrative, points to the inherent need for critique of reality. This is the role that late Victorian and Edwardian children's fantasy filled. And as Nelson writes, "[F]rom its birth Victorian fantasy as a whole was less interested in escaping from reality than in criticizing it" (145).

As fantasy literature increasingly became a means of escape for those feeling the limits of the ideology of separate spheres, the interest in children, those who had yet to experience the demands on their adulthood, grew as well. During the Victorian era, the fascination with childhood as a distinct phase of life grew, resulting in increased emphasis on education and the development of children's concepts of morality. Specifically, the concept of childhood and

children as being separate from adulthood became more developed. Reynolds establishes, "In the course of Queen Victoria's long reign, the middle and upper classes evolved a more self-conscious and sustained myth of childhood than any that had gone before" (2). Though the development of this myth grew largely in the mid-Victorian era, it had heavy implications for those who were children themselves during that time. Barrie, born in 1860 to a family placed squarely in the rising middle class, experienced the emphasis on the need to define childhood while he himself was growing up. Barrie's own concepts of childhood contrast directly with those who came before him, as Andrew Birkin points out in his biography of Barrie, *JM Barrie and the Lost Boys*:

> Unlike Kingsley, Carroll and Wordsworth, Barrie rarely perceived children as trailing clouds of glory; he saw them as 'gay and innocent and heartless' creatures, inspired as much by the devil as by God. He exulted in their contradictions: their wayward appetites, their lack of morals, their conceit, their ingratitude, their cruelty, juxtaposed with gaiety, warmth, tenderness, and the sudden floods of emotion that come without warning and are as soon forgotten. (19).

As a boy who grew up during the Victorian era, Barrie's concepts of childhood align closely with the prevailing concepts of the late-Victorian society, specifically as they function as an escape from the strict demands of adulthood placed on the Victorians by the ideology of separate spheres.

With the growing emphasis on childhood coming to a point by the end of the Victorian era, it comes as no surprise that the following era, that of Edward, was largely defined by a society's outright desire to escape adulthood and instead revel in irresponsibility and

immaturity. Jonathan Rose writes in *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919* that the age was largely defined by "an impulse to return to childhood, to put aside adult responsibilities and indulge in the pointless messing about of infancy. The Edwardian spirit of play was bound up with just such a reversion to a childlike turn of mind, often an outright refusal to grow up" (178). This movement within society against the idea of growing up and a desire to prolong childhood as a means of escape is most evident in the literature of the time, since, as Reynolds discusses, "The attitudes and positions proffered in the literature produced for young readers tells us a great deal about the preoccupations and values of the time" (5). Never, Rose says, has children's literature seen such an explosion of creativity and passion before or since the Edwardian era, and "no other generation in English history produced so many children's classics as the Edwardians" (181). This outward manifestation of the movement within culture points to the strong desire to escape the oppressive and narrowly defined gender roles of the Victorian era.

In his Peter Pan stories, Barrie offers observations and even subtle critiques of the society in which he grew up, but no clear solutions or conclusions. The children's time in Neverland does not fix or solve the narrow prescriptions placed on gender roles and the family unit. Nor does it condemn the obsession with childhood that so many sought as a means of escape, but the conversation between the narrator and an adult readership eager to escape back into childhood is there as well. In this sense, Barrie's story is metafiction, that is, "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2). Hollindale articulates this concept in his discussion of the narrator of *Peter and Wendy*: "…below the surface another narrative voice is speaking which is likely to be audible only to grown-ups. . . .The adult reader is a helpless intermediary between Barrie and the child, caught in the storytelling crossfire and

receiving bullet wounds intended for him or her alone. Under the surface of the children's book is a sharp and sometimes ferocious dialectic" (xxi). The story is about children and childhood and the transitions they face, but the story is being told to a generation of adults, and those that follow them, who have not been able to properly and appropriately mourn the loss of their own childhood.

Chapter 1

The Mother and the Fairy

Within the story of Peter Pan, Barrie develops characters that provide strong representations of the prevailing ideologies of his time, especially of those he grew up with in the mid-Victorian era. His characters are human and fantastic, adults and children. Yet when examined together, they reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of the prevailing ideologies. Perhaps the most overwhelming movement in development during his time, within the context of the ideology the separate spheres, was the emphasis placed on domesticity, resulting in a cult-like obsession with the role of women. His female characters all offer varied views of the development of the position of the woman within society, some more realistic than others. Specifically, an examination of the adult females, Mrs. Darling and Tinker Bell, thoroughly reveals every extension of the ideal woman, as well as the antithesis to the ideal and what is missing. And as these characters are contrasted with others, the tensions in the ideology begin to undermine the solidity of gender roles, creating confusion for the children in the household and a desperate, yet ultimately unfulfilled desire for escape.

Not only does a study of Barrie's female characters show the tension of principles in the ideology of separate spheres, but they also reveal the overall sense of mourning over lost girlhood taking place in the late Victorian era and into the Edwardian era. With such a strong and confining emphasis placed on the characterization of women as maternal came a desire for those who grew up during that time to escape the limiting adulthood they had seen their parents experience. Only in childhood did they find freedom from the oppressive roles dictated by the separate spheres, and so the obsession with childhood began as a means of escape from the reality of the time. As a result, a difficult situation emerged, especially for girls and women: the

inevitability of growing up and consequent confinement in the role of motherhood was seen as a tragedy, even as motherhood was at the same time valued even more because of its direct connection to children and childhood. Thus, Barrie sees women as tragic figures, always desiring escape into a childish role they have lost, while being daily confined to a role that causes them to replay the tragedy: raising children into adulthood.

Barrie's female characters play out possible responses to the standards to which Victorian women were expected to conform. For example, Mrs. Darling fulfills her respective social requirements as the angel of the home, the center of the domestic realm. As such, she is a successful embodiment of motherhood in all its virtues. In Mrs. Darling, the Victorian mother is pulled to the front of the stage, seemingly unable to do any wrong. However, Mrs. Darling has little characterization outside of her role as a mother, largely due to how she relates to Peter's character. She gives us a clear and definitive picture of motherhood, but the woman buried inside the mother does not make herself known. Instead, the woman is defined and determined solely by her bearing and raising of children. Still, she meets every requirement of the Victorian ideal, while appearing as only partially developed. In contrast to Mrs. Darling, Tinker Bell epitomizes the sexuality and feminine vibrancy that is lacking from the Victorian idea of womanhood. She exudes sensuality both in her description and her actions. Murray Pomerance refers to her as the "fairy of electricity" (13) in that she embodies the excitement and mystery of the newly invented light bulb, as well as the not-so-subtle imagery of her electric sexuality. Her size and effervescence indicate that the gaps in the Victorian ideal of womanhood are not substantial enough to merit a human character. But nonetheless, they are intrinsically present in Barrie's work in the most iconic fairy in children's literature. Together, these two adult, female characters offer point and counterpoint representations of the ideal Victorian woman.

Barrie's development and use of each of these characters offers a strong definition of womanhood in Victorian England, both through representation and through contrast. By highlighting such prevailing strengths and weaknesses in the adult, fully formed representations of society, he also points directly towards the issues at play. Mrs. Darling's character indicates the social mourning taking place over the loss of girlhood and the move into maternity. Specifically, through analysis of the completed product of the Victorian ideology of the domestic sphere, Mrs. Darling, and her fully formed antithesis Tinker Bell, we see the interaction of multiple issues, all of which directly affect the children growing up in their midst, causing confusion and a desire for escape in the generation growing up.

For the middle-class Victorian woman, the domestic sphere was almost entirely bound up with motherhood. While outside the domestic sphere men may have a strong identity through work and public success, their place inside the home was subverted by the role of their wives. Steinbach parallels her discussion of men in the domestic sphere with that of women: "Women were responsible for the home. . . . Within the home they were expected to focus on childrearing, and this expectation intensified with the influence of evangelical religion as the century wore on. Women were seen as naturally maternal and were expected to embrace mothering" (134). Thus the identity of the woman was not simply domestic but was actually maternal. For girls growing up in the middle class during the early Victorian era, girls' education had as its goal "an impeccable reputation and domesticity, with a particular emphasis on being a helpmeet to her husband and a loving [i]nculcator of moral values to her children" (Steinbach 126). To be feminine was increasingly defined by the domestic role, which itself was more and more identified with maternity.

Coupled with the increasing emphasis on the maternal role was a lack of sexual identity;

society generally venerated the woman as mother while downplaying any possible enjoyment of the act that made her a mother in the first place. Richard Altick takes an example of this tendency from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," in which the hero says of women that "Nature made them blinder motions bound in a shallower brain / Woman is the lesser man, and all passions matched with mine / Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine" (54). In general during the Victorian period, men and women were seen simply as having different sexual drives, with men having the dominant desire and women having a minimal desire at most. Much of this perception grew from the increasing scientific knowledge that men and women are biologically different. Still, the application resulted in extreme views: "Women were passive. It was their natural destiny to give birth, and whether or not they did they were dominated by their reproductive systems; they were incapacitated by their menstrual periods and by pregnancy. They could not physically or mentally exert themselves too far or else they would drain needed energies from their wombs" (Steinbach 135). As a result of this perception of a woman's sexuality (or lack thereof), the potential for a sexual definition of womanhood separate from motherhood was simply unheard of. Even prostitutes were not considered to be as feminine as middle-class mothers; instead, they were seen as "so unfeminine as to have sexual desire" (135). Female sexuality in the Victorian era, particularly for the middle classes, came to be identified solely with motherhood, furthering the place of maternity within domesticity and squelching any additional sexual definition.

The role of the mother as chief in the domestic sphere was also amplified by the absent but unnecessary father figure. It only followed that, in the separation of spheres, the father would be largely absent from the domestic sphere in order to be more fully present in the public sphere. In the same way, women were not often present in the public sphere because they were expected

to remain fully in the domestic sphere. The concept of an absent father carried no pejorative connotation. Instead, the father *should* be mostly absent. Claudia Nelson writes in *Invisible Men* that "[a]s masculinity came to seem less domestic, it took on what John Demos calls 'a certain order of contamination,' lessening the father's perceived right (or even ability) to be the king of the castle" (43). Yet even Nelson's assessment carries the negative connotation that was simply not present at the time. Men were absent because they had another rightful place of their own in the workplace. Tosh points out that the "[p]olarization of the home and the new focus on the needs of children projected the wife into the pivotal domestic position, whatever transitional wisdom might say about the husband being master in his own home" (12). The woman was expected to fill the parental role almost entirely, leaving no space for a father within the home. A home that needed the intervention of a father, or a highly present father figure, was one that had a lapsing or failing mother figure. In this sense, then, the emphasis on the absence of the father only served to raise the expectations placed on the mother within the home.

With the increased emphasis placed on maternity as central and encompassing of the domestic sphere, the figure of the ideal mother was often depicted as quasi-divine, the moral center of the home. Altick writes of this heightened, seemingly deified, identity of the woman in starkly religious terms: "Woman's serfdom was sanctified by the Victorian conception of the female as a priestess dedicated to preserving the home as a refuge from the abrasive outside world. . . .she was Dora Spenlow (in *David Copperfield*) and Rosie Mackenzie (in *The Newcomes*); she was The Angel in the House" (53). Conventry Patmore's work, *The Angel in the House* (1862), is a long poem written in praise of the poet's wife, but generally praises the idealized Victorian woman. This figure clearly exemplifies where the maternal and the divine met within the idealization of the woman in the domestic sphere. For instance, Patmore

proclaims in the Prologue that his wife is the only theme worth writing about, surpassing even the fame of Jerusalem or the life of King Arthur (4). He shortly thereafter claims that his own praises are only amplified and strengthened by their children's praising of their mother (5). Elaine Hartnell writes that this version of the woman in the home was hardly prescriptive for the time; instead, it was largely descriptive, with Patmore depending on the dominant views and discourses within his society (458). In raising the maternal role of the woman higher than the paternal role of the man, the Victorians undermined the Christian-based duty of the man to be the spiritual leader of his own home. As the mother raised the children, she also saw to their education which included moral instruction. She imbued her own morality in her children, and, as such, was required to be a strong moral figure herself. Thus the role of the mother took on a nearly divine aspect that exemplifies the increasing centralization of the maternal identity of the woman within the home.

Within Victorian culture, the result of such a standard for the woman did prove sustainable, but only if women held on tightly to the mothering role. Without it, though, their identity would be lost. Any sense of identity in addition to or other than motherhood was purely a temporary function. Sexuality, for instance, served the sole purpose of procreation. Similarly, the mother ran the home with the end goal being the creation of a sustainable environment for raising children, not out of any sense of her own personal identity or expertise. In addition, any sense of identity outside the realm of motherhood was considered less than ideal. While limited to the lower classes, a woman working, whether inside the home or outside it, was looked down on. Even performing actions like washing or mending for a household that was not her own was deemed unsuitable for the ideal Victorian woman (Steinbach 135). Such a broad condemnation of any roles outside that of mother produced a largely imbalanced perspective on what it meant

to be a woman.

In raising the role of mother to such great heights, Victorian culture consequently lowered and deemphasized the woman as simply woman or wife. And while the feminist movement has largely reclaimed the identity of woman in the century since the end of the Victorian era, the role of wife, outside of its intersections with motherhood, remains largely deemphasized. In Barrie's time, particularly the decade leading up to the first production of *Peter Pan* on stage, the feminist movement was making its first waves in propelling women out of the home. Altick writes that the struggle for women at the time of the first strains of feminism was to break into the public sphere. In the mid to late Victorian era, women working outside the home were almost always unmarried, and were relegated to a type of serfdom, serving the households of others as a replacement for having their own (55-56). Thus the movement for the rights of women initially was focused on the unmarried woman in the public sphere.

The Darling Mother

As we have seen, Barrie's key mother figure, Mrs. Darling, is a strong example of the Victorian woman and mother, and the sympathetic way in which Barrie describes her acknowledges the attractiveness of this role. She is everything the Victorian woman should be, but nothing more. She clearly knows and accepts her place within the home, and her identity there is well-established and respected. Of all the characters within Barrie's work, Mrs. Darling may be the closest to an ideal figure. We see very little weakness in her, and the instinctual readerly response—dramatized in the responses of her own children to her—is to love her for everything she is. Her introduction within the work associates her personality with the sort of joy usually only characteristic of children, but which easily fits with her position as a mother. She takes such joy in her children, and we take similar joy in her. She is the central figure of the

Darling home, creating a sanctuary for her family. While the home itself provides this place of escape, much of the action and interaction within the Darling home takes place within the nursery, a sanctuary within the sanctuary. It is here that Mrs. Darling is most profoundly idolized as the angelic mother figure. She does seem to possess nearly divine qualities that, though separate from any religious connotation, do raise her above the level of mere humanity and make her seem more divine than mortal.

Yet for all her glorious attributes as the idealized Victorian woman, Mrs. Darling is lacking in any area aside from motherhood. With this, she excels, but as a strong representation of the Victorian ideal, she offers nothing outside of a maternal identity. Mrs. Darling is first introduced, briefly, in childlike and delightfully feminine terms which quickly shift to maternal vocabulary: "She was a lovely lady, with a sweet, mocking mouth. Her romantic mind was like the tiny boxes, one within the other, that come from the puzzling East, however many you discover there is always one more; and her sweet mocking mouth had one kiss on it that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in the right-hand corner" (*PW* 69). Mrs. Darling's first interpersonal relationship that we see is not that with her husband, but with her daughter. And though Mr. Darling is introduced directly following this description of his wife, their relationship is characterized first and foremost by their having children. Instead of paying proper attention to the bookkeeping as a new wife, Mrs. Darling would draw little baby faces as "guesses" of what her children would look like (*PW* 70), hinting at her natural inclination towards motherhood above marriage. And while Mr. Darling figures up the expenses of having Wendy, his wife "looked at him imploringly. She wanted to risk it, come what might. . . . But she was prejudiced in Wendy's favour" (*PW* 70-71). Thus, Mrs. Darling is quickly established as highly maternal, even before all of her children are born.

As a mother, Mrs. Darling is truly ideal, and the seeming center of the Darling home is the nursery, the place mother Darling seems to shine brightest. Indeed, most of the time we encounter Mrs. Darling is in the nursery, sometimes with her children, but sometimes alone. She not only establishes the nursery as a sanctuary for her children, but she also guards and protects it. When Wendy offhandedly mentions to her mother that the leaves left on the nursery floor by the window were left by Peter Pan, Mrs. Darling immediately scours the nursery for other signs of him. She senses that this maternal realm of hers has been invaded by an unwelcome presence. She is thorough in her investigation, showing her strong sense of protection of the center of the home (*PW 76*). She guards the nursery after that, watching to see if Peter will come again. In this realm, she is the authority and the protectress, exemplifying the height of the ideal Victorian mother.

Though religious or moral themes are markedly absent from Barrie's work, Mrs. Darling does possess divine-like capabilities and intuition regarding the safety of her children. For example, she is in the habit of cleaning up her children's minds at the end of the day:

> You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and place at the bottom of your mind; and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, all ready for you to put on. (*PW* 73)

Such actions highlight the importance of the mother as moral center of the home. It is Mrs. Darling who filters and protects the minds of her children, specifically choosing which thoughts

are healthy and appropriate, while hiding the ones she does not see as fitting. Thus, Mrs. Darling's maternal identity includes a level of moral instruction that hints at the divine image of motherhood.

Though a strong portrayal of maternity, Mrs. Darling is also a subtly tragic character in that we see and sense the remaining vestiges of girlhood in her, and we are led to mourn the loss of that girlhood in the midst of her adulthood. We see the subtle hints at her lost girlhood early in the story, first with the mention of the kiss, sitting in the right hand corner of her mouth. Her children recognize it, but cannot grasp it for themselves. Even Mr. Darling is said to have gotten all of her except the kiss, and that he eventually gave up trying to get it (*PW* 69). We find the kiss linked to girlhood in a memory of the family romping together: "The gaity of those romps! And loveliest of all was Mrs. Darling, who would pirouette so wildly that all you could see of her was her kiss, and then if you had dashed at her, you might have got it" (*PW* 72). Though no clear definition is ever given of what the kiss is, or what it symbolizes, it is highlighted early on in the novel as a piece of Mrs. Darling that those who know her as an adult, her husband and her children, can never quite get at or understand. It is only at the end of the story that we learn of the fate of the kiss, after the children have returned to the nursery, and Peter leaves it, with the promise that he will come back for Wendy: "Of course Peter promised, and then he flew away. He took Mrs. Darling's kiss with him. The kiss that had been for no one else Peter took quite easily. Funny. But she seemed satisfied" (*PW* 218). Thus, the little piece of girlhood is recognized and easily taken by Peter, who takes it back to Neverland. It seems appropriate that the last vestige of girlhood that has remained with Mrs. Darling should actually belong to Peter, and that he may take it with him when he pleases. But the final loss also brings with it a renewed sense of mourning, for the mystery resting in the corner of Mrs. Darling's mouth is now gone.

Mrs. Darling is clearly a strong representation of the ideal of the Victorian woman set forth by the ideology of separate spheres. Barrie has formed a woman who is not only Victorian in her characterization, but is excellent in her role. As a mother, she really lacks nothing. Her care for her children transcends the fact that they still escape. However, her character serves as strong evidence to the flaws and gaps within the Victorian ideal. Mrs. Darling carries no identity outside of the home, and even within the home she is overwhelmingly maternal, but nothing else. Though we have subtle implications as to whom she may have been as a girl, and we see the remnants of that girlhood in her kiss, she is a child no longer, a point that Barrie seems to want us to mourn. Her character is nothing but a mother, and though she is successful in her maternity, she offers nothing else to her family or the story as a whole.

The Mischievous Fairy

Providing the antithesis and standing in direct opposition to the Victorian ideology of the woman, exemplified by Mrs. Darling, is the iconic fairy at Peter's right hand: Tinker Bell. Regarded among critics today chiefly as the sexual antithesis to Mrs. Darling, Tinker Bell encapsulates what the Victorian woman is not, especially in that she lacks a maternal identity, replacing what she lacks in maternal instinct with sexual energy. Thus, while Barrie gives us a strong picture of the Victorian woman in Mrs. Darling, he also is able to discuss and explore female sexuality through his creation of a character such as Tink. Yet like Mrs. Darling, although Tinker Bell embodies everything the Victorian ideal woman lacks, she does not make up a complete person—she is just a fairy, a fantasy character. As a fairy, and the opposite of the Victorian standard, she cannot endure beyond her purpose within the story. Within the story, however, Tinker Bell functions as a clear antithesis to Mrs. Darling, particularly to the emphasis on the maternal.

Tinker Bell is, in large part, the sexual opposite to Mrs. Darling within the story, highlighting the blindspots created by the Victorian ideal. Barrie's description--aside from her actions--defines Tink in sexual terms. Christina Roth calls Tinker Bell "the story's clearest and most constant symbol of threatening female sexuality" (62). As a clear sexual symbol, she bears only minor other defining qualities. Though she does take on the role of the working class through her name (a tinker mends the pots and pans), she still maintains an aura of femininity that is not present in the Victorian view of working class women (Roth 57). And while Michael Egan points out that other female characters in Neverland provide similar manifestations of sexuality, Tink is by far the most openly sexual creature, as well as the most consistently present within the story (46). She is first described using the French term "embonpoint" (*PW* 88) which is defined as a "plumpness: in complementary or euphemistic sense" (233 note). We also learn that she is "exquisitely gowned in a skeleton leaf, cut low and square, through which her figure could be seen to the best advantage" (*PW* 88). Yet in the midst of such explicit sexuality, Tinker Bell is not the equivalent to the Victorian whore. She prefers privacy in her own room, and only changes behind a curtain. When Peter threatens to throw open Tinker Bell's curtain unless she hurries up and gets dressed, she leaps up before the Lost Boys can see her in her negligee (*PW* 169). Her boudoir is set apart from the rest of the home, since, we are told, she is "fastidious" about her privacy (*PW* 134). Thus, Tinker Bell does not oppose the Victorian ideal within the society in the same way a woman of lower class or a prostitute might. Instead, she stands outside the sphere in regards to her sexuality, contrasting the ideal but still maintaining a sense of dignity which the ideal does not allow.

Just as Tinker Bell exudes sexuality which separates her from the ideal Victorian woman, Tink herself lives separately from the domestic sphere of the Lost Boys. She maintains a physical

distance between her own little world and that of the children, particularly of the domestic sphere Wendy sets up upon her arrival. The description of her room is as a "private apartment," and she was "very contemptuous of the rest of the house, as indeed was perhaps inevitable; and her chamber, though beautiful, looked rather conceited, having the appearance of a nose permanently turned up" (134-35). Tinker Bell lives within the home, but separately from the domestic sphere. Her home is closely safeguarded, but it does not prohibit her from living with Peter and the others. Clark points out that her separation actually "release[s] her from the constraints and codes of propriety that plague Wendy and allow her to inhabit a physically and socially independent space" (308). She also looks down on many of the activities that are defined as domestic by the Victorian standard. She does not participate in meals or story time the way Wendy and the Lost Boys do. In these ways, in addition to her sexuality, Tinker Bell exemplifies the gaps within the Victorian ideal for the woman.

Not only does Tinker Bell, in and of herself, embody the missing aspects of femininity within the Victorian ideal, but her actions point directly to the issues with the ideology as well. Due to her size, Tink is capable of feeling and acting on only one emotion at a time, and her interactions with Wendy usually spark jealousy in her over Peter that govern her actions. Tink's initial response to Wendy is one of jealousy when she senses that another female is taking Peter's attention. Pomerance writes that "[Tink] was in many ways the brightest, and surely original in her jealous and possessive attitude toward a male" (13). This attitude directly contrasts with the lack of emotional response, positive or negative, of Mrs. Darling towards her husband. The ideal Victorian woman may feel a sense of care towards her children, but she rarely displays emotion, especially negative emotion, towards her husband. Instead, Tink is a creature ruled by emotions that she feels one at a time, throughout her entire being. In this way, Tinker Bell's actions

highlight what is not present in Mrs. Darling, the quintessential Victorian woman.

Additionally, Tinker Bell's actions directly contradict those of Mrs. Darling early in the story, threatening Mrs. Darling's seemingly impenetrable role of the protectress of her children. Tink's presence is identifiable chiefly through light, the light she exudes. Pomerance points out that her light supersedes other lights when we first meet her; specifically, she puts out Mrs. Darling's night lights simply through her presence (21). Mrs. Darling has left the night lights as a safeguard for her children, but she herself leaves the home, and her lights are not enough to keep Tinker Bell and Peter out of the nursery: "…the night-lights by the beds of the three children continued to burn clearly. They were awfully nice little night-lights, and one cannot help wishing they could have kept awake to see Peter; but Wendy's light blinked and gave such a yawn that the other two yawned also, and before they could close their mouths, all three went out" (*PW* 88). The night-lights are not enough to keep watch over the children in the place of Mrs. Darling, and it is in this moment that Tink's light, the light of herself, not something she leaves behind, is able to come into the nursery: "There was another light in the room now, a thousand times brighter than the night-lights" (88). This light takes the place of Mrs. Darling's nightlights, and it makes a way for Peter to enter the nursery, which had previously been safely illuminated. Pomerance writes that "it is a source of light supremely beyond these frail night-lights, a light that overshadows candle flame precisely as does the electric lamp, that Tinker Bell is first introduced. Cast as a fairy, she is, indeed, an embodiment of electric illumination as magical power" (21). It is this illumination that marks the beginning of the adventure to and in Neverland. Thus, Tinker Bell's light, the essence of her being, easily takes the place and overwhelms the lights Mrs. Darling leaves behind, and provides the opportunity for Peter to enter the nursery.

Tinker Bell does serve a specific purpose within the story, but once she has served her role of setting the children's adventure in motion and, in the end, saving Peter, she ceases to exist. Her character is not sustainable beyond providing contrast to the Victorian ideal. She is the one who is able to protect Peter, drinking the poison Hook has left for him: "No time for words now; time for deeds; and with one of her lightening movements Tink got between his lips and the draught, and drained it to the dregs" (*PW* 184). Tink's light begins to fade and, at perhaps the highest moment of dramatic action within the play, Peter pleads with the spirit of children everywhere to proclaim their belief in fairies in order to revive her. Tinker Bell's spirit is revived at this point, but she has served her purpose within the storyline. She continues to function as Peter's companion throughout the rest of the plot, but her role is complete. Clark writes that, after being revived by the applause and belief of children, "she immediately fades into the background of the narrative as the pirate ship and Wendy's safety take precedence, once again making Tinker Bell a minor part of the larger human and imperial context" (310). Within the plot structure of the story, Tinker Bell is easy to dismiss once her moment of heroism has passed. In addition, we discover by the end of *Peter and Wendy*, in the final chapter, that Peter has lost track of Tinker Bell after his adventures with Wendy, and has forgotten entirely that his fairy companion ever existed (*PW* 219). Kayla Wiggins actually points out that Barrie here contradicts traditional fairy lore—fairies traditionally have very long life-spans, but Tinker Bell's life is cut short because of the demands of the text. Since Tinker Bell serves as a contrast to Mrs. Darling but is not sustainable within Victorian society, Barrie must cut her life short to show that, even though, in doing so, he contradicts an accepted point in fairytales. Her unsustainability in the story further emphasizes her lack of perpetuation outside the fantasy setting, in the Victorian world. She provides strong contrast to Mrs. Darling, but this contrast is theoretical only—Tinker

Bell cannot exist aside from a temporary presence within the fantasy story. So though her character allows for exploration and questioning of the Victorian ideal woman, Barrie's portrayal indicates that any such existence cannot be sustained; thus, the maternal role is all that is left. However, this maternal role is the central role of a parent in the home; as exemplified by Mrs. Darling's husband, the father figure in the Victorian home is hardly striking.

Chapter 2

The Man and the Pirate

Among the cast of characters Barrie constructs are men, fully grown, who struggle to find and embrace an identity within the domestic sphere that is not defined by motherhood or childhood. Mr. Darling and Captain Hook, two distinct characters whose roles are traditionally performed by the same actor, offer thorough examples of the ideal Victorian man and his antithesis. Mr. Darling exists within Victorian society, representing how such men, while still fulfilling the qualifications for the ideal man in the public sphere, struggle for a place within the domestic sphere and ultimately fail. Captain Hook, existing outside the Victorian realm, is not required to meet the standards set forth in the ideology of separate spheres, but still must interact with characters who are themselves defined by the Victorian standards. And as such, he is ultimately incapable of sustaining his transgressive identity. As in his pairing of Mrs. Darling with Tinker Bell, Barrie contrasts ideal Victorian characters with their opposites in order to draw attention to the discrepancies and missing pieces within the ideals.

Mr. Darling and Captain Hook represent two responses to Victorian ideas about masculinity. Mr. Darling is the embodiment of the ideals of Victorian manhood. As such, while his public life is successful, he is a pathetic and unimpressive figure within the domestic sphere, a consequence of the ideal set up for the Victorian man. His attempts to assert his authority in his own home fall flat, and he is soon acting like one of his boys, exemplifying the problem facing men of the Victorian era: when their efforts at maintaining an authoritative presence in the home fall short, they respond by becoming either feminine or childish. Mr. Darling succumbs to this same problem within Victorian society. Though unsatisfactory and unremarkable as a father, he fulfills the primary requirements of Victorian manhood by providing financially for the

establishment of the home, thus giving the audience/reader a clear picture of this aspect of social ideology. In stark contrast to Mr. Darling, Hook is a forceful masculine presence, embodying the Byronic qualities of danger, adventure, passion, and authority that are noticeably missing from the Victorian ideal of masculinity. While he is vilified from the outset, Hook is not entirely an antagonist, described in the work as a "not wholly unheroic figure" (*PP* 119), and called by Michael Egan "more an anti-hero than a fiend" (49). The missing characteristics of the Victorian ideal are enough for Barrie to develop an entire, adult character from them.

As in his treatment of the ideal Victorian woman, Barrie offers a character clearly and fully exemplifying the standard for the Victorian man, while also providing an antithesis, though an unsustainable one, to the ideal. Mr. Darling struggles to assert his authority as the paternal figure in his home but has been unable to properly mourn the loss of his childhood and so quickly moves back into a position of childhood, trying to relate to his children as a peer instead of as an authority and is, therefore, a melancholic. In an opposing sense, Captain Hook refuses to allow children and mothers to govern his masculinity, and instead seeks to assert his masculine identity through violence. However, such an assertion is simply not possible, highlighting the necessity of Mr. Darling's regression. Through representation and opposition, Barrie offers a strong but subtle argument regarding the problems with Victorian ideas about masculinity.

For the middle-class Victorian man, married, with children, the ideology of separate spheres offered a strong sense of identity outside the home, but very little, if any, sense of identity within the home. This man was educated and wore a suit to work; he worked hard to support and provide for his family (Steinbach 134). In the early Victorian era, men wholeheartedly embraced their identity as provider. They were the ones who provided for the establishment of the home. They were able to see the fruits of their labors every time they

walked through their front doors. The convergence of domesticity and masculinity was found in the establishment and continued provision of a household. However, the quickly developing concepts of domesticity and the emphasis on life within the home did not provide any additional sense of identity for the man. Once the home was established, and, so long as he continued to work hard enough to provide, he had fulfilled his function. For Mr. Darling, the only true father in *Peter Pan*, this lack of clear identity within the place of the home manifests itself in a lost sense of masculinity and a subsequent identification as yet another child within the Darling home.

The definition of the separate spheres is comprised of two clear parts, the public and private spheres, with men taking over every role in the public sphere (Steinbach 125). With the rapid spread of education across the middle class came greater opportunities for men to establish respectable households and move closer to the ever-present but almost never attainable status of the upper classes. Still, men strove to provide a respectable appearance for their families. Steinbach writes that, though the middle class was defined as those who earned between £300 and £1000 per year, it was mostly comprised of those who made do with between £100 and £300. For instance, any given Mr. Smith, a clerk at a store, and Mr. Phillips, his employer, are firmly established within the middle class. Both earn true salaries, but live very different lives while still striving to meet the same standards of respectability (124). The idea of a profession as opposed to simple work was also central to the middle-class Victorian man's identity. He was educated for a specific mode of work which was a clear distinction from the working-class men whose chief work requirement was simply physical labor. Most of these middle-class men often took jobs as clerks or assistants in the hope that they would swiftly attain a better position. Still, their position within a specific profession, despite the poor monetary compensation, was

considered more respectable than the position of men in the working class, regardless of the salary such men earned. Working hard in a specific profession was a hallmark of masculinity for the Victorian man.

As the Victorian man worked to establish himself in a profession, the motivation to do so continued to come from the domestic sphere. Middle-class men worked, ultimately, for the provision of their household. With the bulk of middle-class families falling in the lower half of the financial scheme, the push to work, and work hard, in order to provide well was a strong motivation. Men not only provided for the basic needs of their families, but for the idealization of domesticity as well. The home was, for the man, "a refuge from the cruelty and rapaciousness of the workplace and the marketplace" (Steinbach 134). As the idea of home became continually separated from the idea of work, so the necessity of home as an escape from work became central to masculinity. Tosh writes in *A Man's Place* that "[t]he separation of home and work . . . soon acquired psychological and emotional dimensions as well as a physical reality. . . .More importantly, as work became detached from home, so its association with a heartless commercial ethic became closer. . . Home provided the refuge from work in all its negativity" (30). The ideology proclaims that home is a place for escape, a refuge from the marketplace.

However, as the middle-class man's identity became increasingly established in the professional world, the gap between the public sphere and the home widened, causing ever-increasing friction between the two idealized (and non-negotiable) but conflicting identities for the man—the provider and the father. Tosh explains in "New Men?" that "[f]amily life was something which happened elsewhere, at first within walking distance, but then increasingly a railway journey away" (10). Thus, though the man as provider for the home was a sufficiently strong motivation for hard work in a specific profession, and though the home did offer sufficient

escape from the marketplace, the subsequent lack of a concrete role to play once a man reached his front door created an innate tension between the two idealized identities of man. Tosh also points out that scholars most often examine and condemn the strict placement of women within the home—a woman working outside the home was acting against the ideology of the separate spheres. However, the same is true for men as well, going the other direction. The identity of men was found strictly outside the home, in the public sphere. For a man to have a true place within the home was to violate the ideology of the separate spheres: "If [the household's] functions were domestic, then anyone employed in the business was out of place there" (*A Man's Place* 18). As the doctrine of the separate spheres grew more stringent later into the Victorian age, the potential for a man to maintain a strong sense of masculine identity within the home grew more and more rare. In fact, even as men's and women's places both within and outside of the home grew increasingly rigid over the course of the nineteenth century, they also grew more interdependent. Because the role of the mother was so clearly and thoroughly articulated during the time, the role of the father became a vague, unimportant point within the structure of the household. While the begetting of children remained highly integral to a fully developed masculinity (Tosh 79), any action or function beyond that was indefinite at best. In short, men needed to construct some new way to self-identify within the domestic sphere. Since the parental identity had largely been usurped by the mother, men were often left with assuming an identity similar to their wives' as mothers, or, more commonly—as Barrie illustrates clearly with the case of Mr. Darling—as overgrown children who have not successfully mourned childhood and moved on to adulthood.

Not surprisingly, the dominance of the mother's and children's places within the home—and the inability of the father to play a part of his own—had heavy repercussions. Within

Barrie's story, we find adult male characters that regress back to childhood[4], and with some success, but we also see an adult male who instead fights against perpetual childhood. For example, Mr. Darling unsuccessfully attempts to be a peer of his children due to his own melancholy regarding childhood as a thing lost. However, he must regress even further and ends up residing in the dog kennel by the end of the story. Captain Hook, in complete contrast, is determined to fight against the spirit of perpetual childhood, but finds that he cannot win and eventually accepts his death at the hands of a female creature. A close analysis of both key male characters shows how unstable the identity of the man in Victorian society really is, and how, in order to have a sustainable identity, man must reject any truly masculine identity within the domestic sphere and give himself over to the prevailing emphasis on the mother and the child.

The Childish Man

Within *Peter Pan*, Mr. Darling is the sole and definitive father figure. Though other characters like Captain Hook and even Peter take on various paternal attributes at times, and may even function as foils for Mr. Darling, he alone is a biological, Victorian father. Upon close analysis, he fits remarkably well with the Victorian ideals of masculinity. As a provider, he is perfectly adequate, and the text establishes him as being primarily concerned with the provision for his family and household. His relationship with his children strongly indicates his lack of clear understanding of how to interact with them. As a result, we see him quickly reverting to the position of a child within his own household. Though Mr. Darling is an appropriate representation of the Victorian ideal, his function within Barrie's work exemplifies the weaknesses in this standard and its subsequent consequences as the man of the house reverts back to a childhood identity.

[4] Both Tosh and Nelson include the ideas of regression to childhood with gender confusion, resulting ultimately in growing awareness in society of pedophilia and homosexuality. However, Barrie's work emphasizes regression to childhood only, and does not directly suggest gender confusion.

The initial points of characterization in the first two chapters of the novel describe Mr. Darling in terms of his Victorian role: the provider for his very Victorian household. In working to establish their home, the Darlings struggle to make way for children within their budget, and, in the end, "[Wendy] just got through" (*PW* 71). The same occurs with the two boys, each one scraping by a little more closely than the last. We are then told that "Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbors" (71), and in the play our first introduction to Mr. Darling has him teasing his wife about going out in the evening: "I warn you, Mary, that unless this tie is round my neck we won't go to dinner to-night, and if I don't go out to dinner to-night I never go to the office again, and if I don't go to the office again you and I starve, and our children will be thrown into the street" (*PP* 91). Though light-hearted, this joke points to Mr. Darling's awareness of his place, or lack thereof, within the home. He takes his task of providing seriously and expects his family to see him in such a light. More significantly though, Mr. Darling does strongly consider the opinions of others in how he regulates the appearance of his household, saying that he has "his position in the City to consider" (*PW* 72). For Mr. Darling, the work of providing for his household, even the provision of the appearance of respectability, is directly linked to his profession and his strong sense of identity in the public sphere.

Though Mr. Darling is the provider and sustainer of his family's home, he lacks strong placement within that home, which is first highlighted through his relationships with his children and wife. Specifically, these relationships lack consistent manifestation. While the children have a clear, well-defined relationship with Mrs. Darling, Mr. Darling, at times, seems uncomfortable in his home with his children. His responses to the mention of Peter Pan are overly exaggerated, while Mrs. Darling's appear balanced and mature. His not being able to tie his necktie is narrated in the novel with subtle criticism: "It is an astounding thing to have to tell, but this man, though

he knew about stocks and shares, had no real mastery of his tie. Sometimes the thing yielded to him without a contest, but there were occasions when it would have been better for the house if he had swallowed his pride and used a made-up tie" (*PW* 81).The narrator also gives us a glimpse of a scene after the children are taken with both parents bemoaning their responsibility in the loss of their children, and Mr. Darling takes the sacrificial yet overly dramatic stance: "'No, no,' Mr. Darling always said, 'I am responsible for it all. I, George Darling, did it. *Mea culpa, mea culpa*'" (79). Instead of partnering with his wife in parenting, Mr. Darling gives into aggravations within the home, stirring up potential conflict instead of providing stability. When he goes off on his tirade about his tie, thinking his wife and children are not "sufficiently impressed" with his outburst, he continues on in a stern tone, yet Mrs. Darling still "was placid" (*PW* 81), showing the strong dichotomy between their positions within the home, but especially highlighting the lack of consistency of Mr. Darling's relationship to his wife and children within the home.

Because Mr. Darling lacks strong positioning as father within the home, he reverts to the position of the child within his own home because that role is clearly identified and fostered. Descriptions of him quickly move from inconsistent assertions of authority to the position of the child within the home. Directly following the incident with his tie, Mr. Darling "thanked [Mrs. Darling] carelessly, at once forgot his rage, and in another moment was dancing round the room with Michael on his back" (*PW* 81), his aggravation quickly forgotten. Such a quick swing of mood is childlike in its agility and lack of permanence. Mr. Darling also shows his childlike identity in his attempts to play a joke on Michael and then on Nana. While romping with his son may be a positive aspect of a childlike identity, this example is clearly negative. He challenges Michael to drink his medicine, at which point Wendy tells her father that he should take his

medicine too. With this Mr. Darling is challenged to take his medicine just as he has been challenging his son. But instead of setting a strong example, he "slipped his behind his back" (*PW* 84), at which point his son gives a "yell of outrage" (*PW* 84), and Mr. Darling is admonished by his daughter. Mr. Darling's attempt to recover is to convince his children that he will instead play a joke on Nana by slipping his medicine into her milk bowl. Yet the children see the inappropriateness of Mr. Darling's childish behavior, "and they looked at him reproachfully as he poured the medicine into Nana's bowl" (*PW* 84). And once he has been discovered, he makes a roar about his treatment in his own home: "'That's right,' he shouted. 'Coddle [Nana]! Nobody coddles me. Oh dear no! I am only the breadwinner, why should I be coddled, why, why, why!'" (*PW* 85). Such an outburst, unlike his extreme sarcasm with his tie, is genuine yet childishly petty on the part of Mr. Darling. His identity within the house as an authority figure is subverted by his own actions; therefore, he must take on the well-established place of the child within his own home, yet cannot be successful in it due to its inappropriateness.

Just as his wife exemplifies Victorian femininity, Mr. Darling serves as Barrie's example of what Victorian ideology demands of the man. He effectively, though with some struggle, provides for the establishment of the home. Even within his home, Mr. Darling attempts to emphasize the importance of appearance. But within the domestic sphere, his ministrations fall flat, largely due to the overwhelming emphasis on maternity that is fulfilled by his wife. As an artifact of Victorian society and the embodiment of the demands it placed on the man, Mr. Darling's characterization shows the many issues regarding gender roles and familial authority within the domestic sphere.

The Manly Pirate

Providing the antithesis to Mr. Darling, Captain Hook portrays the crumbling structure of Victorian masculinity by standing in strong opposition to any alignment with a childish character. Hook is not only the antagonist of the story; he is the antagonist of childhood. His arch nemesis is Peter Pan, the boy who does not grow up, a character point emphasizing that Hook is entirely grown up and completely opposed to childhood. His task in Neverland is to provide childhood with an enemy, an image of oppressive adulthood. Coats points out that within the novel, "In his authorial asides as well as within the plot structure, Barrie sets up a deliberately antagonistic relationship between childhood and adulthood, and in the characters of Peter Pan and Hook, he reveals the truly violent nature of that relationship and its groundedness in an irrational hatred" (4). While his character serves a strong and clear purpose, it is ultimately unsustainable. While Mr. Darling must revert to a childish identity in order to have a strong identity within the home, and is a melancholic as a result, Captain Hook insists on destroying the perpetual child, Peter, but finds that he cannot endure; thus, he accepts his own death.

Both Hook and Mr. Darling seek to deal with the apparent worship of children in their environments, but while Mr. Darling becomes a child within his own home, Hook seeks to take childhood captive, even to the point of destruction. His actions are characterized by hatred and bitterness, not towards specific children, but toward childhood in general, and the eternal child Peter. Mr. Darling is able to squelch any ambivalence he feels towards his children in an effort to assume their identity within the home since he lacks a strong place of his own. Hook, however, manifests the ambivalence through hatred and destructive action, revealing something of a Jekyll and Hyde split in the relation of men to children (Coats 11). When we first meet Hook, he and his pirates are on a perpetual quest after the Lost Boys, their natural enemy. It is in this setting that Hook is described:

> In person he was cadaverous and blackavised, and his hair was dressed in long curls, which at a little distance looked like black candles, and gave a singularly threatening expression to his handsome countenance. . . .He was never more sinister than when he was most polite, which is probably the truest test of breed; and the elegance of his diction, even when he was swearing, no less than the distinction of his demeanor, showed him one of a different caste from his crew. (*PW* 115)

His character is geared towards highlighting his adulthood, as well as his position as antagonist to Peter and the Lost Boys. As a character, Hook is sometimes considered one of the most intriguing of those in Barrie's story. He never swerves from his position, but Fox reminds us that "Hook is in many ways the most aesthetically intriguing character in Neverland" (41). His interests and characterization are not simply frightful, but strikingly adult. Egan writes that "[Hook] is an oddly attractively individual, more an anti-hero than a fiend. . . . Disarmingly handsome, he loves flowers, music, and good clothes. He is something of a gentleman.. . .Finally, he possesses an outstanding brain and a code of honor which he calls 'good form'" (49). In addition, though he is frightful to the child imagination, he is somewhat less fearsome than those in more traditional pirate stories, and his actions are more playful (May 73). Instead, Captain Hook is simultaneously an evil villain of childhood and a complete, well-bred adult.

Hook's character also serves as the adventure-seeking and authoritative opposite to the domesticated Victorian man. As a well-defined adult, Hook strives for a life of adventure, asserting strong authority over his crew, and attempting to gain authority of the rest of the island of Neverland. While May points out that Hook is a far more appropriate pirate for a children's story than others, she also highlights his adventurous spirit, saying, "Barrie's Captain Hook too

is a representation of man's natural need to explore new places and desire to dominate others" (75). In this sense then, Hook contrasts with Mr. Darling both in his seeking of adventure and in his domination of others. For instance, when we first meet Captain Hook, he is involved in the cyclical pursuit of the Lost Boys, who are themselves pursuing the Indians, on the island of Neverland. Hook is directly pursuing domination of the island, and throughout the story, breaks the cyclical norm, by eventually attacking the Indian camp directly. As Hook attempts to break the cyclical nature and balance of the island, we read that "in disregarding [the normal procedure] [Hook] cannot be excused on the plea of ignorance" (*PW* 173). He uses his attack on the Indians to draw out Peter and Wendy, since "it was not the redskins he had come out to destroy; they were but the bees to be smoked, so that he should get at the honey. It was Pan he wanted, Pan and Wendy and their band, but chiefly Pan" (176). Hook's desire is not solely for adventure, unlike Peter; otherwise, he would simply be content to continue in the cycle, always in pursuit of another group on the island, but never overtaking them or utterly defeating anyone. But Hook's desire is for domination of Neverland, a very adult attribute, and he wants ultimately to kill Peter Pan, his arch nemesis.

Hook also manifests the underlying ambivalence towards childhood felt during the Victorian era, exemplified by his jealousy toward the eternal child. As the symbol of eternal, perpetual childhood, Peter Pan is the obvious enemy of Captain Hook, who is a strong representation of masculine adulthood, carrying nothing with him of childhood. This hatred and jealousy are manifestations of the underlying ambivalence felt by Victorian adults towards children. The desire to hold on to childhood is one of the most bitter of desires, according to Coats, and Hook embodies the subtle jealous tendencies felt by adults towards children in the Victorian era. Coats writes, "We mustn't hate children—how monstrous!—and hence we have

figures like Hook. . . who [does] engage in the practice of hating children in order to manage readers' tendencies towards such hatred" (11). Thus, in a work based in the imaginative fantasies surrounding childhood, Barrie gives us a character to manifest ambivalence towards the child who never has to grow up.

Though Captain Hook is a strong, thorough representation of what is lacking from the Victorian standard for the man, he, like Tinker Bell, is not sustainable outside the plotline of this fairy tale. Hook's final end is characterized both by his defeat by the spirit of childhood and his acquiescence to the prevailing domination of femininity. After thinking he has killed Peter, Hook proceeds to capture all the children and make them walk the plank; he revels in making Wendy watch the coming death of her "children," ordering her to give "a mother's last words to her children" (*PW* 192). At this, his moment of triumph, Peter Pan makes his appearance, and the two engage in the epic battle scene of the story. The play text describes their battle:

> Hook or Peter this time! They fall to without another word. Peter is a rare swordsman, and parries with dazzling rapidity, sometimes before the other can make his stroke. Hook, if not quite so nimble in wrist play, has the advantage of a yard or two in reach, but though they close he cannot give the quietus with his claw, which seems to find nothing to tear at. He does not, especially in the most heated moments, quite see Peter, who to his eyes, now blurred or opened clearly for the first time, is less like a boy than a mote of dust dancing in the sun. (*PP* 145)

When Hook believes he has won the day, he exclaims, "A holocaust of children, there is something grand in the idea" (*PP* 146). But Peter quickly reclaims the victory, and Hook accepts his defeat. In this epic battle against childhood, both the figures themselves and the eternal spirit,

we see Hook fight with everything he has but still fall. However, it is not Peter who actually kills Captain Hook. Hook instead willingly throws himself overboard, into the waiting jaws of the crocodile that has been pursuing him throughout the story. Hook understands that death is inevitable for the adult, but still wants to dominate the island in the time he has. However, once he understands his final defeat, he gives himself over to his fate.

A subtle but vital detail in this point is that the crocodile who has been pursuing Hook throughout the story is actually gendered female when it is first introduced. Though the pronouns used throughout the story by other characters refer to the crocodile as "it," the narrator explicitly refers to the animal as "she" (*PW* 116). Though barely noticeable, the gendering of the crocodile as female further supports the idea of the unsustainable adventurous man as being ultimately devoured by the female, exemplifying the issue within Victorian society of domesticity and the emphasis on maternity seemingly devouring the role of the man within the home, a similar fate to Mr. Darling's. Thus, Hook is ultimately defeated by childhood and swallowed up by femininity.

Though Barrie's work offers intriguing commentary on the views of masculinity within the domestic sphere, the larger critique at work deals more with masculinity in relation to femininity and childhood, and the tensions between the differing gender roles in particular. While much of the story is centered on mourning the loss of girlhood, whether for Mrs. Darling or Wendy, there is a lack of proper mourning of the loss of childhood on the part of the boys and men. Mrs. Darling's fate may be a somber one, but she is not pathetic, unlike her husband. Mr. Darling's position within the domestic sphere has been so completely eliminated in terms of masculinity that he is not required to move fully into adulthood in order to exist within the home. He may carry on just as a child would, and so he is not required to mourn childhood and move

on from it. But as Freud carefully articulates, a lack of proper mourning of an object lost results in melancholy, “the extraordinary diminution in his self-regard” (246).The conclusion of the work, with Mr. Darling willingly placing himself in the dog kennel shows just how low melancholy may bring a man. The ideology of separate spheres and the expectations placed upon men by Victorian society precipitated men taking on the identity of the child within the home. But with this shift in identity also comes the likelihood that no growing up will occur at all within the domestic sphere. Instead, boys will remain boys in the home while the girls will be forced into motherhood.

Chapter 3

Little Mother

Central to Barrie's story is the little girl, Wendy. Though named after the flying boy, Barrie's story clearly has Wendy in the center of it all, even from the second line of the book, where he narrates when Wendy first knew she must grow up, thus giving her the place of attention from the beginning. The oldest child in her family, Wendy is clearly still a child at the beginning of the work. She lives in the nursery and in no way usurps her mother's role. Yet in many ways, she is on the cusp of growing up, of moving beyond her childhood. She is a true liminal figure, a girl in the midst of transition, but without a liminal space in which to experience it. Thus the story opens with a strong underlying tension of the movement Wendy will inevitably have to make. Her lack of place in which to transition and mourn the passing of childhood only aggravates that tension. However, her time in Neverland gives her just such a space for transition, where, although she is surrounded by childhood fantasy come to life, Wendy is placed in a clearly adult role of maternity. Though Wendy early on does not understand or even willingly accept this role and the responsibility that comes with it, by the end of her time in Neverland she has gone through the appropriate mourning process in order to move past her childhood. Thus, she reenters society fully prepared for the maternal adulthood awaiting her. Though the loss of her childhood and the lack of potential for a little girl to remain a child forever is a sad conclusion to come to, Wendy, more so than any other character, represents a healthy and appropriate response to the harsh ideals of the Victorians regarding adulthood. By following Wendy's transition and movement through mourning, readers and audiences alike may find themselves working through the process in a healthy manner.

Within society, there is a startling lack of space for the transition from childhood to

adulthood to take place. According to Van Gennep, though puberty marks a biological point of transition, the accompanying societal transition has no particularity to it. He writes that initiation rites of passage have far less to do with biology than societal action. However, the societal action is often vaguely defined and takes place without its own specific liminal space (67). For the Victorians especially, the lack of space to transition from the highly idealized place of childhood (the nursery) to the domestic sphere made the movement that much more difficult. Moving on from childhood was marked with a profound sense of loss, particularly for women. Being so closely associated with children but unable to retain any of the vestiges of childhood itself made the role painful in many ways. Coupled with the lack of space in which to make this transition, the forceful nature of time and growing up was a menacing reality. Within his work, Barrie constructs a place for Wendy to move through this process, making Neverland a liminal space, a space that is otherwise absent in Victorian culture. Fox writes that, within Neverland as a liminal space, Wendy is able to accept motherhood and maternity apart from reality—after all, Neverland is still a place of fantasy, which provides a sense of security for the young girl (26). By providing a space in which Wendy can transition, Barrie has taken much of the violence and harshness out of the experience, alleviating some of the tensions surrounding the inevitable fate of children.

Additionally, Neverland as a place for transition allows Wendy the opportunity to come to terms appropriately with her fate and gives her time to mourn the childhood she is losing. Specifically, Wendy's time in Neverland provides her with the aspect of mourning Freud calls the "turning away from reality" temporarily in order to give the object being mourned the attention it deserves (244). Within this time apart from reality though is the slow detachment from the object. Within Neverland, Wendy is surrounded by childhood fantasy, but her existence

within it is not as a child, but as an adult. Thus she is given the time and space to mourn, a key aspect of her transition, while still separating her from the role of child and placing her in the role of mother through her domestic activities. Wendy's appropriate mourning process is strongly contrasted with the failed mourning of her father. Mr. Darling has had no time within Neverland and, as such, has never properly mourned childhood and transitioned out of it. Indeed, the stark separation of the public and domestic spheres has allowed, and even required him to remain childish within the home. But his daughter must be anything but a child within the home by the end of the story. And though there is some sense of relief at Wendy's acceptance of her fate and her ability to be a good mother, the entire work is tinged with the sense that something beautiful and profound has been lost to her forever.

Little Girl in the Nursery

Within the domestic sphere lies another sphere in miniature, safeguarded by parents, built entirely around the needs and desires of children. It is within the nursery of the Victorian middle-class home that we first meet the Darling children, and we discover that, in addition to Mother Darling, we have Daughter Darling, a little mother in her own right, and a seeming angel in miniature bearing many resemblances to her fully grown mother. Though Wendy takes on the role of mother throughout the story of Peter Pan and is clearly identified in Victorian maternal terms, she is still a child in the nursery, a daughter only playing at motherhood. Initially, Wendy is first introduced in relation to her parents, her mother specifically, which points towards her positioning as a child primarily. Yet this identity as a child is also immediately coupled with the inevitability of Wendy growing up and becoming a mother herself. In the text of the novel, Wendy is introduced in a scene with her mother, set years before Peter enters their lives:

> They [children] soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was

> this. One day when she was two years old she was playing in the garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, 'Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!' This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. (*PW* 69)

Mrs. Darling is keenly aware of the aging of her daughter, and Wendy sees it as well. She sees, even from such a young age, that she will grow up and become her mother. Roth claims that it is this sense of awareness, interpreted as a tragic loss of something beautiful, that is the central theme of Barrie's story. She says, "Barrie emphasizes the story's primary lament for little girls' inevitable maturation and degeneration from daughters into mothers. Daughters again continually replace mothers throughout the story" (54). This knowledge is accepted without question, establishing the already basic premise of the separate spheres: girls grow up to be mothers, with no mention or thought given to who a grown up woman might be if she is not a mother. Roth also points out that "little girl figures always outgrow the fantasy worlds around them—a tragic fate, or flaw even, that inevitably leads to the deep sense of loss that motivates most of Barrie's stories" (54-55). Girls inevitably leave the nursery, just as we know Wendy eventually will. This inability to escape the growing up process is a lingering presence within the walls of the nursery, a constant reminder that, though the children merely play at adulthood and parenthood, they will soon be faced with adult reality and leave the nursery behind. For Wendy in the story though, she has not yet had to face such a fact—she is a child still, merely playing.

Though Wendy does tend to 'mother' her brothers and even her father, such actions within the nursery are clearly kept within the context of play, further supporting the portrayal of Wendy-as-child while she remains at home. She must first leave the nursery and enter a liminal

space in order to transition. Her maternal tendencies are kept to the type appropriate to a big sister, with her and John playing their mother and father at the Darlings' early stages of parenthood:

> [Mrs. Darling] had found her two older children playing at being herself and father on the occasion of Wendy's birth, and John was saying:
>
> 'I am happy to inform you, Mrs. Darling, that you are now a mother,' in just such a tone as Mr. Darling himself may have used on the real occasion.
>
> Wendy had danced with joy, just as the real Mrs. Darling must have done. (*PW* 80)

Quickly though, Mrs. Darling is coddling Michael after his brother and sister tell him he is not wanted; Wendy is still a sister, simply playing at motherhood, while the real mother of the nursery appropriately fills the maternal role. The only genuine mothering Wendy does occurs after Mr. Darling has attempted to play a trick on his son and Nana. Wendy is quick to admonish with an "O Father!" which Mr. Darling easily recognizes as corrective (*PW* 84). Again though Mrs. Darling steps in to take over the correction of Mr. Darling, while Wendy comforts Nana. Though Wendy's actions here hint at her mothering tendencies, their further use is to subvert the authoritative role of Mr. Darling within the domestic sphere, a use that is quickly (again) taken over by Mrs. Darling, the rightful mother of the home. Wendy's characterization within the nursery is either at playing mother or being used as a mother figure to create further confusion of roles within the family unit. But Wendy-in-the-nursery is clearly still a child in the home, despite her maternal characteristics. She has yet to transition out of the position of the child, a transition that must take place in a space other than the nursery.

A final point as to the position of Wendy as child and not as mother within the nursery is

that of her vulnerability and need for outside protection. A true mother is capable of keeping her children, or, in Wendy's case, her brothers, safe from harm. She would also have the ability to recognize the potential for harm, just as Mrs. Darling is quite suspicious of the signs of Peter she sees. Wendy, within the nursery, possesses no such instincts for the safety of children, either for herself or her brothers. While Mrs. Darling leaves night lights behind, supposedly to be the eyes watching her children, Wendy has no such lights of her own and cannot keep her mother's lights from being blown out upon Tinker Bell's entrance through the window. It may be fair to mention here that it is actually Wendy's nightlight that goes our first, followed by the other two. Wendy comes close to acknowledging the danger at hand when she recognizes Nana's warning bark:

> They could hear Nana barking, and John whimpered, 'It is because he is chaining her up in the yard,' but Wendy was wiser.
>
> 'That is not Nana's unhappy bark,' she said, little guessing what was about to happen; 'that is her bark when she smells danger.'
>
> Danger! (*PW* 86)

At this, Mrs. Darling recognizes the need for her children's safety, making her wish she did not have a party to attend. Wendy, however, is not mentioned at all after her acknowledgement of their nanny's warning. She, unlike her mother, is unaware of the danger the children are in, placing her squarely in the position of child within the nursery and contrasting her with her mother.

Though Wendy is first and foremost a child in the Darling nursery, she is also defined in several terms aligned with the Victorian view of motherhood, particularly in her caring nature and her story-telling. Though first a child, she is second a little mother, moving back and forth between the two with ease. As a secondary mother figure in the home, she plays the little mother

while her brother, John, played their father, celebrating the birth of their first child (*PW* 80). Though they are merely playing, Wendy easily takes on the role of mother, acting much as Mrs. Darling would have. And it is Wendy who has the idea to have her father and Michael take their medicine at the same time, much as any mother would find a solution to ease such a trial (84). In less than a page, Wendy is coddling Nana, who is scolded as Mr. Darling shouts his own exclamations about the unfairness of it all (85). Such maternal characteristics are fairly understandable and predictable for Wendy. As Roth writes, this potential for maternity within the body of a little girl is an intriguing aspect for the audience and readers of the time: "[readers are] haunted and thrilled by the ever-lurking image of a woman behind the eyes of the little girl" (48). So while Wendy does not fulfill the role of a mother within the nursery at the beginning of the story, the potential for maternity is there, thinly veiled behind her childhood, and it is the mysterious presence of potential maternity within the little girl that made childhood so intriguing for Barrie's audience.

Wendy's position in the nursery, first as child and second as little mother, is vital to the understanding and establishment of the journey to and adventures in Neverland. Clark claims that the nursery must be the place for Peter to enter since it is separate from the world of adults. So though Wendy is not primarily maternal, she still belongs, first, in the nursery. Clark writes that the nursery seems to "represent English society, in which the roles of men and women, adults and children, and humans and animals seem inseparable," much as in Neverland (305). The nursery, though still very much present in an English reality, also exists on the outskirts, a place separate from the adult world of Mr. and Mrs. Darling. Clark claims that the Neverland actually exists as a shadow of the nursery, and the connection between the two is made when the Darling children leap the boundary and fly away. The nursery serves "as both a touchstone of

'reality' and the nucleus of the mainstream British life" (308). It is a place where motherhood reigns supreme, though only a child's version of motherhood. However, though the nursery serves as the central place of childhood, and the nucleus of the Victorian home, it is not a place for transition. Residing in the nursery places a person squarely within the bounds of childhood, and transitioning out of that space is a movement that proves quite tense and difficult. In essence, in order to even begin a transition into adulthood in a healthy manner, one must leave the nursery. While leaving to move into a room of one's own makes the transition harsh and even emotionally violent, the movement into a liminal space allows the child to grasp the reality of adulthood before being placed squarely in it.

It is the maternal, not the childish, Victorian role of Wendy's to which Peter Pan is first drawn, and he is attracted to the nursery window as a gateway, entering the English reality, but only just. Peter admits to Wendy that he often comes to the nursery window to hear her stories (*PW* 96). Jacqueline Rose, in her work *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, writes of Wendy's role as a mother that "[m]others tell stories to their children, and nothing could be safer than that" (34). Indeed, it is for the purpose of telling stories that Peter claims to want Wendy to come to Neverland. However, the storytelling is also quickly linked with Mrs. Darling, the rightful mother figure within the confines of the nursery:

> 'You see I don't know any stories. None of the lost boys know any stories.'
>
> 'How perfectly awful,' Wendy said.
>
> 'Do you know,' Peter asked, 'why swallows build in the eaves of houses? It is to listen to the stories. O Wendy, your mother was telling you such a lovely story.' (96)

Just as quickly as story-telling is directly linked to true motherhood, Wendy claims her own ability as a story-teller, informing Peter that she, too, knows a lot of stories (96-97). This admission is all that Peter needs to beg her to join him in Neverland.

While still in the nursery, both before she meets Peter and after, Wendy is not only a child and little mother, but also carries other interests that do not fall easily into either category. As the only daughter of the Darlings, she eagerly participates in more boyish imaginings, playing at pirates with her brothers. In their imaginings, John's little Neverland has a lagoon with plenty of flamingoes for him to shoot down while, the novel tells us, "Michael had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it" (*PW* 74). Wendy herself has a wolf for a friend. Thus, Wendy plays with her brothers without significant delineation between their interests and adventures, again emphasizing their position in the nursery as the same—they are all simply children, playing childish games. However, after Peter has come into the nursery, the very first signal of a time of transition, but before the children have left their room, Wendy expresses a naïve romantic interest in Peter, showing a side of femininity that is neither maternal nor entirely childlike. Peter compliments Wendy at one point, drawing an interesting comment from the narrator:

> 'Wendy,' he continued, in a voice no woman has ever yet been able to resist, 'Wendy, one girl is more use than twenty boys.'
>
> Now Wendy was every inch a woman, though there were not very many inches . . . (91)

Here we have Wendy identified as a woman for the first time, no longer just a girl, but still not a mother. Her response to Peter is that of a woman whose ego has been stroked, despite it having been done by a boy. At once, she offers him a kiss, a rather cheeky action for so young a girl. But Peter does not know what a kiss is, and Wendy is not quite brazen enough to show him, so

she gives him an acorn instead. When Peter offers to give her a kiss in return, she responds much as any young woman would at the offer of a first kiss: "…she replied with quiet primness, 'If you please.' She made herself rather cheap by inclining her face towards him, but he merely dropped an acorn button into her hand" (92). Though still covered in a veil of innocence, this entire exchange points to Wendy's newly budding, romantic desires. They are neither childish nor maternal, in the Victorian sense, and this particular desire is one that Wendy carries with her into Neverland, the liminal space.

Little Mother in Neverland

Once Wendy, along with Peter, Tink, and her brothers, leave the nursery for Neverland, Wendy's actions begin to move in a distinctly maternal direction which becomes even clearer upon their arrival on the island. She quickly establishes herself as the most grown up of the children, thinking of her and her brothers' safety on their journey to Neverland. On their flight to Neverland, John and Michael quickly embrace the adventure, making games out of the flight and following after Peter without question. However, Wendy quickly becomes bothered by the question of time and the danger of flying over the ocean. Though Peter does provide for their hunger by stealing food from birds flying by, "Wendy noticed with gentle concern that Peter did not seem to know that this was rather an odd way of getting your bread and butter, nor even that there are other ways" (*PW* 102). Once outside the bounds of the nursery, Wendy quickly assumes a more serious role that oscillates between older, protective sister and little mother. She also continues to promote societal norms for her brothers, telling him they should be polite to Peter, even though he forgets about them on their journey, whispering, "'You must be nice to him,' Wendy impressed on her brothers. 'What could we do if he were to leave us?'" (103). Wendy in this instance couples politeness with the safety of her family, recognizing that Peter, as

the chief male figure, is providing for them in his own, fantastic way, but it is Wendy who must work to guarantee the continuance of this provision. Thus, as soon as the children have left the nursery and the protection of their true parents, Wendy steps into a more serious maternal role out of necessity, without any obvious point of decision.

Upon her arrival in Neverland, Wendy's girlhood is quickly dismissed and replaced with identity of a woman by those around her, despite Wendy's insistence to the contrary. After Tootles shoots Wendy from the sky, mistaking her for a bird due to Tinker Bell's deceit, the Lost Boys quickly identify Wendy, not as a bird, but as a lady. They quickly surmise that Peter was bringing a lady to take care of them, and they are appalled that they have killed her:

> Slightly was the first to speak. 'This is no bird,' he said in a scared voice. 'I think this must be a lady.'
>
> 'A lady?' said Tootles, and fell a-trembling.
>
> 'And we have killed her,' Nibs said hoarsely.
>
> They all whipped off their caps.
>
> 'Now I see,' Curly said; 'Peter was bringing her to us.' He threw himself sorrowfully on the ground.
>
> 'A lady to take care of us at last,' said one of the twins, 'and you have killed her.' (*PW* 122)

The Lost Boys, separated for so long from girls in traditional roles, easily see and understand what purpose a lady has. They do not see Wendy as a peer, though she is their own age, but see her as above them, both in age and experience, and assign her role accordingly. In the text of the play, Tootles adds a mournful comment regarding his supposed killing of Wendy: "'When ladies used to come to me in dreams, I said 'Pretty mother,' but when she really came I shot her.'" The

stage note adds that "He perceives the necessity of a solitary life for him" (*PP* 112), highlighting the egregiousness of this act in the minds of the boys, to have a killed the lady who had come to be their mother. Wendy's entrance into Neverland is here defined through the perspective of the Lost Boys who do not see a girl, a playmate as Wendy was in the nursery, but as a true woman, come to take care of them just as any real mother would.

Since Wendy has been shot, she has no ability to protest or affect the view of the boys towards her, and they continue to treat her just as a true mother, first in their reverence, then in their actions. Peter directly promotes their treatment of her as a mother, telling the boys to build a house around her so that she will wake within the domestic space appropriate to a mother figure. The description of their preparations is likened to preparations undergone before a wedding, aligning their activity with the event that marks a girl's entrance to womanhood and the potential for motherhood: "In a moment they were as busy as tailors the night before a wedding" (*PW* 127). This series of events places Wendy squarely in a position of transition. The house the boys build is a very literal liminal space. Wendy must spend time there before she may enter the home of Peter and the Lost Boys. In essence, she must transition from the role of child in the nursery from which she has just left to the role of mother in the home, which she will soon take on. In this scene, all the boys, including Wendy's brothers, take part in preparations for Wendy and her house, treating her as a mysterious creature who must be taken care of. In this way, they place her squarely within the Victorian concept of motherhood despite her having no choice in the matter.

Though they are now all outside the bounds of Victorian society, Wendy is still immediately placed in a maternal role despite her girlhood, and without her own volition, allowing her to begin the mourning process in the midst of her transition. This physical

movement from space to space takes Wendy through the process of transition, providing smaller liminal spaces, as Van Gennep defines them, to help her transition step by step (59-60). Once Wendy does wake up and question what is going on around her, she seems delighted to be the new mother to the Lost Boys, but insists that she is not a mother, only a girl:

> 'Oh say you're pleased,' cried Nibs.
>
> 'Lovely, darling house,' Wendy said, and they were the very words they had hoped she would say.
>
> 'And we are your children,' cried the twins.
>
> Then all went on their knees, and holding out their arms cried, 'O Wendy lady, be our mother.'
>
> 'Ought I?' Wendy said, all shining. 'Of course, it's frightfully fascinating, but you see I am only a little girl. I have no real experience.' (*PW* 131).

Wendy here simultaneously exhibits her admiration and flattery at being placed in the maternal position, but also knows the reality of her own position. She is not a true mother in her own mind, and sees the issue with being a mother to a bunch of very real little boys with very real needs. However, Peter quickly dismisses her concerns, justifying his placing Wendy in such a position by saying that they really only need a "nice motherly person" (132), a quality which Wendy does readily agree she possesses. And with that, Wendy slips out of her childhood and into motherhood, placed there by Peter's insistence. It is at this point that Wendy not only willingly begins to transition, but she is also ushered into the mourning process, as Freud defines it, the separation from and reaction to the loss of a person or object (244). We see her hesitancy to blindly accept her maternal role, but she does begin to move forward into it. She appropriately and healthily recognizes that, in some form, she is capable of maternity, and with that, she begins

to leave her childhood behind.

Though the tone of the work indicates that the children are all still largely playing at adulthood, the play has a fair more grave and serious undertone—Wendy's role becomes entirely maternal, providing no time to stop playing and leave the games behind. Wendy quickly sets up house in the home of the Lost Boys, establishing bedtimes for the boys and hanging up a line for the wash to dry (*PW* 134). Her housekeeping actually keeps her in the home for long periods of time:

> I suppose it was all especially entrancing to Wendy, because those rampagious boys of hers gave her so much to do. Really there were whole weeks when, except perhaps with a stocking in the evening, she was never above ground. . . . Wendy's favorite time for sewing and darning was after they had all gone to bed. . . . When she had a basketful of their stockings, every heel with a hole in it, she would fling up her arms and exclaim, 'Oh dear, I am sure I sometimes think spinsters are to be envied.' (135)

Incredibly quickly, Wendy's life in Neverland is entirely consumed with motherhood, starkly contrasting the small bits of mothering she did within the nursery. Her role is now consistent and far more serious. Whereas before she and John played at the happiest moments of having children, Wendy now fulfills the more mundane qualifications of motherhood, listed mostly in terms of housekeeping and basic care for the boys. While the boys all take off on adventures of their own, Wendy's only adventure in Neverland to this point is that of maternity, a role she seems fated to fill whether in England or in Neverland.

The reality of Neverland demands that Wendy take her role as mother seriously; she is no longer allowed to relinquish maternal tasks to another, and she is ultimately responsible for her

"children." She has a few rough moments in Neverland that show her naïveté and lack of true mothering experience, particularly with the children at Marooner's Rock. Barrie speaks of Wendy as brave, while admitting that her actions are quite foolish. He sets up the scene of a lazy afternoon for both mother and children on Marooner's Rock beginning with the children dozing on the rock under Wendy's watch before a cold chill suddenly envelopes them: "Of course she should have roused the children at once…but she was a young mother and she did not know this…so, though fear was upon her…she would not waken them. She stood over them to let them have their sleep out. Was it not brave of Wendy?" (*PW* 142). And though we are meant to believe that Wendy's actions are done out of innocent love for her dear Lost Boys, the truth of the matter is that she is a child trying to do the work of an adult mother. This particular event serves to remind us that Wendy is not yet capable of effective motherhood.. Wendy is still very much in the process of transition in this scene; she takes on the maternal position but is not yet entirely capable of protecting her children. Her time in Neverland has yet to be successful in moving her into maternity.

Though Wendy is placed in the maternal role and given very little opportunity to explore any other adventures, she does express interests outside of motherhood. One of Wendy's initial interests is the mermaids in the lagoon, female beings who exude danger and sexuality. However, they refuse to interact with any of the children, except Peter, a fact which greatly disappoints Wendy: "When she stole softly to the edge of the lagoon she might see them by the score, especially on Marooner's Rock, where they loved to bask, combing out their hair in a lazy way that quite irritated her; or she might even swim, on tiptoe as it were, to within a yard of them, but then they saw her and dived, probably splashing her with their tails, not by accident, but intentionally" (*PW* 140). Wendy's knowledge of the mermaids is thus kept to observation

only, except for a comb of theirs that Peter gives her. Though Neverland should be a place for Wendy, like the other children, to explore adventures that have only been imaginative before, Wendy is kept at a distance from such experiences. We thus see the mourning of lost childhood here. Her gender dictates the type of adulthood she moves into; as a girl, her adulthood is defined by maternity, not by sexuality or any other adult experiences. While she is moving into maternity, there is also the stark reality at the lost pleasures and adventures of childhood and adolescence separate from the dictates of the ideology of separate spheres.

Separate from her curiosity regarding the mermaids who exude sexuality is Wendy's initial and growing desire for Peter as type of spouse as opposed to one of her own children. Yet this desire is also crushed as Wendy finds that Peter has no desire for a wife, only for a mother, and he most certainly never wants to be a man. As Wendy moves through the transition process, she experiences the natural longings associated with growing up. But the movement that Victorian ideals demand does not allow for a place defined just as a wife or partner. Instead, Wendy must move past these desires until she is fully maternal and the very picture of the Victorian woman. The initial dismissal of this desire for a romantic partner occurs in the nursery, but Wendy continues to harbor her wish for Peter as a mate, a spouse, and not just another of the Lost Boys. Her interest is not to have a co-parent so much as to have a companion. Thus, her desire for Peter is separate from her maternal role within Neverland. To the boys, Peter is equal parts authority figure and playmate—Wendy often refers to him as "Father" in front of the boys, but his role with her is far more obscure. One particular scene shows Peter as something like Wendy's partner, but it only lasts for a short while, and Wendy is unable to gain any assurance from him as to the state of their relationship. Peter calls Wendy his "old lady" and tells her that "there is nothing more pleasant of an evening for you and me when the day's toil is over than to

rest by the fire with the little ones near by" (*PW* 161). The sweet moment between the two children, playing at having children of their own, provides a charming but fleeting image. Quickly, the image changes as Peter fears Wendy is more serious than he: "'I was just thinking,' he said, a little scared. 'It is only make-believe, isn't it, that I am their father?'" (161). Peter far prefers that Wendy should be a mother to him just as she is to the other boys, and that he should only have to play at being a father. Though Peter enforces Wendy's maternal role, he is unwilling, and even perhaps unable, to place himself in a spousal role as her equal. This dichotomy epitomizes what Roth says about the obsession with the childhood and the transition into adulthood: "Though many of the boys are close to Wendy's age and Wendy is supposedly in a place where children never grow up, she is forced into her mother's role while the boys remain unquestionably, even exaggeratedly, childlike" (60). Not only is Wendy placed in a maternal role largely without her own volition while her other, female interests and desires are subverted, but she is not allowed a true companion with which to share her growing responsibility and forced maturity. Being placed into such a position so forcefully, while still in the liminal space of Neverland, allows Wendy the chance to accept the loss of her girlhood and any feminine aspirations separate from motherhood.

Seemingly led directly into her choice, Wendy must ultimately accept her fate as a solely maternal being and return to England to complete the tragic process of growing up. Her time in Neverland pushes her into the maternal role and effectively shows her the pointlessness of her other, non-maternal desires. She is given the time to mourn her childhood, but the choice is rather passive on her part—she must simply accept her societal fate. Unlike the Lost Boys, who have lived in Neverland for an unknown amount of time, Wendy is not able to avoid adulthood perpetually. Even escaping to a fantasy land inhabited mostly by children does not allow her to

grow into anything but a mother. Once Wendy realizes that she cannot escape her role, despite having been able to escape England, she embraces the desire to return home to her own mother. She tells her brothers that she fears their mother will already be halfway through mourning their loss and on her way towards replacing them with other children (*PW* 167). Wendy understands that, though the children may perpetually remain in Neverland, their mother may move on from them and find other children to mother. After all, her role is entirely maternal, and she must have children in order to have a place of her own. Understanding maternal desires after her time in Neverland, Wendy now makes the choice to go back, reclaim her position as child, short as the time may be, and from there move into true maternity of her own. Wendy has, at this point, successfully completed the mourning process in order to accept her role. Her choice is portrayed as tragic and final, despite it merely being the obvious conclusion to the children's adventures. Wendy's stepping out of childhood and into adulthood, however inevitable, is also clearly characterized as the mourning of a loss, with childhood being the thing lost.

In the end, we see the cyclical pattern of Victorian maternity explored and questioned, but it is ultimately reinforced by Wendy's return to the nursery. Barrie ends the story with a look into her future, placing her in the seemingly inevitable role of mother within a nursery of her own. Though the context shows that motherhood is the apparently unavoidable end for all girls, the fate of Wendy is a tragic one, although she has accepted it appropriately. Mrs. Darling had promised to let Wendy return to Neverland with Peter to do his spring cleaning, but he only came back for her once while she was a girl. In telling of Wendy's own daughter, Jane's, place in the nursery, we are also told that Mrs. Darling is "dead and gone" (*PW* 221), emphasizing again the cyclical nature of mothers and daughters. Yet Peter Pan, the eternal child, must always have a mother, though a true mother will never do. Barrie writes that the night Peter comes back for

Wendy, expecting to find her just as she was before, is a tragedy (223). When he finds that Wendy is a mother in every sense, "[h]e [gives] a cry of pain; and when the tall beautiful creature stoop[s] to lift him in her arms he [draws] back sharply" (224). And when Wendy tries to explain to him that she has grown up, has been grown up for a long time, and now has a child of her own, he responds in straight denial, just as if a favorite toy had been broken and was now beyond repair. It is only once Jane awakens, sees Peter crying, and utters the same words her mother did years ago, that Peter forgets his heartbreak. Jane is convinced Peter needs a mother, someone to clean house for him, and that she must go:

> 'He does so need a mother,' Jane said.
>
> 'Yes, I know,' Wendy admitted rather forlornly; 'no one knows it so well as I.'
>
> 'Good-bye,' said Peter to Wendy; and he rose in the air, and the shameless Jane rose with him; it was already her easiest way of moving about.
>
> Wendy rushed to the window.
>
> 'No, no,' she cried.
>
> 'It is just for spring cleaning time,' Jane said; 'he wants me always to do his spring cleaning.'
>
> 'If only I could go with you,' Wendy sighed.
>
> 'You see you can't fly,' said Jane. (*PW* 225)

Wendy's heartbreak over her daughter's leaving, as well as her own inability to leave as she once did, underscores the cyclical pattern of girlhood and motherhood. Once Jane returns, we can expect that she will have mourned the passing of her childhood and transitioned into her future maternity, accepting her fate, just as her mother did. Once her daughter returns, Wendy knows

that most of her childhood will forever be lost. Thus the tragedy of girls always growing up and becoming mothers is perpetuated and characterized as a loss.

By the end of the work, Wendy's transition is complete in every way. Her time in Neverland provided both a specific place and the proper events to transition her more easily than if she had remained in Victorian society. It also highlights her need for proper mourning of childhood. She has become a beautiful mother figure by the end, but the loss of her childhood is tragic. She joins her own mother in this sense; her daughter has taken her place in the nursery, and will soon take her place in the home as well. Even though Wendy now lacks what her own mother did, all those qualities personified in Tinker Bell, she is every inch a capable, wonderful mother. Her own gender does not allow her to remain childlike in any sense, for just as all girls must become mothers, the eternal boy-child will always demand a mother.

Chapter 4

Peter Pan

Tied to the ideology of the separate spheres is the Edwardian obsession (held over from the earlier Romantic period) with defining and experiencing childhood. As James Kincaid describes, in the popular imagination of the Victorian period, children had gone from not being seen, to being seen as another species, to being always in a state of motion towards adulthood (65-66). He also points out the longing or desire for their former childhoods that adults began to explore during the mid- to late nineteenth century: "The fervent hope to catch the child and hold it, even at a distance, suggests…a well of desire deeper and more unsettled than anything either purely natural or simply escapist" (67). Thus, the desire to reconnect with childhood turned quickly toward an unhealthy emphasis that is most profoundly realized in literature about children. With this obsession came the slow discovery that children are not innocent or simple or, more so than anything else, good. The Edwardian adult's fixation on the child is complex and not entirely attractive. For an author raised in the Victorian era, childhood is intensely desirable, but not truly attainable. As Kincaid puts it, "[Children] keep us up on our toes, sprinting after them and never getting close, seldom catching more than a glimpse" (275), and Peter Pan embodies this desire.

The character of Peter Pan is a manifestation of the obsession with childhood within the Victorian *fin de siècle*. He represents the strong desire of the culture for escape and fantasy, an existence entirely separate from the bounds of society. He exists in a space outside the ideology of the separate spheres, and as such, is not bound to any of the expectations of society. Thus, we can see in him every aspect of wishful fantasy felt by portions of the society of the time. He is the culmination of desire for escape that has roots in the Victorian age but continues in the

Edwardian. As Wullschlager points out, “If the Victorians set down the foundations for a cultural obsession with childhood, the Edwardians, with their attempt to turn life into a giant playground, brought it to its apogee” (110). Thus, both the thing from which adults wanted to escape (demands of the ideology of separate spheres) and the beginnings of that escape (seen within children’s literature) took place within the Victorian era. But the climax of this energy, this movement away from such narrowly defined spaces outward from the bounds of society, took place in the Edwardian era, and such profound energy is manifested in the character of Peter Pan. However, Peter also shows how and why the fixation on childhood, when taken to its extreme, is ultimately a fantasy, separate from reality.

The Birth of Peter Pan

Around the same time that Barrie was dreaming up his Peter, other authors of children’s literature were creating characters with the same mythical origins as Peter—the Greek woodland god, Pan. The god Pan is defined by the *World Mythology: Handbook of Classical Mythology* as “God of shepherds and flocks, at home in Arcadia among the central Peloppenese” (n.pag.). His origin is usually traced to the *Homeric Hymn to Pan* which has him as half-man, half-goat. In Roman tradition, he is called Faunus, the origin of the faun (“Pan”). Aside from his physical shape being only partially human, he is also usually identified by his “pan-pipes,” a set of hollow reeds of different lengths strung together to make a set of pipes. The sounds of these pipes are perhaps the most common identifier of the god, and he is almost never portrayed without them (“Pan”). His portrayal in mythology is largely consistent, and the renewed interest in Pan in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought with it what Wullschlager calls a “cluster of Pans” within literature of the time (111).

Kenneth Grahame, author of *The Wind in the Willows*, also offers some interesting

commentary regarding the resurgence of interest in the woodland god, particularly in his essays "The Rural Pan" and "The Lost Centaur," both published in 1898. His descriptions mark the growing desire within society for escape into the woodland, seeking the same quiet and fantastical elements with which Pan is identified. He writes in "The Rural Pan" that Pan hides in "more remote haunts" than other gods, "piping the low sweet strain that [reaches] only the ears of a chosen few" (65). Grahame almost always describes Pan with his pipes, which he plays with "freest abandonment" (67). The attitude with which Pan seems to live is very like the attitude the Edwardians wanted to experience, escaping from the constraints of Victorian society with which they grew up. We see some sense of escape and freedom from a more civilized society as Grahame continues his description:

> Both iron road and level highway are shunned by rural Pan, who chooses rather to foot it along the sheep track on the limitless down or thwart-leading footpath through copse and spinney, not without pleasant fellowship with feather and fur. . . .Albeit shy of the company of his more showy brother-deities, he loveth the unpretentious humankind, especially them that are *adscripti glebae*[5], addicted to the kindly soil and to the working thereof: perfect in no way, only simple, cheery sinners. (69)

Grahame's fanciful descriptions stay true to Pan's mythological origins, but also imply the connection to children, and seem to foresee Peter Pan especially. One of Barrie's most famous remarks within *Peter and Wendy* is the description of children as "gay and innocent and heartless" (226), closely following Grahame's words of those who are "perfect in no way, only simple cheery sinners" (69). This description of children generally follows the perception of Pan of the time, but most clearly describes Peter, the ultimate veneration of perpetuated childhood.

[5] Persons of the soil

Grahame's own works, particularly his most popular children's tale, *The Wind in the Willows*, contains his own representation of Pan, though the god is never named. We meet the "Piper at the Gates" (155) in chapter seven of Grahame's story, just as Frog and Toad come upon him in a meadow after following the magical sound of his pipes: "…in that utter clearness of the imminent dawn, while Nature, flushed with the fullness of incredible colour, seemed to hold her breath for the event, [Toad] looked in the very eyes of the Friend and Helper…and still, as he looked, he lived; and still, as he lived, he wondered" (155-56). Grahame's characters are overwhelmed with the sense of peaceful fantasy, lost in the majestic creature before them. In "The Lost Centaur," Grahame asks, "…which among all these unhappy bifurcations, so cheery, so unambitious, so purely contented, so apt to be the guide, philosopher, and friend of boyhood as he?" (178). Again, while Grahame's own descriptions fit well with his Pan character, they may also be applied to the character of Peter, created by Barrie only six years after the publication of Grahame's essays. Though not traditionally seen in such a light, the view of Pan for the Edwardians could be just as associated with childhood as he is with the wild.

Though Grahame provides a non-fiction concept of Pan to accompany his fictional portrayal, other authors of the same era used similar characterizations, particularly in stories about children. Wullschlager summarizes the explosion of interest in Pan-like characters re-formed as children:

> Maurice Hewlett's play *Pan and the Young Shepherds* opened in 1898 with the line, 'Boy, boy, wilt thou be a boy forever?' In a cruel short story, Saki has a woman punished by death for doubting the existence of Pan. Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) stars Pan, Aubrey Beardsley's novel *Under the Hill* (1904) is about an orgy of satyrs and shepherdesses, and the children's classic *The Secret*

> *Garden* has a Pan-like figure, Dickon, a rural wanderer with supernatural powers. Burne-Jones drew a whimsical Pan; C. H. Shannon published woodcuts of Pan in *The Dial*. Charles Sims's picture *The Little Faun* (1908) has a mischievous centaur disrupt a dinner party, and his *The Beautiful is Fled*, with a tiny faun shivering in a bare winter river landscape, suggests the unearthly wistfulness of the apparition of Pan in *The Wind in the Willows*. (111-12)

Thus, the presence of the image of Pan in society, particularly related to children, was strong. Some, like Grahame, portrayed Pan in the mythological sense, with his curved horns and furry legs. Others chose to portray Pan in a more personified sense, as with Burnett's character, Dickon. The initial description of the boy is provided by his sister, and the main character, Mary, responds in keeping with the mythological effect Pan seems to have: "Our Dickon goes off on th' moor by himself an' plays for hours. That's how he made friends with th' pony. He's got sheep on th' moor that knows him, an' birds as comes an' eats out of his hand. However little there is to eat, he always saves a bit o' his bread to coax his pets.' It was really this mention of Dickon which made Mary decide to go out, though she was not aware of it" (n. pag.). Though Dickon is not clearly identified as a Pan character, his description in such earthy terms points to the growing societal interest in Pan, especially in relation to children. It also shows how the description and likening to Pan could be more subtle and abstract than a direct representation such as we find in Grahame's works, such as what we find with Barrie's own Pan.

Barrie's own version of Pan, renamed Peter Pan, bears some marked characteristics of his mythological namesake, but his character is largely a re-forming of the god, cast in the body of an eternal child. Barrie thus uses the growing interest in Pan, the pagan god, to encapsulate the social fascination with childhood. Though Peter Pan is, in many ways, reminiscent of the god

whose name he bears, as Wullschlager points out that his "horned cap, rural attire. . . and pan pipes are the only remnants of his descent from the Greek centaur. . . .He could not have come about without the cultural obsession with Pan" (112). Indeed, Peter appears very Pan-like in his physical form as well as some of his actions. When Wendy first meets Peter in the flesh, he bows to her quite grandly, much as we might imagine any woodland god would (*PW* 89). As described in the play notes, "In so far as he is dressed at all it is in autumn leaves and cobwebs," (*PP* 97) quite befitting the woodland god. The other key identifying factor is Peter's pipes, which he seemingly plays upon when he is seeking solitude, or just pouting in a corner: "She explained quite matter of fact that she thought Peter sometimes came to the nursery in the night and sat on the foot of her bed and played on his pipes to her" (*PW* 76).Though the god Pan seems to play his pipes to call others to himself, Peter plays his pipes to forget his own loneliness, as something of a comfort. After Hook has kidnapped all the children, we see Peter using his pipes as personal comfort: "Unaware of the tragedy being enacted above, Peter had continued, for a little time after the children left, to play gaily on his pipes: no doubt a rather forlorn attempt to prove to himself that he did not care" (*PW* 180). Peter Pan's pipes are one of the key identifiers with his mythological namesake, but the likeness really only works on a superficial level; at his core, Peter is not a copy of Pan, but is actually the personification of the fixation on perpetual childhood with reminiscences of the pagan god. So while the use of Pan imagery within Barrie's work is a motif of the culture, Barrie only uses it as he sees fit, choosing to replace the emphasis on nature with one on childhood.

As the embodiment of a cultural obsession with childhood, and boyhood in particular, Peter Pan is the accumulation of a generation's desire for escape into something which is ultimately unattainable—eternal, perpetuating childhood. As such, his symbolic value is both

enlightening of the age and terrifying in its dramatic departure from reality. The cultural fascination of the time sparked many positive imitations, such as the inspiration behind the Boy Scout movement (Wullschlager 110), but saw more negative ramifications in the decadence of the *fin de siècle*. In the time between the creation of Alice and the creation of Peter Pan, a change in the perception of childhood had taken place. While Alice represents the child as "moral icon, emblem of purity," Peter Pan is the "fun-loving playboy hero" (109). This shift may be due in part to the public perception of Edward, the Prince of Wales, as a playboy himself, an image that did not change once he became king and ushered in the Edwardian decade (109-10). Indeed this image of the irresponsible, wild youth was overtaking English culture quickly: "…the model of the dangerously attractive young man, immortal but in some way doomed, 'the lad who will never grow old,' stands at the heart of thirty years of English culture: from Housman's Shropshire Lad and Wilde's Dorian Gray to Baden-Powell's new scout movement for 'boy-men'" (109). As a representation of this larger movement, Peter Pan is also showcasing the desire behind the movement—the desire to escape society. Kincaid writes of this shift that, in regards to this change in the view of childhood, both the Alice and Peter stories raise a particular question being asked in and of their respective societies: "The question raised for both figures is, 'Will you agree to grow up?' Alice seems to find the prospect so untroubling that she recognizes no dilemma at all, while Peter sees adulthood as a trap and is willing to give up everything in order not to fall into it" (278). With these characters representing the attitudes of society towards childhood and adulthood, it becomes clear that the desire for escape became, with the age of Peter Pan, an age of refusal to grow up. In essence, childhood represents, for the adults (and men in particular) the ultimate escape, leading to the desire for eternal childhood, and Peter Pan is the ultimate embodiment of society's unhealthy desire.

Eternal Childhood

As a representation of the cultural obsession with childhood and boyhood, Peter Pan provides an intriguing and attractive concept on the surface that must ultimately be relinquished in order to transition from childhood to adulthood, the process that the Edwardians found so daunting and unappealing. As a character, Peter demands interaction from those who meet him. His existence is magical and mysterious, delighting and entrancing his fictional playmates as well as his audiences and readers. Yet his existence also incites a sense of danger and insecurity, particularly through the aspects of his character as forgetful, solitary, stagnant, and selfish. He is not the picture of innocent purity and perfection that Alice is; instead, Peter shows us exactly what culture desired: an eternity of childishness, which Barrie calls being "gay and innocent and heartless" (*PW* 226). As a representation of the emphasis and desire for childhood felt by the Edwardians, Peter is ultimately a character worthy of examination, the result of which is ultimately an understanding of the damaging and negative effects of the unnatural perpetuation of childhood.

Though Peter's character is initially attractive, his chief defining characteristics are not attractive at all; instead, they are qualities that we seek to see remove from children as they mature. As the eternal child, Peter never outgrows his most childish and unattractive qualities, and this is possible because of his forgetfulness. Peter's habit of forgetting his own adventures, and even the people in them, is one of the first concerns Wendy has during her time with him. Even on their trip to Neverland, she sees the danger she and her brothers are in should Peter forget about them entirely:

> He [Peter] would come down laughing over something fearfully funny he had stay, but he had already forgotten what it was, or he would come up with

> mermaid scales still sticking to him, and yet not be able to say for certain what had been happening. It was really rather irritating to children who had never seen a mermaid.
>
> 'And if he forgets them so quickly,' Wendy argued, 'how can we expect that he will go on remembering us?'
>
> Indeed, sometimes when he returned he did not remember them, at least not well. Wendy was sure of it. She saw recognition come into his eyes as he was about to pass them the time of day and go on; once she even had to tell him her name. (*PW* 104)

This aspect of Peter's, this inability to remember moments, strikes Wendy as quite dangerous; she has no parallel desire to be like Peter in this way. The question of Peter's memory remains consistent throughout the story, and by the end he has even forgotten about Tinker Bell, and is unable to distinguish her from any other fairy (*PW* 219). As a result of this forgetfulness, Peter is entirely unable to learn through experience. The lack of memory causes the lack of knowledge, which Kincaid labels as a state of bliss, intrinsic to the experience of childhood: "Ignorance really is bliss here, a state that is blessed because it does not *know*, does not partake in the limitations of what passes for *knowing* among the grown-ups. With grown-ups, being is dispersed along various dribbles of knowledge. With the child, all is compact within the certainty of not-knowing, refusing to know" (282). Thus, Peter's forgetfulness and inability to learn is the key to the perpetuation of his childhood. His utter inability to move forward is made possible by his forgetfulness.

Not only is Peter entirely forgetful, a trait which allows for the perpetuation of his childhood, but he also has a strong desire for solitude, a disdain for community, both social and

familial. Peter is drawn to Wendy as a mother figure, but he "despised all mothers except Wendy" (*PW* 137). He desires Wendy's maternal presence, but he cannot stand any official communal role, either as a son or as a father. In this way, he demonstrates much of the wandering quality of his mythological namesake, Pan. Many of his adventures are lived alone, and we never seem to know precisely what he has been up to: "He often went out alone, and when he came back you were never absolutely certain whether he had had an adventure or not. He might have forgotten it so completely that he said nothing about it; and then when you went out you found the body; and, on the other hand, he might say a great deal about it, and yet you could not find the body" (*PW* 137). Thus, Peter's forgetfulness is directly linked to his desire for solitude, his existence outsides the bounds of community. Even the Lost Boys, his pack of devoted followers, are not allowed to be like him. They must never dress or look like him, and they must never engage Hook; they are under strict orders to leave Hook to Peter (*PW* 112). This distance from community, Kincaid claims, is part of what makes Peter intriguing and attractive, particularly to an adult audience. We love him because he is distant—he is not within reach; the story functions as "a self-protective lament for the remoteness of the child that creates that very distance. We could not love Peter half so much were he not able to fly and escape us" (279).This particular aspect of childhood functions as both an argument for and against the *fin de siècle* fascination. The distance of childhood from community and society offers an excellent escape from the rigorous demands placed on adulthood by the ideology of the separate spheres. However, this distance, when perpetuated, is certainly a dangerous existence, something that Wendy and even the Lost Boys recognize. Upon deciding to leave Neverland and return home, Wendy tells her brothers and the Lost Boys a story of a mother forgetting her lost children and replacing them. Upon hearing of this fate in story form, all of the children strongly desire to

return home (*PW* 164-68). Perpetual separation of children from reality and adulthood is a life none of the children want. Only Peter can lead such a life, and we both love and hate him for it.

Peter is also a negatively connoted portrayal of the obsession with childhood in that he shows no desire for personal growth as a leader, or domination and authority over the island of Neverland aside from what he already has. Peter is interested in perpetuating his adventures, but never bringing them to conclusion. He wants fun and play, to be the winner of the battle but never the conqueror of the entire war. His motivation strongly differs from Hook's here, offering an image of the difference between an adult desire for authority and the childish desire merely for adventure. Whereas Hook is willing to break the cycle in which the pirates, Indians, and Lost Boys are engaged, Peter instead wants to keep the cycle evenly balanced so that the battles will go on and on:

> Should we take the brush with the redskins at Slightly Gulch? It was a sanguinary affair, and especially interesting as showing one of Peter's peculiarities, which was that in the middle of a fight he would suddenly change sides. At the Gulch, when victory was still in the balance, sometimes leaning this way and sometime that, he called out, 'I'm a redskin today; what are you, Tootles?' And Tootles answered, 'Redskin; what are you, Nibs?' and Nibs said, 'Redskin; what are you, Twin?' and so on; and they were all redskin; and of course this would have ended the fight had not the real redskins, fascinated by Peter's methods, agreed to be lost boys for that once, and so at it they all went again, more fiercely than ever. (*PW* 138)

Peter's desire is for adventure every day, and if that means never truly winning a battle, allowing the wars to go on and on, he is perfectly content to do just that. This aspect of Peter's could also

be described in the same terms Grahame uses in his essay "The Lost Centaur"; he says of Pan that there is no other god so "cheery, so unambitious, so purely contented" in being a "friend of boyhood" (178). The Pan of old and our fresh-faced Peter share the desire to maintain life just as it is, despite the pressures of others to grow and change.

Peter does eventually gain control of Hook's pirate ship, signaling the end of male adulthood on the island in surrender to perpetual boyhood. However, Peter is not actually the cause of Hook's death. Instead, Hook gives himself over to the (female) ticking crocodile, showing that the end of man is at the hands of time, of growing old(er). Peter's initiation of the conquest of the pirate ship and downfall of Hook is actually born of his need to save Wendy, his maternal figure. As Peter and Hook battle, Hook is met with the realization that he may never truly defeat Peter, who will never learn or grow, unlike the unfortunate captain:

> Hitherto he had thought it was some fiend fighting him, but darker suspicions assailed him now.
>
> 'Pan, who and what art though?' he cried huskily.
>
> 'I'm youth, I'm joy,' Peter answered at a venture, 'I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg.'
>
> This, of course, was nonsense; but it was proof to the unhappy Hook that Peter did not know in the least who or what he was. (*PW* 203)

Hook then leaps into the jaws of the crocodile, who is no longer ticking because her clock has run down. Thus, Peter defeats Hook not due to the child's own desire for authority or domination, but only because Hook must eventually give up and surrender to death at the jaws of the feminized crocodile after failing in his battle with the eternal child. In his end, Hook suffers the symbolic fate of any man who asserts his masculinity within the Victorian domestic sphere.

Peter then assumes the role of captain of the ship, but the rest of the story carries no indication that Peter actually ascends into this position. Instead, the chapter closes with Peter once again taking the position of son to Wendy's maternal role, being comforted in her arms after having a nightmare on board the pirate ship (*PW* 205). We learn later of his plan to live in the house he and the boys built for Wendy, which the fairies have placed in a tree (*PW* 217). Peter does not desire authority over the ship, but wants only to be a child, having fun.

Ultimately, Peter Pan has a thoroughly selfish nature largely due to his lack of self-awareness, a key identifier of childhood for the Victorians. Due to his inability to understand his own place in relation to others, he is incapable of acting selflessly, in the interests of others. His actions throughout Barrie's story are fully selfish due to his perpetual childishness. Soon after meeting Wendy and having her perform the domestic act of sewing his shadow back on, he exhibits this lack of self-awareness and selfishness in his response: "Alas, he had already forgotten that he owed his bliss to Wendy. He thought he had attached the shadow himself. 'How clever I am,' he crowed rapturously, 'oh, the cleverness of me!'" (*PW* 91). Though Wendy quickly expresses her hurt at being forgotten, and Peter works to assuage her bruised ego, the point has been made: Peter's instinct is to forget all others in favor of himself, remaining unaware of his identity in relation to others. Additionally, Peter first decides Wendy should come with him to Neverland when he realizes what she may provide for him as a mother figure. As soon as Wendy suggests that she can tell stories to Peter and the Lost Boys, Peter begins to tempt her into going with him. He even physically grips her and tries to take her through the nursery window with him (*PW* 96). In his attempts, we are told that he has become "frightfully cunning" (*PW* 97). Peter is interested in only what may serve him, and acts in accordance with that selfishness. He is unaware of his placement in society, which in turn creates a lack of place in

society, and, therefore, he is able to stay continually selfish. However, with the perpetuation of his childishness comes the lack of place in the real world; because he does not (nor does he want to) exist within society, he loses any ability to function in the real world or live past his own childhood. Thus, Peter represents a very undesirable conclusion in that he is not a sustainable character within society while embodying the most negative of characteristics of childhood.

Untouchable Peter

Though Peter interacts on many levels with the various characters of Barrie's work, he is ultimately unattainable—they cannot take over Peter, own him, or become like him. However, though he himself is untouchable, interactions with him act as a catalyst for the movement and transition that each of the characters, particularly Wendy, must go through. As an eternal child, Peter's existence demands a maternal figure, precluding Wendy or any other girl from joining him—every girl must become a mother to him, forcing her into adulthood. And while boys may experience his adventures for a time, they too exist within liminal spaces that push them from boyhood into a boyish manhood, as evidenced by the Lost Boys choosing to forego their life in Neverland in favor of the childish adulthood awaiting them in Victorian England. Finally, men are unable to return to their true childhood and instead must either accept a role as child within the domestic sphere or perish due to the ever encroaching beast of time and their inability to conquer the spirit of eternal childhood. Just as the characters within Barrie's work cannot attain or realize a likeness with Peter, so the work's audience and readership cannot attain the same. Instead, we may gaze upon Peter, marvel at him, and even desire him, but we must ultimately put him aside in favor of realities that are attainable.

While Peter's existence allows for interaction with females of various types, he cannot have a female companion who carries the same eternal childhood. He demands a mother figure,

which guarantees that any girl will be forced through the process of transition from child to mother—she is not allowed to stay young. Peter's pre-pubescence guarantees that he has no desire or inclination towards romantic feelings towards girls or women. Though Wendy has inklings of these desires toward Peter, he is not able to match them since there is no future adulthood where those desires may be realized. Since Peter cannot fulfill Wendy's growing desires for something that belongs to adulthood, she must make the painful decision to transition and leave Neverland. She is able to effectively and appropriately mourn the loss of her childhood in order to enter into adulthood; however, Peter is not capable of such a decision. Thus, we do not see girl-children existing in Neverland any longer than Wendy. By entering Neverland, the girl unknowingly enters a liminal space; a girl's time with Peter demands she become maternal, a strictly adult role. And as such, she cannot stay in Neverland. We see this with Wendy, and we begin to see it with her daughter, Jane. A girl may enter Neverland for a season, but she will return ready to transition into adulthood. She must return, having mourned the loss of childhood, ready to take on her socially prescribed role as domestic angel while Peter must always remain behind.

The experience of a girl with Peter in Neverland is not the same as that of a boy. The Lost Boys have remained in Neverland for an unknown amount of time, but they all carry memories of their mothers and lives before. They can easily move back to society since the construct of separate spheres allows for a childish man within the domestic realm. However, they must sacrifice perpetual boyhood entirely by becoming grown-ups in the way society demands it, a choice that Peter effectively articulates when Mrs. Darling asks if he will please let her adopt him as well. His response is utterly tragic, but sums up the dangers and heartbreak of eternal childhood:

> Mrs. Darling came to the window, for at present she was keeping a sharp eye on Wendy. She told Peter that she had adopted all the other boys, and would like to adopt him also.
>
> 'Would you send me to school?' he inquired craftily.
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'And then to an office?'
>
> 'I suppose so.'
>
> 'Soon I should be a man?'
>
> 'Very soon.'
>
> 'I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things,' he told her passionately. 'I don't want to be a man. O Wendy's mother, if I was to wake up and feel there was a beard!'
>
> 'Peter,' said Wendy the comforter, 'I should love you in a beard'; and Mrs. Darling stretched out her arms to him, but he repulsed her.
>
> 'Keep back, lady, no one is going to catch me and make me a man.' (*PW* 217).

The sacrifice is one Peter is unwilling to make. Though society has allowed for merely superficial qualifications for manhood, Peter will not take on even the appearance of adulthood. Though the Lost Boys are able to compromise in order to attain a true mother figure within the structure of society, Peter is not.

Peter's state is also unattainable by adult men in the story, particularly Hook and Mr. Darling. Hook is allowed to interact with Peter, but shows very little real understanding of him. It is when he does realize who Peter is and just how far he himself is from ever being like Peter

that he gives himself over to death. And Mr. Darling has absolutely no direct interaction, pointing perhaps to just how far removed he is from the possibility of changing his own position within society. Mr. Darling has taken on the place of the child within his own home, partaking in the societal allowance for perpetual boyhood. But this life is one that Peter refuses, though the Lost Boys accept it. A man cannot become a boy again, just as a boy cannot keep from becoming a man. In the end, Hook finds that he does not have a true place in a world where Peter exists. In an opposing sense, Peter has no place in a world where Mr. Darling exists. Not being willing to compromise, Peter will never have the place that those who are willing to compromise may inhabit.

In the end, Peter, as both an individual and as an image of this particular *fin de siècle* obsession, is ultimately unattainable. He provides a catalyst to transition for children moving toward adulthood, pushing girls into maternity and giving boys an adventurous experience to hold on to. But he is unwilling and unable to transition himself. We may argue as to whether this is an active refusal or if his character is simply not created in such a way as to be capable of choosing to transition and grow up. Regardless, Peter as the embodiment of a fixation on childhood, perpetuated as a means of escape for adults held captive by the tight constraints of the ideology of separate spheres that they grew up with, shows the dangerous and tragic fate of this fascination taken to its extreme. The introduction to the Oxford edition of *Peter and Wendy* highlights the theme of transition and movement throughout the work, with Peter Hollindale claiming that “the rhythms of change are everywhere in the *Peter Pan* stories, even the eventuality of death itself. The true imaginative current of the stories is the one that we all know, in childhood and in adult life alike” (xxvii). Indeed, the simple fact of change is, perhaps, the one clear constant within society. The theme of transition—not the desire, but the inherent need for

it—is central to Barrie's story.

Conclusion

That One Joy

Within Barrie's *Peter Pan*, we see and experience the tension of transition for children and adults, both male and female. The question of why this work has so long enthralled those who witness it is a complex question to answer, and the answer is far from thorough or complete. Perhaps though, just as life itself, with all of its ceaseless movement and tension between times and spaces, is messy and in a state of inconclusiveness, so the story of Peter and his adventures should remain in the same state. The work is certainly an exploration of many striking cultural emphases along with their negative ramifications. Taken one at a time, each character seems to offer some level of commentary on particular facets of the ideology of separate spheres, the obsession with childhood, and a society's hesitancy to grow up.

For Barrie, having grown up in the midst of the reign of Victorian ideals, Mrs. Darling perfectly exemplifies everything such a woman should be. She is every inch a mother, yet nothing more. She lives and acts solely for the betterment of her children, yet she does not quite offer enough in the way of femininity. Her lack of identity as anything other than maternal is a cause for mourning, shown subtly in the characterization of Mrs. Darling. We can easily imagine her as a girl, and we can nearly see it when she romps with her children. But the key aspect of girlhood in relation to Mrs. Darling is the loss of it, and the mourning of that loss. The characters themselves within the work serve as evidence of the ideology of the time; Barrie has left no facet of the ideals unrepresented in his work. But in doing so, he has also revealed the many problems with such a strictly formed set of principles that do not account for aspects of the woman separate from maternity. We mourn the loss of Mrs. Darling's girlhood and wish for an escape for her daughter from such a tragic fate. And as a result, we have a story of children flying away

to escape adulthood in the Victorian world.

Just as Barrie includes characters highlighting the ideal for the Victorian woman through representation and contrast, he also does the same for the ideal Victorian man. While the loss of girlhood may be greater, within the domestic sphere, the woman also carries a more central role. Indeed, the role of the man is almost entirely subverted, especially in the image of Mr. Darling eventually choosing to reside in the dog kennel, lowering himself even past a place of a human and to that of a pet within the home. The ideology of separate spheres pushed the position of the man out, and left him to take on the identity similar to that of a child. And while this push may at first occur in contrast to the adult male's position, it eventually allows the man simply to refuse to grow up at all within the domestic sphere. Instead, the boys may remain just boys within the home while their female counterparts are pushed into maternity.

Such a push is the case for Wendy, the girl at the center of it all. She is the reason Peter flies in through the nursery window, searching for a motherly figure. Wendy moves from the place of childhood, the nursery, to Neverland, a liminal space in which she may explore the fate of maternity awaiting her in Victorian England. By the end of the work, she has replaced her own mother and must watch and weep as her own daughter, Jane, leaves for the liminal space with Peter, the boy who never moves past childhood. Though Wendy's loss is great, she has appropriately mourned her girlhood in order to accept and embrace her maternity, just as her own mother did before her. Throughout the work, Wendy is given the time and space to mourn her childhood while she prepares for the seemingly inevitable fate the ideology of separate spheres will demand from her.

By nature, human beings grow and change, nearly constantly. The ability to learn and grow from day to day is what marks the movement from childhood into adulthood. Van Gennep

claims that society is made up of clusters of groups—that more civilized societies are characterized by how closely related their various groups are and how fluidly, even unknowingly, one may transition from one group to the next (1). He says that "[t]he life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another. . . .Wherever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts" (2-3). Thus, the ability and willingness simply to follow the line of transitions and to participate in the societal acts which move a person from one stage of life to the next are implicitly built into the structure of any given society. The stages of life may differ from culture to culture, as well as the acts that must occur in order for transition to take place, but the need for movement is the same. Without movement, change, or transition, we cannot exist within society—we have no place.

Barrie closes his work with a striking and tragic scene that gives us the briefest sense of conclusion, though what that conclusion may be is difficult to say. As the Darling children are reunited with their Victorian parents, Peter stares in from the window, the only observer of the joyous occasion: "There could not have been a lovelier sight; but there was no one to see it except a strange boy who was staring in at the window. He had ecstasies innumerable that other children can never know; but he was looking through the window at the one joy from which he must for ever be barred" (*PW* 214). Thus we see that, despite the faults of the Victorian family unit and the discontinuity for who the Darling children will grow up to become, they have an existence within reality that allows for community, imbalanced and imperfect as it may be. But Peter, who cannot grow up and cannot exist within society, cannot, therefore, experience any of the benefits. Such is the only conclusion Barrie seems to offer, and the tragic fate of Peter Pan.

Works Cited

Altick, Richard. *Victorian People and Ideas*. New York: Norton, 1973. Print.

Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan and Other Plays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

---. Introduction. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and *Peter and Wendy*. By Peter Hollindale. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. vii-xxviii. Print.

---. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and *Peter and Wendy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Birkin, Andrew. *JM Barrie and the Lost Boys*. London: Yale UP, 2003. Print.

Burnett, Francis Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. New York: Signet, 2003. Print.

Clark, Emily. "The Female Figure in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*: The Small and the Mighty." *Peter Pan In and Out of Time*. ed. Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006. 303-19. Print.

Coats, Karen. "Child-Hating: *Peter Pan* in the Context of Victorian Hatred." *Peter Pan In and Out of Time*. ed. Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006. 3-22. Print.

Egan, Michael. "The Neverland of Id: Barrie, *Peter Pan*, and Freud." *Children's Literature* 10.1 (1982): 37-55. *JSTOR.* Web. 30 July 2013.

Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. XIV. Ed. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1999. 243-58. Print.

Fox, Paul. "The Time of His Life: Peter Pan and the Decadent Nineties." *Peter Pan In and Out of Time*. ed. Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006. 23-45. Print.

G. K. C. "*Peter Pan* as a Novel (Book Review)." *The Nation* 18 Nov. 1911: 314. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 Jan. 2013.

Grahame, Kenneth. "The Lost Centaur." *Pagan Papers*. London: Bodley Head, 1898. 175-84. Print.

---. "The Rural Pan." *Pagan Papers*. London: Bodley Head, 1898. 65-71. Print.

---. *The Wind in the Willows*. New York: Scribner, 1908. Print.

Kincaid, James. *Child-Loving: the erotic child and Victorian culture*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: a reader's history, from Aesop to Harry Potter*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008. Print.

Mew, Egan. "'Peter Pan' at the Duke of York's Theatre." *Academy and Literature* Jan. 14, 1913: 14. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 Jan 2013.

Nelson, Claudia. *Boys will be Girls: the feminine ethic and British children's fiction, 1857-1917.* London: Rutgers UP, 1991. Print.

---. *Invisible Men: fatherhood in Victorian periodicals, 1850-1910.* Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1995. Print.

"Pan." *World Mythology: Handbook of Classical Mythology*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004. *Credo Reference*. Web. 20 Feb. 2014.

Patmore, Coventry. *The Angel in the House*. London: Cassell, 1891. *Project Gutenberg*. Web. 18 Jan. 2014.

"Peter Pan Again (Book Review)." *The Spectator* 18 Nov. 1911: 833. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 Jan. 2013.

Pomerance, Murray. "Tinker Bell, the Fairy of Electricity." *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan*

in the Popular Imagination. ed. Allison B. Kavey and Lester D. Freeman. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2009. 13-49. Print.

Reynolds, Kimberly. *Children's Literature: from the* fin de siècle *to the new millennium*. London: Northcote, 2012. Print.

Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1984. Print.

Rose, Jonathan. *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1986. Print.

Roth, Christine. "Babes in Boy-Land: J. M. Barrie and the Edwardian Girl." *Peter Pan In and Out of Time*. ed. Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006. 47-67. Print.

Ruskin, John. "Of Queen's Gardens." *Essays: English and American*. ed. Charles W. Eliot. New York: P. F. Collier, 1909. *Bartleby.com*. Web. 18 Jan. 2014.

Steinbach, Susie L. *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. London: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Tosh, John. *A Man's Place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England*. London: Yale UP, 1999. Print.

---. "New Men? The Bourgeois Cult of Home." *History Today* (Dec. 1996): 9-15. *ProQuest*. Web. 12 June 2013.

Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1960. Print.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. New York: Methuen, 1984. Print.

Wiggins, Kayla McKinney. "More Darkly down the Left Arm: The Duplicity of Fairyland in the Plays of J. M. Barrie." *Peter Pan In and Out of Time*. ed. Donna R. White and C. Anita

Tarr. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006. 79-104. Print.

W. T. S. “Peter Pan.” *Academy and Literature* 7 Jan. 1905: 19-20. *ProQuest*. Web. 9 Jan. 2013.

Wullschlager, Jackie. *Inventing Wonderland: the lives and fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J. M. Barrie, Kenneth Grahame, and A. A. Milne*. New York: Free Press, 1995. Print.