SENTIMENTALITY OR SATIRE: A STUDY OF VICTORIAN CULTURE AS SEEN THROUGH J.M. BARRIE'S PETER PAN

by

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Traditionally viewed as a children's story, J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan has become an integral part of American culture. This thesis argues that Peter Pan is indeed much more than a children's tale; it is an intense satire of late Victorian values and norms. Through a study of the novel's characters and the narrator, we find that Peter Pan reveals many of the gender roles and expectations of both men and women in late nineteenth century Britain.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION....................................1

II. THE MOTHER-WOMEN..............................8
A Study of Victorian Ideals

III. MEN, BOYS, AND BRITAIN.......................31
Rebellion and Conformity in the
Victorian era.

IV. CONCLUSION....................................47

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY..................................51

INTRODUCTION

A story of youth and adventure, of pirates and fairies, of Never Never Lands, *Peter Pan* is James Barrie's vision of the land of a child's mind and the thoughts of a child's imagination. For anyone with a taste for the fantastic and the marvelous, *Peter Pan* is an essential piece of literature, a work of art, a wonder of creativity. So significant is the place of *Peter Pan* in children's literature that it has become a piece of folklore, the story being familiar to even those who have never read it, "Peter Pan holds a peculiar position: his is the only story of recent centuries to escape from literature into folklore" (Green 1960, 34).

For the past fifty years, however, there have been few literary studies or critiques on *Peter Pan*, either the novel or the play. Why has the level of critical interest in James Barrie and his greatest work, *Peter Pan*, declined so sharply after such a steady flow of analysis (Roy, Braybrooke, Moult)? Why is there not a single analysis to be found of the characters in Barrie's story, except Peter? Though its principal audience has always been children, *Peter Pan* may be read from a "grown-up" point of view as well.

The recent lack of critical interest in *Peter Pan* is not a result of children growing away from the novel but a result of adult readers disregarding its importance. Critics often describe the literature of James Barrie as "touching" or "sentimental". According to Braybrooke, Barrie's literature is on a very surface level: "Barrie does not set out very seriously to attack modern problems, he rather gives us his philosophy of whimsicality" (161). Blake notes that simplicity was a characteristic of the Scottish population in general, "to escape back into the comprehensible conditions of the way things were, away from newness" (18). In a very subtle fashion, Barrie's novel disproves the opinions of both of these critics. Peter Pan is full of innuendo and irony, both of which are neatly covered up by a precise adherence to a norm. The novel addresses social issues, but in a manner that is often contradictory, leaving the reader in a position in which he is unsure of the author's intention. Peter Pan is a lovely portrayal of childhood on one level, but its ability to be read on other levels makes it much more than that. It is one author's interpretation of life in the high-Victorian period which, rather than depicting an "escape", as Blake professes, is a return to the middle class home and a study of the roles of the women, men and children therein. Barrie's study goes even further than the home, commenting on British society and politics as well. It is through his characters that Barrie illustrates the social elements of _Peter Pan_. According to Green, "The charm of Barrie's work lies in the style and characterization" (1960, 25), rather than in the plot. I agree with Green that Barrie's characters are more important than the story line. It is through Mrs. Darling and Wendy, Peter Pan, Captain Hook, Mr. Darling and the narrator, that Barrie depicts a philosophy of life that was, by the date of the play's production, almost nonexistent. The characters expose the reader to the roles, expectations, and politics of the high Victorian period (Note that hereafter the use of Victorian will denote the period ranging from 1860-1890). It is through a study of these essential elements of _Peter Pan_, the characters, that we can realize the novel's importance as a depiction of contrasting ideas about women, men, children, families, and politics which were at work in the Victorian period.

The evolution of the Peter Pan story is a tale in itself. "All Barrie's life led up to the creation of _Peter Pan_" says one biographer (Green 1960, 34). The reality of that statement becomes apparent as one pours through different works by and about James Matthew Barrie. In his _To The Five: A Dedication_, which precedes the first published edition of the play _Peter Pan_, Barrie says that the first thoughts of _Peter Pan_ came to him as a child, playing in an old washing house outside of his childhood home in Kirriemuir, Scotland. As a boy, Barrie was impressed with the adventure stories that he read by Robert Lewis Stevenson and Fenimore Cooper (one sees the origination of ideas about islands and Indians). As Green asserts:

> Fairy tale and adventure story, legend and history, yielded scrapes of glass that would fall into place in the kaleidoscope if his mind to form the picture that was to be Peter Pan (1960 38).

The actual creation of the fairy-boy Peter Pan first began in Kensington Gardens through stories Barrie told to his young neighbors, the Davies boys. In his To The Five: A Dedication, Barrie says to the Davies children:

> As for myself, I suppose that I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you (1935, 3).

The adventures of Barrie and the Davies one summer at Black Lake, a partial realization of the stories Barrie once told in Kensington Gardens, became the subject for a pictorial narrative called the Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island. Barrie later turned parts of Boy Castaways into the story of an elderly bachelor's befriending of a young boy, once again in Kensington Gardens, called The Little White Bird, published in 1902. Barrie would later extract six chapters from that novel to publish Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens in 1906. Peter Pan first appeared in its dramatic form in 1904, at the Duke of York Theater, London. The play was a great success and came to be a part of the London Christmas tradition. The drama was converted into a novel, Peter and Wendy, which first appeared in 1911. It became Peter Pan and Wendy in 1921, then simply Peter Pan, in 1950. The play was published in 1928 (the novel Peter Pan had been published seventeen years earlier), at which time Barrie made many additions and subtractions from the original manuscript (Green 1960, 45). Not included in the play are the final chapters of the novel, which are a sort of sequel to the original story. When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought, published after Barrie's death, in 1958, is a one act play that covers, not surprisingly, what happened when Wendy grew up. Thus one may see that Peter Pan is a novel that developed with its author and his society, a fact that is well represented in the novel's themes.

There remains to be addressed the question of why I chose the novel Peter Pan rather than the play as my primary source. Because of the dates of publication (the novel was published before the play), and because the published play is quite different from Barrie's creation for the stage, I consider the novel the more precise of the two works. Additionally, the great charm of Barrie's work is found in the beauty of his language and the creative manner of his expression. Some of the novel's greatest speeches, especially those that are social commentaries, are relegated to mere stage directions in the play. As one goes to the theater to see acting rather than to read, such lines placed in stage directions lose all of their charm and, moreover, any meaning they may hold. Barrie himself says, "In a play, we must tell nothing that is not revealed by the spoken word; you must find out all you want to know from it" (Moult 155). The play is not the novel, however. We quickly learn, through the narrator's commentary, that a great deal is revealed in the novel that cannot be categorized as "spoken word".

Shifting from the play _Peter Pan_ to the novel, the narrator evolves from a stage direction to a character. His voice becomes the voice of society, or at least one faction of it. It is clearly the narrator's commentary that makes the novel so noticeably Victorian and at the same time so anti-Victorian. He gives one a true sense of the contrary forces that were raging in this time period. His voice is that of an adult male, a voice that is often ironic or cynical, especially when describing activities that perpetuated Victorian "norms". It is through this rather unusual character that Barrie expresses the Victorian attitudes with which the novel abounds, ideas that may or may not be his own. The narrator, more than the author, is the one who defines roles, creates expectations, and alternately praises and criticizes the novel's characters. He adds a great deal of insight into their personalities, biased though it may be. According to Rose, the narrator's role in the novel is too harsh. She argues that Barrie separates the child reader from the novel by using adult language which, when directed toward an inexperienced audience, may be considered manipulative (74). The narrator's language is in an adult voice, admittedly, yet I do not believe this alienates the child reader. The subtle innuendos in the narrator's voice would be missed by a young reader; it is unlikely that he or she would comprehend the irony that Rose considers manipulative. Barrie placed the adult narrator in this *children's* novel (for who ever said that is all Peter Pan is?) for an explicit reason: to raise certain social questions. It is largely due to his role that we cannot cast Peter Pan aside with the label of "sentimental".

THE MOTHER WOMEN: A STUDY OF VICTORIAN IDEALS

Barrie's female characters are intriguing, in terms of both personality and desires. Although on the surface Peter Pan may appear to be a novel that emphasizes men and male roles, the role of women is equally, if not more, important. Placed in a position of role fulfillment, the female characters are always trying to make things as they "should be". Barrie's women are fairly predictable, following a Victorian standard of behavior and clearly representing a stabilizing force. Neither Mrs. Darling nor Wendy are terribly adventurous. As much as they may play the role of protectress or problem solver, they are the objects of a great deal of protection themselves. The women have an undeniable power, yet it is a power that is normally relegated to household matters, such as bedtime and table manners. The reality of the female character's role in this novel is one that is largely shaped by the men who, paradoxically, they take care of. While the role of a female child might be to observe her mother, it was the role of the mother to observe, and fulfill, every need of the family's male members:

> My father seemed to me a very important person and this glamour and prestige were largely due to the general attitude of the womenfolk of the house towards him. In my mother's opinion everything

> he did was right, everything he said had the weight of divine revelation and it would not have occurred to her that any one could doubt that every word he uttered was inspired by perfect wisdom. She considered it right that the life of a wife, that the life of all women in a household, should revolve around its male head. Nurse, the maids, even Lizzie the cook, accepted this attitude without question, and everything went smoothly. (Dyhouse 1986, 32)

Barrie's women are not the "movers and shakers". They are what the Victorian period demanded.

The paragon that one refers to with the phrase "perfect lady" or "ideal" Englishwoman is a lady who was "'neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind' a girl who, when she married, 'would be her husband's friend and companion but never his rival...a tender mother, and industrious housekeeper, a judicious mistress'" (Crow 196). As recalled by a woman of the day:

> For the men were the money-lords; and since for almost every family the community values were fundamentally economic, it followed that their women were dependents. They existed for their husbands and fathers' sakes and their lives were shaped to please masculine vanity (Dyhouse 1986, 32).

Being utterly dependent on her husband, the Victorian woman reflected him in every manner. She was a breathing symbol of his wealth, his values, and his uprightness: "...the Victorian wife was to provide the proper environment of respectability. She became the guardian of morality, the citadel of respectability...she was righteous, gentle, sympathetic, and most of all submissive." (Branca 7). The nineteenth century in England was a period of great wealth, a period in which the middle classes rose greatly, both financially and socially. A desire to raise oneself, to acquire the "paraphernalia of gentility", became almost obsessive in the middle classes. According to Branca, "The 'Perfect Lady' was an important element of the "paraphernalia of gentility'" (6). Visions of the "perfect lady" will not be uncommon in this analysis. She is certainly present, embodied in the female characters of Peter Pan and challenged through the voice of the narrator.

In 1896, James Barrie published what may be the basis of his female characters in a memoir of his mother's life, Margaret Ogilvy, by Her Son J.M. Barrie. It is a touching novel that gives one a view of Barrie's mother as he remembers her from childhood and on. The book is more valid as a way to observe Barrie's view of his mother and her life than as a biographical tool (as one is not certain when and if Barrie is fictionalizing). For the purpose of this thesis, it is useful to compare the mother characters in both Margaret Ogilvy and Peter Pan. It is certain that the roots to both Mrs. Darling and Wendy are to be found in the story of Margaret Ogilvy's life. It is interesting, but not surprising, that Barrie's created mother shares a great deal with his real mother. Regarding his female characters, Barrie admits in Margaret Ogilvy, "She [Margaret Ogilvy] was not meant to be you when I began. Mother, what a way you have of creeping in!" (1897, 176). Perhaps the desire that runs throughout Peter Pan both to have a mother and to idealize her, on the part of nearly all the characters, has its beginnings in Barrie's view of mothers and their role which, of course, began with his own.

Mrs. Darling, the mother of Wendy, Michael, and John, is portrayed as nothing less than the perfect mother, an image that is vital throughout the novel. She is lovely, charming, and fun. She is certainly the one who brings peace and harmony into the household. She is creative, able to do a great deal with very little money, a wonderful story teller, and dearly loved by all her children, despite the fact that they desert her for a time. All of these qualities are ones that Mrs. Darling shares with both Margaret Ogilvy and the Victorian stereotype of the "perfect lady".

Introducing Mrs. Darling, the narrator tells one that she is "a lovely lady, with a romantic mind and a sweet mocking mouth" (Barrie 1985, 1). One quickly learns an important duty of this ideal mother:

> It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the

> day. If you could keep awake (but of course you can't) you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her. It is quite like tidying up drawers. 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...when you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on. (Barrie 1985, 5).

The role of the mother in Peter Pan, as evidenced in the above description, is partially to keep evil and naughtiness out of her children's minds. Their "prettier thoughts" are to be kept in the forefront. This sort of ideology, as expressed by the narrator, is typical of a period that wanted to paint everything picture perfect, a period in which sexuality, emotions, and passions were to be quietly suppressed in the home. The above passage is one means by which the narrator creates the image of a "good mother". Martha Vicinus, in her book Suffer and Be Still, further defines what the Victorians considered a "good mother":

> The cornerstone of Victorian society was the family; the perfect lady's sole function was marriage and procreation. All her education was to bring out her "natural" submission to authority and innate maternal instincts (1973, x).

Mrs. Darling fills Vicinus' definition nicely. The very ideal of the period might have been shaped from her character.

The narrator suggests one somewhat mysterious way by which Mrs. Darling deviates from the normal Victorian standard; her "kiss". The kiss is never defined; one only knows that it is the part of Mrs. Darling that Mr. Darling can never get, the part of her that refuses to speak badly of Peter, even after he has taken her children away. The narrator tells one that "She [Mrs. Darling] had believed in him [Peter] at the time, but now that she was married and full of sense she rather doubted whether there was any such person" (Barrie 1985, 7). Perhaps Mrs. Darling is really not so "full of sense" that she no longer believes in imagination and Never Never Lands. This may be why she refuses to dislike Peter; there is a part of him that is still within her. Similarly, Barrie says of his own mother, "There was always something of a child in her, and her laugh was its voice" (1897, 18). Margaret Ogilvy's laugh and Mrs. Darling's kiss are a great deal alike: they are the spirit of youth that Barrie demands of all of his characters. Even the name that Barrie gives to his adult characters, Darling, brings to mind childish qualities. In one of the stage directions from the play Peter Pan, Barrie confirms this idea: "All the characters, whether grown-ups or babes, must wear a child's outlook on life as their only important adornment. If they cannot help being funny, they are begged to go away" (1935, I.i). As we find later, there is indeed a quality of youth to all of the characters in Peter Pan.

As becomes fairly evident to the adult reader of Peter Pan, a large part of Mrs Darling's role is this novel is invisible, without scenes or lines. She is the image of motherhood and all it symbolizes for both Barrie and his characters. Whether she is present or not, Mrs. Darling's spirit pervades the novel, especially in the character of her daughter, Wendy. Much as Barrie idealizes his own mother, so too he idealizes his mother characters. One such incidence of this arises involving the issue of the constancy of a mother's love. According to the Peter Pan legend, Peter flew away from his mother as a child, yet when he finally decided to return to her, the window was closed. Through it, Peter sees his mother with another child; apparently she has forgotten him. This is a notion that never occurs to Wendy, who has different thoughts on the matter: "If you knew how great is a mother's love," Wendy told them triumphantly, "you would have no fear.", and then,

> "You see," Wendy said complacently, "our heroine knew that the mother would always leave the window open for her children to fly back by; so they stayed away for years and had a lovely time" (Barrie 1985, 105).

Luckily the Darling children do not have the same fate as

Peter with regard to mothers. Though the narrator is angry with the Darling children for flying away, Mrs. Darling never thinks a cross thought about them in their absence. The narrator enters the story at one point, wishing to tell Mrs. Darling that her children, "the brats", are on their way home, which would of course keep them from being able to surprise her. He stops himself, however, with a somewhat satirical comment:

> We are beginning to know Mrs. Darling by this time, and may be sure that she would upbraid us for depriving the children of their little pleasure.
>
> "But, my dear madam, it is ten days till Thursday week; so that by telling you what's what, we can save you ten days of unhappiness."
>
> "Yes, but at what a cost! By depriving the children of ten minutes of delight."
>
> "Oh, if you look at it that way."
>
> "What other way is there in which to look at it?"
>
> You see, the woman had no proper spirit. I had meant to say extraordinarily nice things about her; but I despise her, and not one of them will I say now. She does not really need to be told to have things ready, for they are ready. All the beds are aired, and she never leaves the house, and observe, the window is open. (Barrie 1985, 149).

Though the narrator says that Mrs. Darling has "no proper spirit" and that he despises her, there is some question as to the true meaning of his words. Maybe his dislike is directed toward the Victorian "norm". On the other hand, it is possible that the narrator is ironical when he says that he despises Mrs. Darling; perhaps he actually admires her consistent love of her children. We know that the role Mrs. Darling fills is just one part of the mold that a larger power called society has cast for her. The narrator certainly enforces the then current idea that Victorian womanhood is dependent on children. According to Branca, "In her role as mistress of the house, in her relationship with domestics and most importantly, in her role as mother, the middle-class woman of the nineteenth century defined herself." (144). Clearly Mrs. Darling is no exception to this rule of self-definition. As the narrator predicted, Mrs. Darling is indeed waiting for her children in the nursery, as always, when they return. She happily takes them into her arms, "the three little selfish children", as the narrator calls them.

At one moment the narrator finds the mother figure a delightful, wonderful woman, at the next she is a foolish female who cannot go on with her life without the "brats". The narrator's opinions reflect the contrasting ideas that emerged toward the end of the Victorian age. One critic suggests that Barrie has a "mother-fixation" (Blake 61). Another critic, referring to the paragon position of Barrie's mother-women, says he "has a philosophy of womanhood and honors them far more than they deserve"

(Braybrooke 161). Barrie does have a definite interest in the mother role, whether it be a "fixation" or not. We wonder at times whether Barrie challenges or maintains the position of traditional motherhood in Peter Pan. His female characters consistently fall into the "norms" that were prescribed for (most of) nineteenth-century womanhood and motherhood. The fact that Barrie's characters are emulations of his mother, whom he portrays in Margaret Ogilvy as the perfect image of Victorian womanhood, leads one to believe that Barrie's efforts lean in the direction of maintaining what was, by 1904, a decaying *status quo*. During the author's lifetime, the position of women in all levels of British society altered dramatically:

> 'The perfect lady', who combined total sexual innocence, conspicuous consumption, and the worship of the family hearth for the greater part of the nineteenth century became, in the last portion of the century the 'perfect woman' who continued to hold chastity as an ideal, but made it equally applicable to men as to women. The new woman worked, sought education and fought for legal and political rights.(Vicinus 1973, ix).

Barrie's characters are conceived from an image of women that dominated the greater part of the Victorian period. The narrator, earlier referred to as the voice of the period, has views that do not support the traditional role women in the nineteenth century. He scoffs at mothers for being loyal, passive characters, ridicules the Darlings desire to rise socially and financially, and often thinks children are "brats". One does not know whether Barrie's views are expressed through the narrator. However, one does not know that they are not. Whether the narrator's comments reflect Barrie's opinion on the standards of Victorian womanhood is less important than the fact that, by including such satirical remarks, he raises questions on the subject of women's roles in his own lifetime; this is a challenging feat in a period marked with both great change and strong convictions.

The great similarities between the roles of mother and daughter in this age makes separating the characters of Wendy Darling and Mrs. Darling a difficult task. Wendy plays the role of both mother and child in this novel. As a child Wendy is wonderfully charming, uninhibited, and mother-like. As a mother she is an imitation in miniature of her mother and, perhaps, Barrie's ideal. Just as the adult Margaret Ogilvy is present in Mrs. Darling, so is the child Margaret Ogilvy is present in Wendy. Barrie says of his literature:

> The reason my books deal with the past instead of with the life I myself have known is simply this, that I soon grow tired of writing tales unless I can see a little girl, of whom my mother has told me, wandering confidently through the pages. Such a grip has her memory of her girlhood had upon me since I was a boy (1897, 25)

When Wendy moves to the Never Never Land, she becomes the young mother of Peter, the Lost Boys, and her own brothers. As any good mother would, she tells them stories (stories first attracted Peter Pan to the Darling nursery), cooks dinner, orders that all hands are washed, darns socks, praises, corrects, and performs other various tasks that define the territory of motherhood. The following describes Wendy's first meeting with the Lost Boys, and the beginning of her role as their mother:

> Then they 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."
>
> "That doesn't matter," said Peter, as if he were the only person present who knew all about it , though he was really the one who knew least. "What we need is just a nice motherly person."
>
> "O dear!" Wendy said, "you see, I feel that is exactly what I am."
> "It is, it is," they all cried; "we saw it at once."
>
> "Very well," she said, "I will do my best. Come inside at once, you naughty children; I am sure your feet are damp. And before I put you to bed I have just time to finish the story of Cinderella." (Barrie 1985, 67)

Wendy falls easily into the role of mother. Though her precise age is not given in the novel, we may accurately approximate Wendy to be between eight and ten. Interestingly, Margaret Ogilvy lost her mother and became the mistress of her household at age eight, "After doing cooking, ironing, and cleaning, she would...rush out in a fit of childishness to play with...others of her age" (Barrie 1985, 29). Wendy is a good deal like both the child-mother Margaret Ogilvy once was and the adult mother whom she imitates, Mrs. Darling.

Barrie's presentation of the mother figure is always that of a problem solver and a protectress. Early in the story, Mr. Darling enters the nursery in a fit of rage because he cannot tie his bow tie. Mrs. Darling quietly ties it, soothing him as one would a child. This sort of role becomes even more common later in the novel when Wendy becomes the mother figure. Captain Hook, convinced of a way to kill the Lost Boys, says to Smee: "They will find the cake and they will gobble it up, because having no mother, they don't know how dangerous 'tis to eat rich damp cake" (Barrie 1985, 56). Finding that the boys now have a mother, the mighty Hook says in utter defeat, "The game's up", he said, "Those boys have found a mother'" (Barrie 1985, 82). When Peter brings Wendy to Never Never Land, the first comments from the boys also invoke the role of a mother-protector figure, "A lady to take care of us at last" (Barrie 1985, 59). Wendy does take care of the boys. It is not surprising that Wendy wishes to mother them; she is merely following the guidelines that society has set down for her. We note, however, that the boys of Never Never Land expect Wendy to fulfill the mother role; is this another illustration of a societal order? Wendy's role in the novel is clearly established. The Lost Boy's want Wendy to be their mother-caretaker and Wendy wishes to fulfill this position. The wishes of both parties are therefore merged, fulfilling the demands of society.

The expectations of the Lost Boys, in reference to Wendy, establish part of the novel's gender stereotyping; the relationship between Peter and Wendy is yet another part. The first meeting of these two main characters is an exercise in adult female and male role fulfillment, as is evidenced in earlier remarks on the subject of the "Perfect Lady". Peter, unable to reattach his shadow, wakes Wendy with his crying. "'How awful!' she said, but she could not help smiling when she saw that he had been trying to stick it on with soap. How exactly like a boy!'", then, "I'll sew it on for you, my little man.'" (Barrie 1985, 24). It is clearly Wendy, already stepping into the role of a mother figure, who brings order to this situation. Another example in which gender roles are fulfilled occurs when Peter lures Wendy into both the Never Never Land and motherhood:

> "Don't go, Peter," she entreated, "I know such lots of stories."
>
> Those were her precise words, so there can be no denying that it was she who first tempted him.

> He came back, and there was a greedy look in his eyes now which ought to have alarmed her, but did not.
>
> "Oh, the stories I could tell to the boys!" she cried, and then Peter gripped her and began to draw her toward the window.
>
> "Let me go!" she ordered him.
>
> "Wendy, do come with me and tell the other boys."
>
> Of course she was very pleased to be asked, but she said, "Oh dear, I can't. Think of mummy! Besides, I can't fly."
>
> "I'll teach you."
>
> "Oh, how lovely to fly."
>
> "I'll teach you how to jump on the wind's back, and then away we go."
>
> "Oo!" she exclaimed rapturously.
>
> "Wendy, Wendy, when you are sleeping in your silly bed you might be flying about with me saying funny things to the stars."
>
> "Oo!"
>
> "And, Wendy, there are mermaids."
>
> "Mermaids! With tails?"
>
> "Such long tails."
>
> "Oh," cried Wendy, "to see a mermaid!"
>
> He had become frightfully cunning. "Wendy," he said, "how we should all respect you."
>
> She was wriggling her body in distress. It was quite as if she were trying to remain on the nursery floor.
>
> But he had not pity for her.
>
> "Wendy," he said, the sly one, "you could tuck us in at night."
>
> "Oo!"
>
> "None of us has even been tucked in at night."
>
> "Oo," and her arms went out to him.
>
> "And you could darn our clothes, and make pockets for us. None of us has any pockets."
>
> How could she resist. (Barrie 1985, 30-31).

In the context of a twentieth century mentality, we may laugh at the final line in the above dialogue, "How could she resist", but for the narrator to be seriously ironic, as it seems he is, constitutes a definite attack on the expectations of the female caretaker. Being able to darn socks and tuck in half a dozen "lost" boys appeals to Wendy in the most wonderful way. She is going away to a place where she is needed, to a place where she can fill the role that she has already begun to learn from her mother. The narrator tells one "there can be no denying that it was she who first tempted him". This line tells the reader that the role of mother was desired by Wendy rather than cast upon her. It is also a direct reference to the Biblical image of Adam and Eve. The narrator uses that image to place women in a position of guilt that both excuses the role that male society gives them and forces women into their given roles as a sort of retribution. These lines also enable the narrator to belittle women for being in a position that he (society's representative) sees a their own fault.

Why, one may wonder, does Barrie insert a young mother figure, namely Wendy, in his novel, especially since her role is so greatly criticized?. She might have been left out entirely, making the story a tale of boyhood adventure, with no reference to mothers or family life. Barrie could easily have created a novel around Peter, pirates, and a band of boy followers. Why Wendy is not a part of the adventure side of the novel, at least to any great extent, is fairly clear. Though the roles of women were beginning to change in the Victorian period, women and men, or more precisely boys and girls, still lived in very segregated worlds. A very interesting quote by Virginia Woolf, from _A Room of One's Own_, provides an interesting hypothesis about the reason for Wendy's inclusion and prominence in the novel: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size." (Crow 17). Indeed, it is through Wendy that the greatness of Peter is often recognized or exclaimed. Though Wendy may at times dislike Peter for his arrogance, she never speaks a word of reproof to him. This sort of silence by Wendy is an imitation of both her fictional mother and the world from which she comes. According to Dyhouse, "One of the first and most important lessons learned by the young girl in the middle-class home was that the organization of the household revolved around the needs of the male breadwinner" (1986, 30). Much of the emphasis that is placed on the home would be impossible without Wendy's role (and Mrs. Darling's role in London). The existence of a real home is impossible without a mother-woman figure: "As the middle-class man achieved his position in the cruel, harsh, competitive outside world, he sought refuge in his home, which became his sanctuary" (Branca 7). As everything revolved around the desires of men, it was necessarily important that the home, his sanctuary, be maintained. Peter Pan begins in the Darling home and ends there. In the large space between, Wendy creates a home for her brothers, the Lost Boys, and Peter in Never Never Land. Barrie's novel makes clear the importance of the Victorian home while at the same time the narrator criticizes it. Once again, the presentation of the ideal clashes with the anecdotes of the narrator.

Though Wendy plays both mother and child in the world of the Never Never Land, it is the role that centers around the home, that of the mother, that dominates her life. Accompanying motherhood is typically wifehood. In the situation of Wendy and her "boys", being a mother comes much more easily than being a wife. Wendy's feelings are very confused when it comes to the role of Peter, who plays the father in this charade. Immersed in her position as mother, Wendy wants a further relationship with Peter--one that, at the least, is an imitation of a husband-wife relationship, and taken further, may involve some sexual feelings.

Sexuality was not a subject with which middle class women of Wendy's day were well acquainted, thus the confusion she feels toward Peter. In the chapter called "The Happy Home", this confusion becomes overt. The dialogue in this section is extremely stereotypical and the comments of the narrator are extremely sarcastic. The children want Peter and Wendy to dance, to which Wendy responds, "the mother of such an armful, dance!'" and Peter says, "People of our figure, Wendy'". At one point, the couple steps aside and Peter says to Wendy, "Ah, old lady...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.'" (Barrie 1985, 99). The couple sound like they have been living together for years, hardly like two playful children. Peter and Wendy enjoy this game playing and, because it is just "pretend", are secure from the stronger emotions that accompany the realities of parenthood and sexuality. Peter is happily a part of the mother-father game as long as it is just pretend, a game. When he feels that Wendy is becoming more serious than he about the "game", Peter becomes very uncomfortable:

> "Peter, what is it?"
> "I was just thinking," he said, a little scared,. "It is only make-believe isn't it, that I am their father?"
> "Oh yes," Wendy said primly.
> "You see," he continued apologetically, "it would make me seen so old to be their real father."
> "But they are ours, Peter, yours and mine."
> "But not really, Wendy?" he asked anxiously.
> "Not if you don't wish it," she replied; and she distinctly heard his

> sigh of relief. "Peter," she asked, trying to speak firmly, "what are your exact feelings for me?"
>
> "Those of a devoted son, Wendy."
>
> "I thought so," she said, and went and sat by herself at the extreme end of the room.
>
> "You are so queer," he said, frankly puzzled, "and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother."
>
> "No, indeed, it is not," Wendy replied with frightful emphasis. Now we know why she was prejudiced against the redskins.
>
> "Then what is it?"
>
> "It isn't for a lady to tell."
>
> "Oh, very well," Peter said, a little nettled. "Perhaps Tinker Bell will tell me."
>
> "Oh yes, Tinker Bell will tell you.. " (Barrie 1985, 100)

The emotions displayed in the above dialogue are not surprising. Wendy wants Peter to care for her in a deeper sense than he is able. Being a respectable "woman", Wendy will not directly discuss anything of a sexual nature. This sort of sexual inhibition is a characteristic of the Victorian age. Tinker Bell, who is in Wendy's opinion less than a lady, is named as a reference for information. Indeed, it seems that both Tiger Lily and Tinker Bell, two minor characters in the novel, are also interested in a more than platonic relationship with Peter. Peter, of course, being the eternal child, not only does not have the faculties for such relationships as the women desire, but he is not in the least interested. When Peter returns Wendy to her home in London, she asks him, once again, "You don't feel, Peter," she said falteringly, "that you would like to say anything to my parents about a very sweet subject?" (Barrie 1985, 159). Peter still has no inclination toward an adult relationship. Wendy, as has been consistently shown throughout the novel, seeks to fulfill society's expectations: "Marriage and motherhood were Victorian women's 'natural' destiny and it was considered a tragedy if they were not achieved, or if one were achieved without the other." (Lewis 1986, 5). At the moment, unfortunately for her, Wendy sees Peter as a possible means to become both married and remain a mother.

James Barrie sums up what he considers to be the tragedy of his female characters in the following remark:

> In my notebooks all my women are real women so long as they are just in the notebooks--tremendously determined to tell everything about themselves, to enquire into themselves, to cut themselves open. I would scarify you if you knew the things I intended my heroines to say. But they utterly turn away from me and remain that ghastly word, respectable (Roy 190).

Though respectability is not a negative quality, it is a state that Barrie's female characters must retain. In order that they keep this position in the novel, a portion of their characters (and the emotions therein) must necessarily be neglected. Barrie's females are not really whole characters. He disallows the appearance of certain elements, that are part of any personality, in both Mrs. Darling and Wendy (for example, anger or frustration with her children in terms of the former and denial of sexuality in terms of the latter).

Perhaps Barrie never really had a female role model who did not suppress emotions. Perhaps too the insistence on respectability is due to Barrie's tendency to idealize females. The standards of the period in which the author lived must have influenced him as well. Depictions of the Victorian period, which are often negative, represent the great deal of change that was occurring, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The subject of women remained a highly sensitive issue for the obvious reason that the dominant members of society--men--were, for the most part, not interested in the liberation of their wives and daughters, whether it was of an emotional, political, or financial nature. Perhaps Barrie only shows one side of his female characters, the side that was approved of by society, in order to avoid raising major issues. According to Blake, "His literature came to England in a period of wealth and complacency. They did not want to be challenged or criticized; they wanted to be entertained, to be sentimental." (18).

Still refusing to write Barrie's work off as "sentimental", we cannot forget the role of the narrator in this scenario. Always questioning or satirizing, he is the voice of discontent, a means of expressing the changing ideals toward which Britain was moving. When the narrator of Peter Pan is angry with Mrs. Darling, he is angry at her respectability, not her lack of it. Throughout Peter Pan, Wendy stays respectable as well. Always appropriate, a "good girl", she never says or does anything worthy of shame, yet she is still the object of the narrator's cynicism. The narrator may wish to move away from the "perfect lady" image to the "perfect (or modern) woman". The author will not let him; he keeps his female characters in a neat Victorian mode. Perhaps Barrie, through his characters, is battling the changes that were occurring in his society. Perhaps, contrarily, he attacks nineteenth-century society in way that does not allow his name to be directly attached to any criticism. The narrator personifies change while the norm is embodied by Mrs. Darling and Wendy. Though society eventually wins the battle for change, in Peter Pan, it *appears* that the author (the norm) conquers.

MEN, BOYS, AND BRITAIN: REBELLION AND CONFORMITY IN THE VICTORIAN ERA.

Unlike the female characters, Peter Pan does not typify what would be considered "normal" behavior in the novel that is his namesake. Peter is again and again described as the eternal boy, a quality that constitutes the basis of his character. Peter is irresponsible, nonconformist, and adventurous. He does not follow the expectations of Victorian society or of Never Never Land (few though they may be). Boyishness, the foundation of Peter, is a quality that is present in the other male characters as well. Barrie uses the adult males in Peter Pan, Mr. Darling and Captain Hook, as sounding boards for the narrator's not very subtle remarks on society as a whole. Much as the women's roles in the novel define various attitudes held by Victorian society, the roles of Barrie's men help make this picture more complete. Whether he is trying to fulfill society's expectations, as is Mr. Darling, or to defy them, as is Peter, or to perpetuate them, as is Captain Hook, the male characters in Peter Pan open yet another Pandora's Box in this analysis.

Peter Pan is without a doubt the dominant male figure in the novel. Indeed, the first line of Peter Pan begins with the very quality that defines him, "All children grow up, except one" (Barrie 1985, 1). Peter is certainly Barrie's most unique character, and to many his most fascinating. Unlike other of Barrie's characters, Peter is a creation that critics have commented on extensively. From literature to drama to psychology he is known and studied for his ability to avoid growing up. Perhaps Peter's charm lies in his defiance of nature and the expected: "Peter symbolizes the human desire to be what one isn't (or to have what one has not)" (Braybrooke 121). Another critic says that it is through Peter that Barrie was, "Destined to help the world discover afresh the vital unalterable truth...that in art, as in religion, men seek first for the things that life cannot give them" (Moult 2). Indeed, eternal youth and flight are not a part of man's existence. Even though the more common activities of Peter Pan and his band, such as adventures with Indians, pirates, and fairies, are longed for by many, they are typically never met.

The narrator begins the portrait of Peter Pan as he appears in the Darling nursery: "He was a lovely boy, clad in skeleton leaves and the juices that ooze out of trees; but the most entrancing thing about him was that he had all his first teeth." (Barrie 1985, 10). As one may recall from previous dialogues, the personality of Peter is quite arrogant. After Wendy has reattached his shadow, Peter exclaims over his own cleverness happily. It is of course Wendy's cleverness that is responsible, but one learns quickly that self-praise is a large part of Peter's personality: "It is humiliating to have to confess that this conceit of Peter was one of his most fascinating qualities. To put is with brutal frankness, there never was a cockier boy" (Barrie 1985, 24). When Peter returns to the island with the Darling children, he says to the Lost Boys, "I am back, why do you not cheer?" (Barrie 1985, 60). Such arrogance when addressing his followers, the Lost Boys, is not uncommon. The position of the boys is considerably less powerful than Peter's.

In their home of the Never Never Land, a symbol, perhaps, of the British colonial empire, Peter's law rules. Getting what he wants and maintaining absolute power is more important to Peter than the wishes or desires of his followers (much as power and control were important to the British). This philosophy becomes evident when we learn that Peter will not allow the Lost Boys to know anything that he does not know, nor will he allow them to stay in Never Never Land when they begin to grow up (which of course indicates, to Peter, an acceptance of the adult world and a threat to his power).

The cockiness of Peter, ignored by Wendy and almost condoned by the narrator, is a symbol of the attitude that prevailed among Victorian men. As has been expressed, the world of their home and family revolved around them. It would never occur to a woman at this time to confront her husband. Likewise, it would never occur to a man not to be full of wonder and intelligence. As previously noted by Dyhouse, "...everything he did was right, everything he said had the weight of divine revelation" (1986, 32). Such a personality is precisely what Barrie illustrates through the quality of Peter's arrogance.

Peter Pan is self-assured to a grand extent. One of the qualities that emerges from this sort of temperament is Peter's ability to pretend. He is so sure of his world that nothing is really "make-believe" to him. To Peter, everything is real:

> The difference between him [Peter] and the other boys at such a time was that they knew it was make-believe, while to him make-believe and true were exactly the same thing. This sometimes troubled them, as when they had to make believe that they had their dinners (Barrie 1985, 64).

Peter's world is clearly not the same as that of the Lost Boys. The idea that they must go hungry because Peter chooses to have a "pretend" meal, though not tragic, is rather frightening. Peter's ability to ignore reality may be a reflection of the ignorance and complacency that existed in the Victorian period (manifested in such social conditions as child labor, slum growth, and imperialism). As he is content and not hungry, Peter supposes the same to be true for the people who surround him. Again the image of the middle class Victorian male arises.

Part of Peter's obsession with "pretend" stems from his refusal to grow up. His sureness of the ideas of make-believe is founded in the side of his personality that is make-believe. Both his ability to stay forever young, and his desire to stay forever young, are unusual qualities. What child does not want to grow up? Rose suggests that it is more an adult desire (a desire of Barrie's) to have the child stay young than a desire of the child himself (3). Certainly the glimpses of adult life in the novel are not typically pleasant, and we cannot call the adult voice of the narrator inspiring. In his study of Victorian literary trends, Reed suggests:

> The world of children is largely removed to the province of fantasy in the works of...Barrie...This exclusion of the child from the corrupting ways of adulthood, suggests a growing consciousness of the nature of that society's failure and is, to a large extent, a confession of decline (168).

Perhaps Barrie does want to protect Peter, and all children, from the realities that must be faced in an adult world.

Contrasting, perhaps intentionally, to the idea of keeping the children children, however, is the fact that the adventures in Never Never Land are more adult like than child-like. Again the image of the British colonial empire arises. The activities of the children in Never Never Land include battling with the Red Skins, who may be a representation of the conquerored peoples of the British Empire, whether they be "Red Skins", literally, African natives, or Indians (of India). The Lost Boys and their leader, Peter, finally become "friends" with the Red Skins; "They called Peter the Great White Father, prostrating themselves before him; and he liked this tremendously, so that it was not really good for him" (Barrie 95). Though the narrator uses the word "friends", the meaning of the word is rather ironic. The British may have become friendly with the people of their empire, but it was a friendship based on subjugation and power. The picture Barrie provides is clearly allegorical. Peter is the "Great White Father", leading, and the Lost Boys, much like the lost young men who fought the wars that purchased Britain its empire, follow obediently behind. We even have a female figure who fits nicely into this scenario. Mother Wendy's role on the island is to bring order and institute the proper rules and standards of "civilized" living among the poor motherless (Britainless) men. Despite this mixture of boyish adventures with adult realities, however, Peter remains a boy, shocked at the idea of ever having a beard, or a wife, or real children of his own.

Some critics propose that Peter Pan, due to his eternal youth, is a tragic character, and that the basis of his personality is melancholy:

> For the whole essence of Peter Pan is melancholy, it is a symbol of the striving against the inevitable, a striving not to grow up, that we all really wish, though we pretend that we would on no account be children again (Braybrooke 121).

Peter wishes to stay young, and thereby avoid the responsibilities of the adult world and the bounds that the Victorian period placed on grown-ups. Perhaps this is the notion Barrie conceived when he created the legend of Peter, whom he calls his "dream child" (Moult 174). Peter is indeed a "dream child", a conception far from reality. I must disagree with Braybrooke, however, regarding his interpretation of Peter as a melancholy character. Because he is a fictitious character, we cannot conceive of Peter as striving against the inevitable. Alone though he may be in such a state of existence, Peter will remain forever young, as Barrie wished him to be, until another author creates a "grown-up" Peter.

We may recall from previous chapters that Peter Pan has a peculiar attitude when it comes to the domestic realities, an attitude closely associated with his opinion of the adult world. He is not interested, for example, in anything permanent, which to him denotes an acceptance of the adult world and, therefore, possibilities of growing up. Peter may love to play the role of an adult, but he by no means wishes to be one. As much as he may want a mother in the Never Never Land, Peter's opinion of such creatures in other domains is negative, "Peter despised all mothers except Wendy." (Barrie 1985, 73). Peter forbids the lost boys to speak of mothers in his presence. When he takes the Darling boys home, Mrs. Darling asks Peter if he would like to stay with them. Since Mothers are related to conventionality and the gradual process of growing up, Peter's response is not surprising:

> "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." (Barrie 1985, 159).

When given an opportunity to become a part of the real world, Peter declines. Even through he wishes for a mother, Peter is not willing to give up his eternal youth to get one.

Several different forces are at work in this novel on the subject of motherhood, creating an interesting contrast of ideas; an analysis of Peter only makes the subject more complicated. The female characters in Peter Pan are kind, giving, "motherly" types who certainly meet with the definition of respectability, the very quality for which the narrator often despises these mother-women. Peter says he does not care for mothers at all. The narrator says that if Peter ever did have a mother, all he remembers about her now are her bad qualities (a sharp contrast to Wendy's memories of her mother). Though Peter pretends that he does not need a mother and that they are worthless creatures, we see that this is not exactly true. Like everyone else in Barrie's novel, Peter needs someone to protect and comfort him at times, a role that Wendy, as mother, takes on. The narrator informs us that: "He [Peter] had one of his dreams that night, and cried in his sleep for a long time, and Wendy held him tight." (Barrie 1985, 146). Peter allows Wendy to fulfill the role of comforter, but only in an asexual, motherly way; this is a sort of paradox, because motherhood is by definition a sexual role. Wendy, in her position of enforced respectability, will only allow her sexual feelings to go as far as Peter wishes them to go. In the Victorian period, it was the male who defined sexual roles:

> 'Love of home, children, and domestic duties are the only passions they [women] feel. As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him...'(Lewis 1984, 126).

Peter Pan has a great deal of power in the Never Never Land, both because he is a male and because he is a leader. Knowing all of his other qualities, it is surprising to learn that Peter Pan has an incredible sense of fairness (which of course includes his right to be treated fairly). Peter tells John that he would never kill anyone in their sleep. He rescues Tiger Lily from the pirates not because he cares about her; rather, he is appalled at the unfairness of two against one. It is through Peter's relationship with Captain Hook, that this boy-like element of his personality becomes most evident. While fighting with Hook, Peter helps his enemy onto the rock so they will be on equal grounds as opponents. Captain Hook's refusal to "fight fair" is one of the reasons that Peter despises the pirate. Hook is more concerned with the concept of "good form" than fairness, a fact that fits well with his personality we begin to know him.

In a description that is quite fitting, the narrator tells the reader about Captain Hook:

> In person he was cadaverous and blackavized, 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. His eyes were of the blue of the forget-me-not, and of a profound melancholy, save when he was plunging his hook into you, at which time two red spots appeared in them and lit them up horribly. In manner,

> something of the grand seigneur still clung to him, so that he even ripped you up with an air...He was never more sinister when he was most polite, which is probably the truest test of breeding; 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 cast...In dress he somewhat aped the attire of Charles II...But undoubtedly the grimmest part of him was his iron claw. (Barrie 1985, 50)

Captain Hook represents a class of citizen that would otherwise not be represented in Peter Pan-- the aristocrat. The narrator describes Hook as being most sinister when he is most polite and ironically calls this sinister behavior a manifestation of good breeding. Hook is elegant and evil at the same time. His obsession with good form is a part of his "breeding". The reader is told that Hook went to a famous public school, upon whose traditions he still places a great deal of weight. The most significant of these traditions is "good form": "But above all he retained the passion for good form" (Barrie 1985, 129). Throughout the novel Captain Hook refers to the pirates of whom he is captain as his "dogs". The narrator elaborates on this quality, "It was because he [Hook] was so terribly alone. This inscrutable man never felt more alone than when surrounded by his dogs. They were socially so inferior to him" (Barrie 1985, 129). Barrie satirizes the upper classes in this quotation. Though Hook is the most treacherous and dishonest of the pirates, he considers the other pirates the dogs. A weak man, Hook severely manipulates those around him. It is through fear that he is obeyed. Perhaps Barrie intends Hook's character as a direct comment on the upper classes in Britain. The Lost Boys, in the presence of their mother, Wendy, stand up to Hook's bullying, refusing to become pirates if it means they cannot be loyal to the crown. Angry at the Lost Boy's allegiance to the king and to their mother's expectations, they are ordered to walk the plank. Captain Hook has not a single redeeming quality. This fact is singularly important because of what follows Hook's death: Peter Pan puts on the trappings of the pirate and begins to play Hook's role.

Peter's obsession with his arch enemy is not unusual. What is strange is that he wishes to embody him, literally. Barrie makes a strong argument for the power of an example, as these words by the narrator illustrate:

> Some of them wanted it to be an honest ship and others were in favour of keeping it a pirate; but the captain [Peter] treated them as dogs, and they dared not express their wishes to him even in a round robin. Instant obedience was the only safe thing...The general feeling was that Peter was honest just now to lull Wendy's suspicions, but that there might be a change when the new suit was ready, which, against her will, she was making for him out of some of Hook's wickedest garments. It was whispered among them that on the first night he wore this suit he sat long in the cabin with

> Hook's cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which he bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook" (Barrie 1985, 148).

Peter despises Hook for his inability to be fair. Ironically, we find that Peter, now holding Hook's former position, treats the Lost Boys much as Hook once treated the other pirates. Perhaps Peter and Hook are alike. Both are terribly manipulative, misuse power, and have unalterable ideas about the way things are to be done. Much as the male figure of Victorian society is expected to do, these men have the final word. Their command must be obeyed without question. In the case of Peter Pan and Captain Hook, both of whom have very dominating personalities, a leadership position seems rather natural (unfortunate as that may be). What is one to do, however, when the figure to which one is supposed to look to for knowledge and wisdom is far from possessing or seeming to posses the necessary qualities? Such is the case with the novel's father figure, Mr. Darling.

Though the mother figures in Peter Pan are at times criticized for the beliefs they hold, they are always portrayed as sensible, caring, and giving characters. The narrator is not so kind when he speaks of the novel's one real father character, Mr. Darling. Mr. Darling represents the middle class Londoner, the man who wishes to fill all of society's expectations. A stockbroker of sorts, Mr. Darling has an idea of his importance that is quite exaggerated. As the narrator explains:

> Mr. Darling used to boast to Wendy that her mother not only loved him but respected him. He was one of those deep ones who knows about stocks and shares. Of course no one really knows, but he quite seemed to know, and he often said stocks were up and shares were down in a way that would have made any woman respect him (Barrie 1985, 2).

This quote reveals little about Mr. Darling and a great deal about the roles and expectations to which Victorian men aspired: respect, intelligence, and admiration. As the ironical tone of the narrator makes clear, Mr. Darling is far from being the man he pictures himself to be.

Mr. Darling's foolish nature is more prevalent in the novel than any other quality, leading to such tricks as dumping his medicine into Nana's (the children's nurse) food so he will not have to drink it. When the children discover their father's mean trick, they rush to comfort Nana, to which Mr. Darling responds, "'That's right'", he shouted, "'coddle her! Nobody coddles me. Oh dear no! I am only the breadwinner, why should I be coddled, why, why, why!'" (Barrie 1985, 18). Mr. Darling's cry illustrates both his childish nature and his desire for attention. Blaming himself for the children's departure, Mr. Darling lives in Nana's doghouse until they return. His greatest concern is with finances and social position; "Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbors", says the narrator (Barrie 1985, 3). Indeed, Mr. Darling is extremely concerned with what other people think, as the following incident illustrates:

> "I warn you of this, mother, that unless this tie is round my neck we don't go out 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 flung into the streets" (Barrie 1985, 14).

Barrie's portrayal of Mr. Darling is intensely satirical. This is one father (perhaps an example of many) who does not fit into the grand image of the all-knowing, all-powerful, worthy-of-unending-admiration male figure to whom the Victorian period, especially its women, catered. Referring to the Victorian period, one critic asserts, "Man is defined by his capacity for action, aggression, and achievement" (149), yet our only glimpse of Mr. Darling's achievements (as noted, page 42) is ironical. His place in the novel is significant in that it completes Barrie's illustration (satire?) of the Victorian family and all of its complexities. Pretending to describe Mr. Darling as the stereotypical adult male of mid-nineteenth century Britain, the narrator instead makes fun of both Mr. Darling's inability to fulfill the "appropriate" roles and his wish to do so. Mr. Darling's character is useful as a means of illustrating the expectations of Victorian men within the family. His character also provides a direct contrast to the characters of both Peter Pan and Captain Hook. Peter Pan wishes with all his heart never to become like Mr. Darling and Captain Hook holds many of the qualities to which Mr. Darling aspires (gallantry, finesse, and "good" breeding).

The male characters in Peter Pan represent three different sectors of society. Peter is the radical, the boy who will never grow up. His refusal to conform, to grow up, is rebellious rather than escapist, symbolizing an adversity to the imposed rules and expectations of his society. Peter's arch enemy, Captain Hook, strives first and foremost to achieve "good form", the brand of the socially "correct". Mr. Darling lives in the grown-up world Peter despises. He represents the middle classes of London, a group of people who wish to be everything they are not. In the end, Peter symbolically joins the ranks of the elite when he sports the clothing and attitude of Captain Hook. Perhaps Barrie allows here that the flaws of the aristocracy are less severe than those of the middle classes. Or, perhaps our subtle author insinuates that none are free from the temptations of society. Even the most radical, even the Peter Pans of this world, cannot resist the golden apple of wealth, power, and position.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have maintained a neutral stance on the position of Barrie, in relation to his presentation of the characters, especially the narrator. I chose to preserve this neutrality as it enabled me to present a more thorough analysis of Peter Pan. The conclusion of this thesis demands, however, that I take a stand on the positions of the author and the narrator, thereby presenting my own position on various issues in Peter Pan.

Certain questions must therefore arise: Is Peter Pan best described as an unimportant children's story or as an imaginative means of criticizing the Victorian era? Is Barrie an author worth consideration? According to critic George Bernard Shaw, the answer is no:

> [He] sees no further than his stories--
> conceives any discrepancy between them
> and the world as a short coming on the
> world's part, and is only too happy to
> be able to arrange matters in a
> pleasanter way (Geduld 170-71).

Shaw speaks of a man who writes of (and in) a dream world. His criticism implies that Barrie's work is a sugar--coated children's story. Having studied the roles of the narrator and characters in Peter Pan, I must disagree with the eminent Mr. Shaw. A close analysis of the novel reveals that Peter Pan is not always a "pleasant" representation of life.

The narrator's opinion has been used throughout this thesis as a reliable source of information regarding the characters, their roles, and the social demands expressed in the novel. He is the character who pulls the novel's themes throughout its pages, yet he does so in a manner that is at times ambivalent. Often we are unsure whether or not the narrator's words are ironic. The love-hate relationship between the narrator and the novel's characters is at times difficult to interpret, leading one to suspect that Barrie is not always in control of the meaning in the narrator's words.

Despite the uncertainly which surrounds the narrator, Shaw's criticism might be applicable without him; Barrie's novel might be disregarded as simplistic. The side of Victorian society that the narrator reveals in Peter Pan, specifically the attitudes of middle class city people, has a very true to life quality, as works documented throughout this thesis defend. The narrator may be ironic when he speaks of Victorian society, yet his use of irony is based on facts. He makes fun of the roles of men and women because they are roles he despises, questions, or wishes to change. The narrator is the voice of tomorrow, yet who is behind the force that overrides the power of the narrator, that allows everything to end in a picture-perfect way?

It is difficult to come to a conclusion when one contemplates the position of author versus narrator in Peter Pan. Whose values should we follow in this opposition of ideas? Barrie creates two separate types of characters. On one hand we have the perfect mother-women characters. They are the ideals of the Victorian era and never deviate from their status as "perfect ladies". On the other hand, however, we have the male characters in the novel who are not obedient to the demands of the *status quo*. Mr. Darling fails miserably in his efforts to be an upright Victorian gentleman. Peter refuses to even consider the matter and Captain Hook, as an aristocrat, is above the class rankings of the other characters. Through the male characters, Barrie seems to suggest that it is not possible to follow the guidelines of Victorian society. When we turn to the female characters, however, it appears that the opposite is true. We might more easily conclude what Barrie's opinions are, except for the role of the narrator.

We have established that the narrator is a significant "character" in the novel. It is clear that the role of the other characters in Peter Pan is equally important. If the qualities of both of these entities are meshed, we come up with what must be Barrie's opinion on the many issues that the novel raises. In my analysis, the appropriate conclusion is that Barrie wanted change, hence the narrator, yet at the same time showed society's resistance to change through the consistent roles of his characters. Barrie's female characters are more obviously trapped by the boundaries of society. His male characters at first seem willing to leap the obstacles set up by society, yet a closer look shows that this is not necessarily the case. When we look at characters who refuse to change, no one embodies this role better than Peter Pan himself. Peter, whose character is the soul of the novel, declines invitations to the adult world and its conditions. At the same time, however, he seems to embody many of the negative qualities of Victorian males (and therefore society). Peter is tyrannical, domineering, and self-centered. Though Peter's roles change from playing pirate to playing father, these changes are merely more of the "games" that appeal to him. Through Peter's steadfast rejection of adulthood, Barrie symbolically renounces his own society, yet the tyrannical nature of Peter's personality shows man's very inability to reject that entity.

James Barrie's work portrays a struggle for change in Victorian society. His fight for freedom and imagination, for both body and spirit, is one that lives on today through the heritage he left in Peter Pan.

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