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Rovira Gay, Gisela; Monnickendam, Andrew, dir. From a boy who would never grow up to a kidnapper : another vision to James Matthew Barrie's classic Peter and Wendy. 2016. 31 pag. (801 Grau en Estudis Anglesos)

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**From A Boy Who Would Never Grow Up To A
Kidnapper.**

**Another Vision to James Matthew Barrie's Classic
Peter and Wendy.**

Treball de Fi de Grau

Grau en Estudis Anglesos

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June 2016

Acknowledgments

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my supervisor Dr Andrew Monnickendam, without whom this TFG would not have been possible. I appreciate your patience, guidance and the immediate and excellent feedback. Thank you for letting me put a little bit of *pixie dust* into this dehumanised world we all live in.

I would also like to thank my family for their deepest patience, emotional and unconditional support, specially my sister for her inspiration and invaluable love.

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Abstract

The following essay attempts to prove that James Matthew Barrie's main character in *Peter and Wendy*, Peter Pan, can be seen as a kidnapper. Since the book explains the adventures of the Darlings' siblings, the audience do not see that Peter Pan takes the children out of their homes with the idea of not returning there ever again. In order to argue this, children's literature is described and characterised socially and historically. This is achieved through Bruno Bettelheim's controversial and revolutionary book: *The Use of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*.

Introduction

In our current society, children's literature is often viewed as simple entertainment; it is not one of the main concerns of civilization. People care more about politics, economy and sports rather than literature. However, part of our history is created by the masterpieces that create this group. This genre is known by every adult and children; it goes from generation to generation and helps the readers develop into mature adults. Those books have brought different ways of thinking and different values to mankind, as well as a place to hide and disconnect from the real world. Although reading traditional books makes one's mind and rationality grow, some people do not consider reading as a first option when they have spare time.

Children's literature not only covers books for infants, but for adults too. The latter group is the one in charge of transmitting the message to the former. This is a way to assure that the advice is being transmitted. Not only are grown-ups always needed to explain the story as children are also capable of understanding what is being told. These aspects will be discussed in the first part of the paper, as well as the position of the reader, the definition of the genre and the position of childhood in society. This part is more likely to be a more material and tangible one. Dates, definitions, acts, books, writers, etc. are named and described. This part has a second section which covers spiritual, mental and psychological concepts, where a definition of children's mind and rationality is found. Through this separation, a clear distinction between the external and internal world of the characters in books can be understood.

The paper then focuses on James Matthew Barrie's and Peter Pan's world. Some of the concepts argued in the first part will appear applied to *Peter and Wendy*. It is followed by brief biography of Barrie, by his works and a mental and physical description of Peter Pan.

J. M. Barrie's story about the boy who would not grow up is one of the favourite stories of children. Despite nearly all parents telling it to their sons and daughters, *Peter and Wendy's* story not only has one interpretation, but several views can be discussed. In this essay I intend to argue a different vision of the story, a dark one where Peter Pan is not the hero and friendly boy that everyone thinks they know.

Analysis of Children's Literature

A good question to open this project would be: who reads children's books? Not only are children the target readers of these texts, adults tend to read them too. As a consequence, this genre can be divided into 'single addressed', 'double addressed' and 'dual addressed', depending on how the author approaches the reader. When a book is 'single addressed', it is only dedicated to children. They are the ones who have to read the story. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (1865) was one of the first books fully addressed to the child reader. The 'double address' appeared in those books when adults expected a text to be appropriate for a child. That would be the case of James Matthew Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911). The last group is the one which the author expects both readers, infants and grown-ups, as target readers: 'dual addressed'. From the texts they can get the same experience, for example, anecdotes and jokes. Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* books (1902) fulfil these characteristics.

Some of the main characteristics of this category are plots full of love and kindness, happy endings are frequent and, simplified issues can be found, as well as plain vocabulary. The protagonists are infants who normally suffer from lack of parental figures. This style also contains elements of education. It is used as a vehicle for moral and spiritual instruction. It is less experimental than adult literature and it deals with experiences suitable for a child. The stories are like children: sincere, innocent, carefree, playful, curious and imaginative. These tales are also full of friendships by whom the main character learns some values through mistake.

The oldest children's text is the *Colloquy of the Occupations* (998). In its preface, the author claims that it is for infants. Another book dedicated to children is *Aesop's Fables* (1484). It was translated into English by William Caxton. The first

picture book appeared in 1658 and it was called *Orbis Pictus*, written by Comenius. It was a work with the images of animals and it told its audience the sound of each being. Despite all these works, the 'Golden Age' of this genre was developed between 1860 and 1940. It was when education took an important part of the English society. Actually, it was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* which opened the 'Golden Age'.

Children's literature is a complex, ambivalent, unclear and questionable composition, as Peter Hunt's definition (2001) shows:

The definition of children's literature is an immensely complex and variable one, and generally rests upon authorial intention (however deduced), or the reader implied in the text (however deduced), rather than a factual examination of which books were or are marketed for, adopted by, or imposed upon children.

No one knows where its boundaries are, which are its clear origins or definition. Clive Staples Lewis is one of the many writers who gave a description to this genre which allowed people to see what this style was about. 'The printed story grows out of a story told to a particular child with the living voice and perhaps *ex tempore*' (Grenby, 2009: 3). Frederick Joseph Harvey Darton, a historian, defined children's literature 'as printed works produced ostensibility to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet.' (Holmes, 2008: 133) Despite having these definitions, neither Lewis nor Darton talked about its origins. Three different kinds of origins are attributed to children's literature: the domestic, the specific and symbolic, and the historical.

The 'domestic origin' is the one that exists in every home: parents making up stories for their sons and daughters before going to sleep or to enjoy a lovely evening in family. By the eighteenth century, the role of motherhood became important over Britain. Mothers were the ones 'to personalise curricula according to the individual

needs of their children.’ (Grenby: 10). According to John Locke, when children are born their minds are like empty sheets, he describes it as *tabula rasa*. Depending on what they will be taught, their minds will develop in several ways. Mary Wollstonecraft did not agree with Locke, she thought that each boy and girl needed a different treatment when being taught.¹ This meant that mothers had to conceive their own educational and pedagogical methodology. What mothers did was to create a domestic nursery-culture which was transmitted from generation to generation. ‘Children’s literature was not intended to supplant, but to supplement, the parent.’ (Grenby: 14). Those books had to help the parents to raise their sons and daughters in a polite and intelligent way.

The ‘specific and symbolic origin’ covers those stories that were dedicated to real boys or girls in particular. This is the case of Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and J. M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy*. These stories were based on real children with whom the author had a close relationship. They were first written for them and then they were published.

The ‘historical origin’ is the most conventional one. Children’s literature appeared by mid-eighteenth century in Britain when the concept of ‘childhood’ was introduced. Before the eighteenth-century, children were seen as little adults: no one saw the need of attributing a literary genre to them. Once the term ‘childhood’ appeared, books dedicated to children started to be written. It was first considered that “‘proper” children’s books are only those which include rounded child characters, not mythical heroes or fairy tale figures.’ (Grenby: 6). However, this definition did not last due to the fact that soon fairy figures became an important aspect of this style.

¹ Grenby, M. O. “The Origins of Children’s Literature”. In M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. 3 – 18.

When the term 'childhood' was coined, children had a new place in society. They went from being an unknown and mistreated group to being important. Different scholars talked about this new collective. Puritans and evangelicals claimed that religion education was needed for the process of going from child to adult. Locke made some simple games and books to encourage children to read and develop their personality over their *tabula rasa*, as he considered kids to be rational creatures. The most influential figure was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who said that children had natural goodness and an intimate connection with the environment. He meant that the way they would learn was by interacting with the world and nature. He believed children were infants before being men or women. The socio-economic situation of that period was significant to change and create new laws concerning children's rights. By 1833, the Factory Act banned infants under nine from working in factories. In 1870, the Royal Commission on the Factory Acts established a national system of education and ten years later the age of consent was raised from twelve to sixteen. In 1880, school attendance became compulsory for every English boy and girl. All these laws allowed the development of children's literature. What first appeared in homes then became a commercial product. All these different origins combined in such strong ways that nowadays are impossible to separate. Despite 'poor' children being seen as part of a lower and worker class, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, their position changed and they were seen as a different group of people, different to adults, important for the future and the economy of the country.

Children's literature is a genre with lots of definitions; it is not an easy term to describe. Compared to adult's literature, children do not write their own books. 'Children's literature emerged from perceived differences between adult and child that

developed over time in conjunction with changing constructions of childhood.’ (Vallone, 2009: 181) Youngsters and grown-ups have dependably been distinctive: naturally, mentally and physically.² ‘An adult book is written by adults, read by adults, judged by adults and passed on to adults.’ (Stevenson, 2009: 108). Children’s literature is constituted by different categories: profession, fields of education, proficient status, and age.³ Although infants take an important part in children’s literature, as the name indicates, adults are the ones in charge of writing the stories, choosing the title, drawing the characters, and buying them for their sons and daughters. Katherine Jones described this literature as ‘a literature written almost entirely by adults that assumes various conceptions of the child, childhood, and the childlike, with child readers usually being the target of the book.’ (Holmes: 134) Thus, kids are essential to this genre as they choose and read the works along with their parents. ‘The child’s perceived difference from adults requires unique responses within legal, economic, educational and family systems. Within the marketplace, too, the child functions both as a separate audience for sellers and as a significant consumer of goods.’ (Vallone, 2009: 175) That is why there is a need to have this genre.

What children’s literature covers is a collection of several masterpieces that go from generation to generation. These classics give infants true values and that is why we find them today. They are the basis of the genre. ‘They are classics because they are still here, just as much as they are still here because they are classics.’ (Stevenson: 115). These works get this term as they are old stories which over the years they have entered

² Vallone, Lynne. “Ideas of Difference in Children’s Literature”. In M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. 175.

³ Stevenson, Deborah. “Classics and Canons”. In M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. 108.

societies and families. They have brought different ways of thinking, as well as a world of freedom and refuge. A classic is a classic because of its age and its significance, but what makes masterpieces too is that the authors who wrote them were white and heterosexual.⁴ Nowadays, this genre has been reconsidered and new titles have been added to Children's Literature.

A way to attract kids to certain books for a good development of children's maturity is difference: difference in colour, class, gender, abilities, etc. 'An 'ethics of resistance' argues that difference should (...) become conventionally gender-normed, or that black characters will be successful only in rejecting or ignoring their racial and cultural heritage, or that disabled characters can be miraculously cured of their disability.' (Vallone, 2009: 183) Seeing and understanding all these aspects are crucial for the infants' development. Childhood and adulthood are different periods of one's life. Children need to find out about various individuals and diverse circumstances on the off chance that these people and situations will be beneficial or not to them. Even if they are positive or negative actions, they will allow them to develop as adults. 'We are always individuals, alone together. The child functions as a unique Other to the adult – each adult carries the memory of childhood within.' (Vallone: 188) Despite being different stages of life, they are linked thanks to mental capacities. The ability to grow up and develop one's personality can be achieved through the reading of fairy tales, among others.

This part of the paper will be based on Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment, The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. With the help of classical

⁴ Stevenson, Deborah. "Classics and Canons". In M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. 116.

tales, Bettelheim claims how important stories are, sentimentally and representatively. He makes a distinction between the material and external world, and the internal and spiritual world.

‘Fairy tales, unlike any other form of literature, direct the child to discover his identity and calling, and they also suggest what experiences are needed to develop his character further.’ (Bettelheim, 1989: 24) Stories take part in children’s development. Terrible circumstances show up in individuals' lives as well as in books. By reading them, children are able to find themselves guessing how they should feel, why and what to do. It is like a therapeutic way of finding oneself.⁵ ‘A child trusts what the fairy story tells, because its world view accords with his own.’ (Bettelheim: 45) The fact of having children as main characters makes the reader feel as one of them. All the experiences, objects, friends, etc. are described from a child’s viewpoint. They all have anecdotes and situations where children could find themselves. It is easy to believe that you are part of the tale. The infant does not see the lines that separate the real and the fantasy world. In the same way they cannot see the boundaries, sometimes they cannot see when a determined action or decision might be dangerous.

‘The fairy tale leaves no doubt in the child’s mind that the pain must be endured and the risky chances taken, since one must achieve one’s personal identity; and, despite all anxieties, there is no question about the happy ending. While not every child can or will inherit a kingdom, the child who understands and makes his own the message of the fairy tale will find the true home of his inner self; he will become master over its vast realm by knowing his mind, so it will serve him well.’ (Bettelheim: 79)

The need for new experiences comes to children as an opportunity to create their own identities. They have to face threatening situations to comprehend and discover ‘the true home of his inner self.’ (Bettelheim: 79) Everything is done in order to

⁵ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment, The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. 25.

understand the mind. Once a person takes control of their own minds, they can live happily ever after.⁶ It means the achievement of maturity as a human being.

Once the story is read, children go to play around or to listen to another story so they do not have the chance to gather how dangerous or lovely the story has been. They cannot get any constructive experiences. However, if time is given to kids to go back to the story, emotional and intellectual opinions appear.⁷ The story finishes with the return of the protagonists and the audience to the real world. This journey through different pieces of literature gives clues on how the infant must behave to reach his/her own mental maturity.

An important aspect, despite the maturity of the reader, is geography. It does not matter if the book is dedicated to adults or kids. Mostly, in children's books, the story is mixed with fantasy. This means that the location of the story is a far away fairy land. There are three groups into which stories divide themselves. 'Domestic disturbances' is the first group we find. They are the ones where people or beings from exotic places appear in the real world. They can cause problems to the protagonists' lives. In this type, we find Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*. 'Worlds upside down' is the second group of fantasy's alternative geography where children create their own world and fantasy. It is a way for them to avoid and hide their reality. An example of this group would be Alan Alexander Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928) or Charles Dickens's *A Holiday Romance* (1868). The last group is 'wayfarers in strange lands'. In it, the protagonists travel to a parallel world

⁶ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment, The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. 128.

⁷ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment, The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. 59.

where they fight and defeat wicked beings. This would be the case of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

Analysis of James Matthew Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*

James Matthew Barrie was born in 1860 in Kirriemuir, Scotland, and died in 1937 in London. When he was six, he lost his brother, David, in a skating accident. His mother was truly affected, and J. M. Barrie tried to substitute him wearing his clothes and trying to make his mother forget him. On account of her depression, he started telling her stories. After his years of school, he enrolled at the University of Edinburgh where he studied literature. After this, he started working as a journalist, and he wrote series of stories, which were the basis of his first works: *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888), *A Window in Thrums* (1890) and, *The Little Minister* (1891).

Thanks to this, he became a prolific author, novelist and dramatist. He married Mary Ansell. They met as Barrie needed a pretty lady to act in his play *Walker, London*. They began their relation as friends and became closer when Barrie fell ill for a year. After his recovery, they married in his hometown. They did not have children and some sources report that they were an unhappy couple who did not consummate their marriage. In 1909 a legal divorce was allowed to the couple as Ansell had been unfaithful to the writer. However, after the wedding, they moved to South Kensington, in a house near Kensington Gardens where he would meet Sylvia Llewelyn Davis and her sons. The idea of Peter Pan came with the Davis family. They all had a close relationship and Barrie spent lots of time with them explaining different stories. He became a family friend and in 1901, Barrie wrote *The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island*. It was a made-up adventure story that the three Davis boys had: George, Jack and Peter, who represented the narrator. He only wrote two copies of it, one was given to the father of the children, and the other one was for him, and he left it in a train.

Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up was first a play. It was first performed in London at the Duke of York's Theatre on December 27, 1904, with a female character in Peter's role, Nina Boucicault, who was 37 years old. For the next fifty years, this play was performed around the world.⁸ Actually, Peter Pan has a long life, Barrie spent part of the twentieth century writing about him. He started in 1902 with *The Little White Bird*; or, *Adventure in Kensington Gardens*, and two years later, *Peter Pan* was staged. In 1906, he wrote *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and in 1908, *When Wendy Grew Up-An Afterthought*. It was in 1911 when he wrote *Peter and Wendy*. Ten years later he wrote *Peter Pan and Wendy*. The last thing he wrote about Peter was in 1928 *Peter Pan*; or, *The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*. Peter Pan was considered to be the *alter ego* of the storyteller's own childhood because although Barrie grew up, inside himself a part remained childish due to the loss of his brother. Peter is also considered to be Barrie, as it is claimed that his marriage was not consummated, so he and Peter share the characteristic of being asexual. Peter Pan is also seen as David, Barrie's dead brother, as he became the boy who did not grow up.

Barrie left all the Peter Pan's rights and works to Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London in 1929, but it was only confirmed after his death in 1937. The hospital has received money every time a movie, a book or another product has been made, following Barrie's wishes. Nowadays, they still own Peter Pan's rights.

This project, however, is based on *Peter and Wendy* (1911), which is the novelisation of the play. It is part of a domestic fantasy, which means that the story happens in a primary world, reality, and a secondary world, fantastic world. The story,

⁸ Billone, Amy. "The Boy Who Lived: from Carroll's Alice and Barrie's Peter Pan to Rowling's Harry Potter." *Children's Literature*, 32, 2004: 188.

then, departs from a primary world, London, goes to the secondary world, Neverland, and then returns to the primary world. The narrator speaks to two readerships: kids and adults. By doing this, the narrator sometimes addresses children, and, at others, the adult reader. ‘We too have been there [Neverland].’ (Barrie, 2015: 6)

Peter Pan is an ambiguous figure. He is seen as a Green Man as he enters reality dressed up in green leaves from Neverland. The Romans were the first ones to believe in the Green Man. It showed the relationship between manhood and nature. They also used it to describe the god Pan. From a pagan origin it turned to be part of Christian art. He can also be related to fairy cults and as a guardian angel. ‘Some fairy and folk stories evolved out of myths.’ (Bettelheim: 26) Part of the inspiration of Peter Pan was produced by the mythological figure of the Greek deity: ‘Barrie exploited the mythological tradition to develop his character.’ (Kavey, 2008: 76) The main similarity between the god and our character is the name: Pan. Physically, the god is half-man and half-goat. Our protagonist’s body also has animalistic aspects: he is half-child and half-bird. In figure 1, it can be seen that Peter can fly alone, whereas Wendy, John and Michael fly with the help of several birds. Both are human beings but at the same time they share natural qualities. In relation to their symbols, ‘the god’s body symbolizes his sexuality, perhaps his best-known characteristic, and links him to the animals for whom he has responsibility.’ (Kavey: 77) Peter is a child that at the same time can be charming and anxious. ‘Peter knows he is not a vegetable, a mineral, a man or an ordinary boy.’ (Billone: 190) He is accepted by fairies, birds and mermaids which make him asexual. This creates the first difference between the god and Peter. As a boy, Peter misses his home. However, he does not claim it. It is through his unconscious that the truth is expressed. The unconscious tells you the truth about what you fear in a manner in which you can manage it. The unconscious tells the truth to the conscious. As a result, Peter

has nightmares. 'Sometimes, though, not often, he had dreams, and they were more painful than the dreams of other boys. For hours he could not be separated from these dreams, though he wailed piteously in them. They had to do, I think, with the riddle of his existence.' (Barrie: 114) He does not want to accept that he misses his home and family. It is his mind which knows that he misses everything he had in London. Nevertheless, he has no memory to be fully conscious of what he wants.



Fig. 1 Peter, Wendy, John and Michael flying to Neverland

Both the man-goat and the child-bird are related through two symbols: the goat and the pipes. While the former does not appear in *Peter and Wendy*, the latter is visible, but both of them are crucial to understanding the relation between the two beings. For what concerns the mythological deity, the goat is part of his physical appearance, and the pipes are the musical instrument he played to seduce women. Peter also had a goat. He got it from a girl who stayed in Kensington Gardens at night, breaking the rules. She decided to return home, and left her imaginary goat with the Kensington fairies for Peter. This was the first time that Peter was not successful with a female. She preferred her mother rather than him. The pipes appear several times in *Peter and Wendy* and 'they function as his ticket to acceptance among the birds and fairies, and they also serve as an excellent means for seducing women and girls.' (Kavey: 80) He also uses it to warn lost youngsters of his presence. As he is half-human and half-bird, the pipes allow them to enter the bird world, to be one of them. The pipes also work as a bridge between Kensington Gardens and the world of the nursery. However, for Peter this bridge was broken as he took a long time to return to his window. The fact is that in the gardens time moves differently. So the pipes are a representation of the frustrated nature of his existence. He uses the pipes to attract girls but he cannot keep them, neither the ones in Neverland, nor the ones of the real world. The same happens to the God Pan, he can attract and seduce women, but then he has to let them go. Wendy was sure about Peter playing his pipes on the foot of her bed. In the same way Peter used them to attract Wendy, he used them to make her, her siblings and the Lost Boys feel that he did not care about them leaving his island. He uses them in a way to protect himself from being damaged. Nevertheless, he feels sad at their departure.

Tootles, Nibs, Slightly, Curly and the Twins are the Lost Boys. When Wendy, in chapter three, asks Peter who they are, he says: 'They are the children who fall out of their perambulators when the nurse is looking the other way. If they are not claimed in seven days they are sent far away to the Neverland to defray expenses. I'm captain.' (Barrie: 27) These boys live in Neverland. They have no option to go back to their homes because they no longer remember who their mothers are and where their homes are. Nevertheless, they live with Peter, experiencing funny adventures.

Peter Pan, as seen, has a complex personality. He is brave but childish, bossy and mean, but at the same time innocent, confident and cocky. He is reckless as he lives for the now and, carefree, because he has no responsibilities. He has no regular ego to act properly. He has no memory. He is asexual; he does not know what kisses are. So there is ambivalence in Peter Pan's personality. He has two sides: life and death. He is considered to be the symbol of eternal youth but, at the same time, he is dressed with skeleton leaves. Peter Pan can be seen as a Christ-like figure that stands against death and brings children away to a heavenly place or, as a pagan symbol who steals children from their beds and disposes of them when they get too old for Neverland. 'The boys on the island vary, of course, in numbers, according as they get killed and so on; and when they seem to be growing up, which is against the rules, Peter thins them out, but at this time there were six of them, counting the twins as two.' (Barrie: 44 – 45)

According to Sarah Gilead (1991), *Peter and Wendy* is 'a morbid book rich in themes of guilt, revenge, obsession and murder.' She also claims that 'Peter is death itself [and] Neverland is the realm of the dead.' Peter, as said before, has a complex personality and a part of having positive qualities, he has lots of negative ones. He is

mean and selfish because he does not want children to grow up. By bringing them to Neverland, they forget their families and their lives in the real world. Peter keeps them and makes them hunt and fight against pirates and, some of them die. Tinker Bell, Peter's fairy, is the image of ire, envy, fury and of a liar. She is so full of jealousy that when she sees Peter arriving to Neverland with Wendy she orders the Lost Boys to kill her. She also plans, with some other fairies, to eliminate Wendy from the island by floating her away on the lagoon. Hence, it is easy to relate Peter Pan with darkness.

Peter and Wendy, like all fairy tales, deals with concepts of humans' lives such as the process of growing up and death. Some children's stories do not cope with those aspects so as not to damage childhood. Even if these experiences appear or not in a book, children from both real and fiction world have to know how to behave and cope with them.

When Peter arrives at the nursery window of the Darling's house, Wendy is offered to fly to Neverland. This proposal, with all its implication (mermaids, children, etc.), requires the Darling siblings to start a journey without their parents to a foreign land, which is only known by dreams.

When *Peter and Wendy* is told to infants, they do not see how Peter manipulates Wendy to go to his land: 'mermaids, tuck children in at night, darn kid's clothes and make them pockets.' (Barrie: 29) The readership is seduced by the idea of seeing mermaids. Peter, in a certain way, persuades Wendy, the image of the Victorian girl, to go with him so she will help him and the Lost Boys on the domestic life. In this way, Wendy will be able to develop her Victorian feminine skills. 'Everyone wants Wendy for a mother, the pirates as well as the Lost Boys, and she wants more than anything to be

one.’ (Billone: 185) It can be seen in Wendy’s way of speaking: she seems an adult or she takes her role as mother very deeply. The readers are influenced by Peter’s description of what he is about to offer to our protagonists and, they see him as his friend, despite not knowing anything about him. Children love Peter. What they want is to feel extreme feelings (danger, love, fear, etc.), they want to enjoy a good story without thinking about their background. The fact is that when Wendy, John and Michael arrive in Neverland what they first face is death. Hook starts shooting cannonballs at them. ‘The children’s imagination brought them to the island, but when they left their nursery they had no expectation of the dangers that awaited them there.’ (Kavey: 98) When they arrive at the island, Hook warns them of what they will find in Neverland, anyone can see that the island is a dangerous place and that they were safer in their homes. They can feel as if now they did not have anyone whom they can trust and, at the same time, protect them. Children should be scared of being in a strange island far away from their homes.

J. M. Barrie saw that children had three fantastic skills that adults did not have: they could enter their own dreams and make these dreams come true; they could play fantasy games in which the imaginary world took the place of concrete reality; they could fly (with the help of Pixie Dust and happy thoughts).⁹ Barrie reflects this on Neverland. Before Barrie introduced Peter Pan in *Peter and Wendy*, we first find the description of Neverland. This makes the readership realise the difference between kids and grown-ups. It places kids' mental scenes outside the ken of grown-up experts such

⁹ Billone, Amy. “The Boy Who Lived: from Carroll’s Alice and Barrie’s Peter Pan to Rowling’s Harry Potter” *Children’s Literature*, 32, 2004. 191.

as doctors.¹⁰ The island is used as a metaphor of what children's minds would look like. All of them are different as all infants are different: 'Of course the Neverlands vary a good deal. John's for instance, had a lagoon with flamingos flying over it at which John was shooting, while Michael, whom was very small, had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it' (Barrie: 6) Neverlands will change its shape according to the new interests and opinions a boy or a girl develops. It can be seen as the step between the material world and its events. Thus, when a child grows up, he or she has no more access to the island. It is as if they entered another island separating both of them by a huge sea. This metaphor, which can be seen as Peter's island, is a way to show that adults and children's rationality are different. The latter group does not have enough maturity to understand and take decisions in an adequate way. An adult would not dare to leave his house to go with a stranger to a different world. Peter Pan encourages the kids to go with him to Neverland and they accept it as part of an adventure. The fact that they disappear from their home worries Mr. and Mrs. Darling. The mother leaves the nursery window open so her children can return home. The parents are the real victims of the story, as they suffer from the absence of their daughter and two sons. They see they are missing and they do not know if they will see them again. What Wendy and her brothers feel is joy, bravery, anxiety for new experiences and for fighting against pirates, among others. They can see no risk because they do not have an adults' mind. They are not mature enough to realise what is going on throughout Barrie's narrative. Whereas children are immature because they lack knowledge, Peter is childish due to his refusal to become an adult. He flies to the real world and then tells stories about it to the Lost Boys. He has knowledge of life. However, his refusal to face society, his own fears, and life prevent him from growing up. He has no age because he lives and relies on

¹⁰ Kavey, B. Alison. "I do believe in fairies, I do, I do". In Alison B. Kavey and Lester D. Friedman (eds.), *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008. 75 – 104.

imaginary and fantastic elements. He is unpredictable and lacks continuity, he cannot celebrate his birthday because it is not relevant to him, he knows he will always be a kid. His life does not rely on time. He is only capable of living the moment. This lack of time can be related to the lack of family, as well as the lack of hope. It is as if he had no one to count on.

Bettelheim (1989) claims that we need our parents to instil hope in us. That is the important role Mr. and Mrs. Darling have. They teach Wendy, Michael, and John how to have faith. However, Peter does not have parents. They closed the nursery window, so he could not return home. He does not believe in parents, so he has no hope. 'A young child not only loves his parents with an incredible intensity of feelings, but at times also hates them.' (Bettelheim: 120) This is how children feel when facing their parents. They love them so much because they give them all they want, they make them laugh and they teach them how to behave in every situation. As well as they are next to them to help them grow up, they make children hate them for not sharing similar points of views. When they disagree on a topic or when parents make them behave in a certain way or when do not let them do a particular action, this is when children hate them. This is the situation which Peter lives. He does not have love for their parents: to his father, because he wanted him to work as a grown-up man and to his mother, because he sees her as the one who closed the window. The lack of hope and the hate accumulate in his dark actions.

'[...] he [Peter] was so full of wrath against grown-ups, who, as usual, were spoiling everything, that as soon as he got inside his tree he breathed intentionally quick short breaths at the rate of about five to a second. He did this because there is a saying in Neverland that every time you breathe, a grown-up dies; and Peter was killing them off vindictively as fast as possible.' (Barrie: 100)

In this passage it can be seen that Peter does not care if by breathing he kills adults or other infants' parents. Peter hates adults. He is selfish and mean; he is only

interested in his feelings. Neverland is full of Lost Boys who no longer have a home in London. His mind and rationality are not as the ones of any current kid. 'There is no greater threat in life than that we will be deserted, left all alone. Psychoanalysis has named this – man's great fear – separation anxiety.' (Bettelheim: 145) The problem Peter suffers from is being left alone. He feels loneliness. He is afraid because no one is by his side. Due to his solitude, he has no ambitions and he gives up hope. This means that he does not trust the future, so he does not rely on himself.¹¹ As said above, the ones in charge of instilling goals in children are their parents. Peter is trapped by his dark side; he cannot live in a peaceful way. He cannot see the wonder and charm of life. The only way he can have a mother is through persuading Wendy to go with him and, for the same reason, he does not want her to return to London with her family: "'Quick, Tink," he whispered, "close the window; bar it! That's right. Now you and I must get away by the door; and when Wendy comes she will think her mother has barred her out; and she will have to go back with me.'" (Barrie: 144) He wants and needs Wendy with all his strength, it seems he cares a lot about her, but at the same time, he hates her for being able to return to London.

Wendy is the actual hero of our story. She dares to grow up and she succeeds. She is able to be in both worlds. She is the hero of *Peter and Wendy* because she takes the Lost Boys back to London. She grows up and develops into a Victorian woman. She decides to leave Neverland and to return from it. Peter cannot do that, but she almost tempts him to return through her stories. '[...] the "happy ending", the final consolation, consists of both the integration of the personality and the establishment of a permanent relation.' (Bettelheim: 146) Thus, the happy ending is only for Wendy, the bravest character in the novel. The only one who can maintain the relation between the two

¹¹ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment, The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. 150.

worlds is her. She has the feeling that she has to go back home for their parents. She and her siblings need them.

Conclusions

My conclusions are that Peter Pan takes the children to a place of death and danger. Death becomes an attribute and a quality of the island. It is more present than in the real world. Peter is selfish and mean. He does not allow children to grow up. He makes them forget their families. He obliges them to fight and face death in Neverland. Peter introduces it to children, who are not supposed to deal with such pain and danger, when he brings them to the island.

As I have shown, from a pagan point of view, Peter is seen as someone who steals children from their beds and kills them when they are too old for Neverland. In a certain way he steals them because they never return home. Parents are the real victims of this story. They see that their children are missing and do not know if they will come back or if they will see them again.

I would argue that Peter only cares about his feelings, he does not face life. He acts like this because he has no one on his side and he is afraid of this loneliness. As a consequence he manipulates Wendy to fly with him to a magic place where she will be able to tell stories to the Lost Boys and help him with the domestic aspects. I have shown that if she had been an adult, she would have been more intelligent and she would not have accepted Peter's proposal.

'[...] Peter kidnaps the child to escape the nursery, gravity and other limitations and burdens of ordinary reality; but he takes us to a world infused with morbid reminders of that reality.' (Gilead, 2016: 142) Contrary to many sources, I agree with Gilead on the idea of Peter kidnapping the children. He manipulates reality and both the Lost Boys and the Darling's siblings. He decides what to tell them and what is accepted and what is not. I think that the boys live in Neverland without knowledge of what is

going on in the real world. Actually, they live outside it. They do not have any notion of time and, what's more, they are not allowed to grow up because they will be killed. I consider that they cannot see all these aspects as their minds and rationalities are not mature enough to understand what is going on in there. Their only option is to trust Peter as he considers himself the captain, but who definitely acts as a kidnapper.

Despite all the myth that goes around Peter Pan, I would propose that what Peter Pan does is kidnap the children bringing them to his place where they live next to death, making them forget about their families and denying them the ability of growing up and knowing the reality of the world. If they try to escape and go back to London, he makes some tricks in order they cannot return and feel that they need him. I believe that the boy who would never grow up is a manipulative character full of envy and jealousy that will never care about children's rights and will only act to fulfil his feelings.

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