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Peter Pan's Wendy
as a standardized model of a woman in the Victorian era
by
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Abstract

Considered one of the most famous stories ever written among children's literature, *Peter Pan* (1904) reflects some experiences James Matthew Barrie had in his life. The aim of this dissertation is to provide an analysis of the story by paying special attention to one of the main characters: Wendy Darling. To achieve this goal, this paper will analyse different aspects of the book. Beginning with the author's life and how his biography is reflected on the novel itself. Then, the paper will examine both children's literature and children's fantasy literature. Next section will focus on the role of women in the Victorian era. On the basis of this background, our analysis will focus on how women are presented in *Peter Pan*'s story and special attention will be given to the feminine character of Wendy. Lastly, to finish with the paper, I will explain the different conclusions that could be drawn from this dissertation.

Keywords: Children's literature, Peter Pan, Wendy Darling, women in the Victorian era.

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Introduction

The intention of the writer of *Peter Pan* (1904), James Matthew Barrie, is to portray the real world he lives in, taking into account both adults and children's imagination. Some characters of the story, as in the case of the main character Peter, want to escape from reality, while others, as Wendy, are attracted by the real world. *Peter Pan* is not only considered a fantastic literary production, but it also serves as a basis for the designation of a syndrome, "The Peter Pan Syndrome". This syndrome is suffered by people who do not want to grow up and postulate themselves against maturity. Likewise, this fact is reflected in the main character of the story, Peter. He does not want to grow up because he wants to be a child for the rest of his days. Accordingly, Dr. Dan Kiley, in his book *The Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Have Never Grown Up* (1983), writes about this syndrome defining it as: "the conjunct of characteristics that has that person that does not know and cannot renounce to be son or daughter to become father or mother as Syndrome of Peter Pan" (5). Among many other characteristics, he claims that while many American men tended to suffer from these symptoms, it was not very common among women. The reason behind this could be that women in our culture seem to be prepared to grow up as they are the ones who tend to take care of children.

It was in 1904, in London, when *Peter Pan or the boy who would not grow up* would be first performed as a play under the title *Peter Pan and Wendy*. Diverse authors have tried to interpret or analyse the novel and among them we can find Avelino Rego Freire, who explains in his article "Wendy or the girl who was forced to grow up" (2007) the story from Wendy's perspective and adds that she is a clear representation of a Victorian woman who dreamed to be a perfect wife. Freire believes that Wendy constructs her own family archetype and takes control of the fantasy where she imposes her own rules. On the other hand, according to Alison Lewis in her article titled "Who is Peter Pan?" (2012), the character of Peter has been frequently used by writers, dramatists and filmmakers. The reason behind this is that Peter has become incredibly popular due to his touching adventures in Neverland. This fact helps to create a large amount of different and new versions which involve himself being the main character of the stories. In addition, Oliver Scott admits and explains in his essay "Peter Pan on Stage and Screen" (1983) that the character of Peter in J.M. Barrie's work is in many ways a prototype of a modern superhero (10).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a view about the role of women in Victorian society and analyze if the character of Wendy fills in by presenting the role of women in

Victorian society and examining if the values that the Victorian society represents could be presented in children's literature works such as *Peter Pan*. To achieve this purpose, the paper will start by introducing a description of the author's life. Secondly, I will define children's literature and its relevance in the first half of the 20th century. Then, there will be a description of the role of women in the Victorian era. The third point, central in the analysis, will explain the role of women in Barrie's *Peter Pan* by explaining how women are presented in the novel and will analyze if Wendy belongs to the role that is assigned to the women of the Victorian society. Finally, I will present the conclusions and clarify if our first purpose of knowing if Wendy fills in the role assigned to women in the Victorian society has been achieved.

1. About the author of *Peter Pan*: James Matthew Barrie

Born in Kirriemuir (Scotland), James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937) was considered a successful novelist and playwright. He belonged to an aristocratic family and was the seventh of eight brothers. Even if he studied at the University of Edinburgh, he would always admit that the education that most influenced him was the one taught at home by his mother Margaret Ogilvie. After graduating at University of Edinburgh in 1882, he started working in different journals. As expressed in the introduction of *Penguin Popular classics* (1995), Barrie decided to move to London where he would focus on his own writing (1). As a result, he "published several collections of stories and novels including *Auld Licht Idylls*, *A window in Thrums*, and *The Little Minister*" (1).

According to Silvia Herreros de Tejada in her essay "Peter Pan la obra completa" (2009), Barrie was the best known author of his time (3). His first play *Richard Savage* was published in 1891 and his most revealing book *Tommy and Grizel* was published in 1900. But, the truth is that his most famous play, *Peter Pan*, was also one of the most popular stories among children's literature. It blends together diverse factors such as autobiography, myth and fantasy; which are recurrent elements in, for example, Lewis Carroll's distinguished work *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). Barrie decided to take as a basis of the story the biography of a friend named Arthur Davies; they met each other in Kensington Gardens. Combining these events, Barrie would bring together his own autobiography with fantastic elements in the *Peter Pan*'s story. As explained by Herreros de Tejada, *Peter Pan* was firstly performed in 1904 in a Christmas event and due to its success, J.M. Barrie decided to transform the play into a novel in 1911. Consequently, J.M. Barrie became very popular due to this story; he received worldwide recognition and the story has been consistently

performed in many stages and reproduced in different movie versions not to mention that it has been translated into different languages. According to the encyclopedia *Children's Literature Review* (2007), J.M. Barrie received many honorary degrees from renowned institutions such as Oxford University in 1926 and Cambridge University in 1930.

J.M. Barrie was an author who reflected his sadness into his writing, as we can clearly appreciate in the case of *Peter Pan*. The reason behind this was that he did not have an easy life; there is an important event in his life which affected this story from the very beginning: when he was six years old he lost one of his brothers. Therefore we could understand that this fact could have helped to the creation of a dramatic atmosphere surrounding the story. As a consequence of this episode, his mother was devastated and that is why J. M. Barrie spent the rest of his childhood trying to fulfil the empty space his brother left in their lives (Estrella Cardona Gamio 1)

According to Piers Dudgeon in his *Neverland: J. M. Barrie, the Du Mauriers, and the dark side of Peter Pan* (2011), J.M.Barrie wrote *Peter Pan* during his marriage with Mary Ansell, a marriage that would have an unhappy ending as they got divorced. In the period when he was married, he received a Saint Bernard dog as a gift, which inspired him to create Nana, which was the Darling family's dog and also their babysitter. While J.M. Barrie was walking down the Kensington Gardens accompanied by his dog, he met Arthur and Sylvia Davies who, apart from being inspirational for creating the characters of *Peter Pan*, would also become J.M. Barrie's close friends (Herrerros de Tejada 9). In 1908, the year when J.M. Barrie divorced, a tragic event would hit him very hard: in fact Arthur would die due to a cancer, and Sylvia would follow her husband's path by dying from the same disease the following year. These tragedies affected J.M. Barrie's life, as he would be responsible of taking care of their five children; Peter, John, Michael, Nicholas and Arthur. Even if he treated them as if they were his own children, it is believed that none of these children were happy during their lives. Moreover, some of them claimed that they finally decided to move away from him. Having in mind Estrella Cardona Gamio's words in "James Matthew Barrie's biography" (2002), it is declared that Michael unfortunately decided to kill himself in 1921 due to the social pressure he suffered. This last misfortune was another tragic event that made the author become scared of what the future would offer him.

It is evident that J.M. Barrie did not only demonstrate that his relationship with children was better than the one with grown-ups, but also that he was not capable of having an adult life and that is why he sheltered in some fantasy stories as *Peter Pan*. He also believed that after the age of two, life starts getting gradually worse and this is what is

illustrated in the beginning of the story; “You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end” (1) which clearly indicates that growing up is not such a good idea. J.M. Barrie also wrote that there was a terrible event in his life that happened when he discovered that he was no longer a child and that he would have to stop playing. In relation to the ideas that has been previously mentioned, he added that he was the one who mastered the cure for unhappiness; by using his limitless imagination, he would travel to a better place in order to escape from this tragic life. Moreover, he would fly to a fantastic world which was bigger than the Earth. This place was filled with brighter colours and heroes and heroines who were brave enough to fight against the cruelest villains (Encabo Fernandez & Varela Tembra 98).

It is also important to mention that there were some recognizable characteristics related to all over his work which have been significant in its success within different generations. It is true that even if this story was addressed for children, in reality the ones who have done a better job understanding so were the adults. The reason behind this is that in reality adults tended to understand the story easier due to a rise of “problem novels” in 1960. Most plots mostly focused on social problems than on their effects on individuals and many authors protected themselves by writing them in that way.

According to Encabo Fernández and Varela Tembra in their article “Innocence, Sadness and Fantasy: Salinger and Barrie in Children’s and young adult literature” (2008), J.M. Barrie decided to provide the copyright of *Peter Pan* to the sick children in Ormond Street Hospital (London) before dying. Each and every time the book has been published or the play has been performed in Great Britain, the hospital receives the earned money. As the author did not want to share the amount of money he would earn with the story, no one has been able to discover this secret legacy he left for the weak children (97). It is necessary to remark that due to J.M. Barrie’s generosity, the boy who would not grow up has helped many unhealthy children for seventy years.

2. Children’s literature

There is not a unique definition for defining children’s literature, according to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson in *Essentials of Children’s Literature. Learning about children and their literature* (2005): “Children’s literature is good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interests to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction” (9). At the same time, it is important to highlight that there have been many critical approaches to children's literature which catalogued this

kind of literature for young readers. Due to the creation of the press in 1400s, in many stories, that were previously transmitted orally, got adapted into literature for children. This would produce a rise in the literature for children. In the past, the orally transmitted stories could easily get lost or there could be variations of the same story. Indeed, after having been printed, many classic children's tales started to be written for adults and then adapted for young readers.

With the passage of time, there have been some critical approaches to children's literature. Mariana Ferrarelli in "Children's Literature and Gender: a critical Approach" (2007) defines this type of literature as "a turning point for younger readers" (64). People usually draw a line between adults and children, misplacing the literature for children in a second position by arguing that it is easier to read and understand. Nowadays, literature for children is regarded as an essential step that is necessary to take before children get involved in more complex readings that require a critical approach. That is to say, before they step up into the world of "adult's literature" (66).

What Ferrarelli explains about the relevance of children's literature is highly significant; she comments that this literature is crucial "for the construction of an image of the world" (63). What she really means by these words is that this kind of literature has influenced in the development of young readers and it has also helped them to know what surrounds them. That is to say, even if they are not aware of it, young readers minds' are entirely influenced by this kind of literature.

As has been previously explained, children's literature has been repeatedly compared to adult literature. Many authors have demonstrated that both varieties have many characteristics in common. But, it is not taken into consideration that "Children are not little adults. They are different from adults in experience but not in species, or to say it differently, in degree but not in kind" (Encabo Fernandez & Varela Tembra 95). In other words, the literature for younger people is different from the one for adults, not just in the content but in degree and vocabulary. Besides, it is important to understand the fact that younger people feel and enjoy their readings as much as adults do, even though their knowledge and experience in reading differ. As an example of this we find the case of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1998) which was first seen as children's literature, but eventually it became more popular among adults.

Perry Nodelman defines in his book *The pleasures of children's literature* (1992) literature for children as:

It is simple and straightforward; focuses on action; is about childhood; expresses a child's point of view; is optimistic; tends toward fantasy; is a form of pastoral idyll; views an un-idyllic world from the viewpoint of innocence; is didactic; tends to be repetitious; and, tends to balance the idyllic and the didactic. (95)

In the quote above, the researcher defines literature for children as a simple reading. In addition, he claims that this subcategory of literature might gather both fantasy and innocence. He also adds that it is mainly characterised for having simple actions. However, it is not the only definition that has been provided to this kind of literature. Furthermore, Lynch-Brown. & Tomlinson also made clear that “Children’s literature is good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interests to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction” (3). The process of reaching adult literature is achieved step by step from the birth of children to their adolescence as explained above.

Concerning the characteristics literature for children should gather, it is relevant to highlight that there are both textual and stylistic differences between adults’ literature and children's literature. To begin with, children’s literature has always been characterized by its transparency; when a story is labelled for children, it is presupposed that it will have a simple vocabulary and a clear structure which will help the readers to understand the whole story, while the structures in adult literature are more complex. This fact does not help them to understand the message of the story, which is normally written with a didactic purpose that avoids taboo topics such as death.

Certainly, there are always exceptions to the rules, and that is the case of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Carroll, apart from deciding not to follow the rules that have been previously explained, also ignored all the stereotypes followed by other writers who wrote for young readers. The story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has no clear purpose, it was written with no intention of teaching anything in particular. This aim was fulfilled by the author since the book has been classified as difficult to understand and also confusing for children.

Following with the characteristics of children’s literature, it is remarkable to mention that authors might avoid writing about taboo topics as they should not appear in children’s literature. Among taboo topics, death and abuse are two polemic ones. Regarding death, even if it is not very present along J.M. Barrie’s work, the reader could repeatedly discover by the

words of Peter that: “To die will be an awfully big adventure” (99), as a reference to those dangerous situations in which he is the only one to enjoy them.

It is of a considerable importance to take into account the ending of the common children's literature stories. Following the rule, authors might write a “happy ending”; modern and adult literatures have influenced this characteristic to become more complex, such as giving an open ending to the stories (Ferrarelli 65). In the case of many children stories, the readers could find out that the end is not really an end because, nowadays, different endings are accepted. Regarding *Peter Pan*'s ending, we could find that the end is not really an end. We consider important to remember the fact that Wendy, Michael and John decide to go back with their family and the Lost Boys are adopted to stay in London too, while Peter decides to continue living in Neverland but, as the last pages of the story show, *Peter Pan*'s story continues with Wendy's daughter; Jane, then with Jane's daughter; Margaret, and as Barrie wrote, the story continues: “Peter comes for Margaret and takes her to the Neverland, where she tells him stories about himself, to which he listens eagerly. When Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and thus it will go on” (185).

All in all, it is believed that *Peter Pan* was initially written by having in mind adults, though it became more popular among children after some years. Taking this into account, diverse versions of the story have been written for both audiences, adults and children.

To conclude with the connection between children's literature and the novel of our analysis, we should bear in mind the notion that Lewis Carroll inserted in his *Alice adventures in Wonderland*: “a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story” (66). That is, when an author wants to write a story for young readers, he may be attempting to persuade older readers.

2.1. Children's Fantasy literature, a general view to understand *Peter Pan*

Children's literature and adult literature are very connected to reality, and this relation was shown in the characters that J.M. Barrie created in *Peter Pan*. It is also believed that fantastic elements are really helpful for literature, since they keep the reader's' motivation while reading books. Fantasy stories are the ones that have travelled through time, from generation to generation, and have been explained from both perspectives of children and young adults. As has been explained in Gabrielle Owen's essay “Queer Theory Wrestles the “Real” Child: Impossibility, Identity, and Language in Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan*” (2010) about fantasy literature for children: “Children's fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but in that it hangs on an impossibility, one

which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between an adult and a child” (258).

Besides, related to fantasy, Tolkien explains in his “On Fairy-Stories” (1947) that “it is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, or obscure the perception of, scientific verity” (114). Fantasy for children is considered similar to children’s literature. It could not emerge until childhood was accepted. Moreover, most times was published for upper middle class children. Fantasy in children’s literature books is mainly connected with innocence and fairy tales, as it is reflected in the character of Peter in *Peter Pan* through the whole story.

The study of 2008 made by Nikolajeva and titled “The Development of children’s fantasy” points out that the first fantasy book that has been considered to be addressed to children was *The Nutcracker and the Mouse king* (1816), where the main character was a little girl in a nursery and most of the characters were toys. Moreover, it is important to say that fantasy plays a crucial role in children’s literature from the very beginning of the genre in such popular stories like Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in the Wonderland*, George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and its sequel *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), or Carlo Collodi’s *Pinocchio* (1883).

Certainly, as Tolkien mentions in “On Fairy-Stories”, short fantasy stories present magic and other supernatural elements which lead to a global association between both fantasy and children’s literature. He argues that: “It is true that in recent times fairy-stories have usually been written or adapted for children. But so may music be, or verse, or novels, or history, or scientific manuals. It is a dangerous process, even when it is necessary” (122). Tolkien also explains his opinion about fantasy stories where “Fairy-stories should not be specially associated with children. They are associated with them: naturally, because children are human and fairy-stories are a natural human taste – though not necessarily a universal one” (135). In addition, he explains that although children's literature stories have many fictional elements, fantasy belongs to a different genre. At the same time, there are some stories which lack in those fantastic characteristics and there are other fantasy novels which are not necessarily classifiable as literature for children.

According to Sara Gilead’s “Magic Abjured” (1992), there are stories where the returning of characters from the secondary world where the fantasy takes place to the real world supposes a physical growth of the protagonist that makes him/her older, and that is interpreted as an exposition of the protagonist’s desires and emotions. He/She returns home with an acceptable level of maturity and with a completely formed social entity (22). There is

a type of return in fantasy stories where the reaction of the protagonist supposes the fact of going in the opposite way of reality. These characters will try to keep the fantasy in the real world, acting in a tragic way when they have to socialize themselves (55). Peter is a clear example of this case. He decides that he wants to continue being a young boy without going to school so, he finally stays in Neverland.

To finish this point, we could agree with Martha Stoddard Holmes when in her “Peter Pan and the possibilities of Children’s fantasy Literature” (2009) affirms that *Peter Pan or the boy who would not grow up* results a complex novel to classify into a particular genre (132). The reason is that when J.M. Barrie wrote the story he decided to combine different fantasy minor genres and that is why we can not categorize as one or another. In any case, it is clear that Barrie took into account most of the children’s fantasy literature rules and wrote a fantastic story easy to follow and understand by readers.

3. The role of women in Barrie’s *Peter Pan*

3. 1. Family structure in the Victorian era: Wendy’s family as an example

In this first section, the Victorian era family life will be illustrated through the story of *Peter Pan*.

To start with the analysis, it is important to mention that the Victorian period corresponds to the nineteenth century, when Queen Victoria was in the crown. By this time, there were many social changes, such as the creation of different job positions linked to the industrialization. Moreover, the citizenship of this period of time substantially valued their family. According to Estrella Cardona Gamio in her essay titled “James Barrie” (2012), the reason behind this was that they all had a family model to follow: the one created by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. On the basis of this model, they had to have a pacific, lovely and respectable home, with more than one child among their families. These children had to respect a strict education and they also had to play nursery rooms with their nannies (1). I would like to relate and analyze these characteristics under the scope of the story written by J. M. Barrie. To achieve this purpose, it is essential to clarify that in this story there are two different representations of how the structure of the family could be organised: the one in London and the one in Neverland.

Regarding the patriarchal hierarchy that we could perceive in the Londoner families of the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the time when J.M. Barrie placed his novel, we can start by affirming that Wendy’s father, Mr. Darling, follows the general pattern of this period. He is the one in charge of the financial support of his family

since he works outside home, in an office located in London. In the case of Wendy's mother, Mrs. Darling, she portrays a lovely behaviour which helps the environment of the house to be pacific and respectful. Moreover, it is worth noting that in this story there is a dog called Nana which takes care of the children by playing with them and adopting the role of the traditional nanny. Freire remarks that in Barrie's period men generally tended to portray a dominative behaviour (240). The reason behind this strong image could be that they were the ones working outside home and, consequently, the ones maintaining their family. Besides, whichever decision they took, all the members of the family had to respect it, since the decisions they made were absolutely unquestionable by this time. Another crucial aspect to take into consideration would be the social pressure in this epoch. Based on what Freire explains, the contemporary men were worried about their social status (241). In addition, it is worth mentioning that the male descendants of these families inherited the knowledge from their fathers, who had to educate the inheritors with strict rules and values.

In *Peter Pan's* story, the one representing the patriarchal figure is Wendy's father, Mr. Darling. He is portrayed as a manipulative, dominant and arrogant person who occasionally mistreats the nanny who is called Nana. When Nana comes in with Michael's medicine, Mr. Darling instead of being thankful to his nanny, he indicates the following: "You will never carry the bottle in your mouth again, Nana" (17). It is of considerable importance to mention a situation that happens at the beginning of the story, when all the members of the family are having a conversation in the children's room: he complains to his dog by claiming that "it is being a mistake to have a dog for a nurse" (17) and that "I have an uneasy feeling at that she looks upon the children as puppies" (17). It is true that all the family members were comfortable with Nana at home, but due to the fact related to the social pressure, he is portrayed as being always angry. Moreover, Wendy's family is the only one having a dog as a nanny, so Mr. Darling blames this situation by proclaiming excuses which validate the necessity of having a human nanny instead of a dog nanny.

Based on the information that has been provided in this section, we could appreciate that J.M Barrie followed the contemporary Victorian society in the creation of Wendy's family structure. Moreover, the different events that have been described reflect that Mr. Darling is the patriarchal figure dominating both his family and his wife. Not only are the characteristics of the Victorian era represented in his attitude, but also in the portrayal of women.

3.2. Women in the novel

In this second section we are going to go one step further in our analysis by paying attention to the different roles and positions that women had during J. M. Barrie's story.

In relation to the figure of women, we should bear in mind that by this time women belonged to the private sphere of home. Besides, apart from adopting the mother role, they also needed to be excellent wives. Furthermore, as Freire clarifies in his study "Wendy or the girl who was forced to grow up" (2007), these mothers were usually focused on the well-being of their families, by taking care of their children and dealing with the house chores (248).

When analyzing *Peter Pan's* story, we can appreciate something which apparently does not belong to the traditional scheme of the Victorian era. Within the narration of Neverland, J.M. Barrie describes a family scheme which is commanded by the mother figure of Wendy. Rather than portraying the Victorian patriarchal family scheme that we have described in the previous section, Wendy's new family has a matriarchal structure based on the affectionate behaviour she learns from her mother Mrs. Darling. This situation occurs once she is in Neverland, when she is accompanied by Peter, her relatives and the rest of boys. For instance, when they are in trouble with Garfio, Wendy represents this mother figure and protects the boys:

The Lost Boys: We are on the rock, Wendy.

Wendy: We must go...

The Lost Boys: Yes.

Wendy: Shall we swim or fly? (98)

Looking into the other side of the coin, it is also possible to perceive that the author repeatedly portrayed women throughout the storyline as if they were secondary characters and he showed to the audience that women had no real worth in the fantastic isle. For example, when Wendy tries to explain to The Lost Boys how mothers behave with children, Peter does not appreciate what she is saying and he starts to grow angry: "Wendy you are wrong about mothers" (116). In addition, it is important to mention that men in *Peter Pan's* story do not treat women in the same way as they do to men: "Wendy, she is only a girl" (70).

It is evident that each feminine character has a specific role in Neverland, as in the case of Tinker Bell, who is Peter's friend and stays by his side during the whole story. The truth behind this is that J.M. Barrie represents women as the companion of men, their exclusive function is to satisfy the necessities of the male characters:

Peter: none of us has even been trucked in at night

Wendy: Oh. - her arms went out to him-

Peter: And you could darn our clothes, and make pockets for us. None of us have any pockets.

Wendy: Of course, it's awfully fascinating! (34)

Moreover, there is a conversation between the two pirates Smee and Hook which signals that Wendy is in Neverland only to help Peter and satisfy his necessities: "Perhaps she is hanging about here to help Peter" (92).

It is also important to take into account that in Neverland there are not ordinary women, since they all are fictional characters such as fairies or mermaids. Heather Shipley explains in her article "Fairies, Mermaids, Mothers, and Princesses: Sexual Difference and Gender Roles in Peter Pan" (2012) that some female characters are "not current women" (154), by referring to the fact that the different women who appear in this story are not real humans (151), such as Tinker Bell, who is a fairy. Apart from that, she also explains that Wendy is just a "mother" who could fly with Tinker's help (151). Another example is Tiger Lily, described as a young Indian who is untouchable for Peter.

Shipley claims that females are only allowed in Neverland to work as mistresses (153). Taking into account the character of Wendy, she usually stays at home while Peter goes out -similar to the role assigned in a standard Victorian family-. Moreover, Wendy is the one waiting Peter, the man, as if they were a couple: "Sometimes he came home with his head bandaged, and then Wendy cooed over him" (82). Apart from that, it is of considerable importance to mention that there are different conflicts during the stay in Neverland, which are produced because of the fact that all the characters, except Garfio, love Peter. For instance, at the beginning of the story, when Peter, Wendy, John and Michael arrive to Neverland, Tinker Bell is already there with them and driven by her feelings to Peter, she explains to The Lost Boys -who are waiting for Peter in Neverland- that Peter wants them to attack "a bird" who actually is Wendy: "Peter wants you to shoot the Wendy" (63). Fortunately, nothing tragic happens afterwards, but Peter becomes very angry with Tinker Bell and The Lost Boys.

Based on the information that has been provided previously and regarding the storyline, it is clear that female characters do not take a huge role in these adventures in Neverland. Contrary to this, the ones who have interesting and great adventures are solely Peter and captain Hook -Peter's enemy-. In addition to this idea, Wendy adds the following statement: "He -Peter- often went out alone, and when he came back you were never absolutely certain whether he had an adventure -with C. Hook- or not" (81).

It is true that J. M. Barrie represents female characters as if they have “restricted” their own voice, that is, as if they are not able to talk. For instance, this silence happens when Wendy and Peter go to the Lagoon and while they are observing the mermaids, Wendy notices that “she never had a civil word from one of them” (85). Accordingly, even if Tiger Lily appears within the story, due to some unknown reasons, she never speaks a word. Likewise, Tinker Bell can solely use fairy language and the only one who is capable of understanding her language is the main character Peter. Furthermore, as indicated by Wendy, she tries to understand Tinker Bell’s language, but unfortunately she cannot understand her:

Wendy: Peter... you don’t mean to tell me that there is a fairy in this room

Peter: She was here just now... You don’t hear her, do you?

Wendy: the only sound I hear... is like a tinkle of bells

Peter: Well, that’s Tink, that’s the fairy language. (30)

All in all, the only female character being capable of talking during the whole story is Wendy, who at the same time is the only one who turns on the interest of Peter. This fantastic story represents diverse adventures wherein all the protagonists are men. Watching these scenes from this last perspective, they could represent men in a superior position, since women have no voice and consequently, they are not able to give their own opinion or do whatever they want. On the basis of these ideas, Shipley argues that “this demonstrates the control of speech that Irigaray (1989) sees in societal organizations as well (...) that the communication between women is confined to male parameters and regulation” (157). In accordance with this idea, we could venture that the women of this story were created to satisfy the main protagonist’s necessities.

3.3. Wendy in the novel

Delving into the representation of the women characters all through the storyline, one of the most significant characters of the story is the eldest sibling of the Darling family Wendy. As stated in the study of Freire, she is described as “the girl who was forced to grow up” (239) due to the fact that she lives in a society that obliges her to grow up faster than the usual contemporary girls. This situation may lead the reader to believe that she always behaves as an adult woman. As part of the Victorian women classification, Wendy believes that each and every child needs love and care.

In this story, Wendy represents all those women from the Victorian times, following the stereotypical characteristics of her contemporary society: mother role, domestic manager and the one taking care of children. This is the reason why Wendy decides to adopt the

mother role when she realizes that there is no mother in Neverland, neither a mother for her brothers and herself nor for The Lost Boys:

Nibs: Please Wendy, be our mother.

Wendy: Of course. It's frightfully fascinating, but you see I am only a little girl.

Nibs: That doesn't matter, what we need is just a nice motherly person.

Wendy: I feel that is exactly what I am, I will do my best. (74)

Freire adds that Wendy is obsessed with the fact of being mother, and "adopting" the mother role in Neverland is related with this maternal necessity (Freire 245). Throughout the story Wendy wants to be the ideal woman, "She represents the traditional Victorian woman, who wishes to be the perfect woman" (Freire 240). Apart from this, Freire also explains that Wendy is a woman that due to her culture, she is just a woman who only worries about living according to the social rules and values of her period of time. We can justify this idea indicating an event that occurs at the end of the story, when Peter explains that her life has changed and that she has everything she wanted to have with him, since she followed the rules that marked her whole life: "I am a married woman... and the little girl in the bed is my baby" (183).

In many situations, Wendy intends to imitate her mother's attitude as Wendy considers her to be a perfect woman. Based on this idea, Wendy takes her mother as a reference to become a perfect woman and consequently, she also forces herself to mature rapidly. In the beginning of the story, there is a conversation between Peter and Wendy where Peter tells her that he can not find his shadow and due to this situation he does not feel good. Following this conversation, Wendy tries to act as a mature woman and speaks to him in very selected words that Peter does not understand. For instance, when he states "what's sewn?" (26), Wendy shouts him in a sarcastic tone with the intention of demonstrating that she is a mature girl: "you are dreadfully ignorant" (26).

We could appreciate that Wendy enjoys practicing all those typical activities that women in her period had to do, such as narrating stories to her boys, cleaning and cooking. Moreover, as indicated previously, she acts like a real mother: "Dear boys, I feel that I have a message to you from your real mothers, and it is this -We hope our sons will die like English Gentlemen-" (132). For instance, talking about the first chapter of the story, it is possible to perceive that she likes playing games and adopting the mother role within them: "She wants to be an abnegated mother and wife" (Freire 240). In addition to this, in the following dialogue from *Peter Pan* we can appreciate that she describes John as her husband while they are playing a game:

John: We are doing an act; we are playing at being you and father (to his mother). A little less noise there.... I am happy to inform you, Mrs. Darling that you are now a mother. You have missed the chief thing: you haven't asked, "boy or girl?"

Wendy: Now let us pretend we have a baby.

John: (good-naturedly). I am happy to inform you, Mrs. Darling, that you are now a mother. You have missed the chief thing: you haven't asked, 'boy or girl?'

Wendy: I am so glad to have one at all, I don't care which it is.

John: That is just the difference between gentlemen and ladies. Now, you tell me.

Wendy: I am happy to acquaint you, Mr. Darling, you are now a father. (7)

Wendy has the patriarchal figure as the centre of her life and as a consequence of this, she wants to be both a great mother and a great wife. It is true that in the adventure of Neverland Wendy has the chance of deciding who she wants to be and how she wants to live, and she is the one creating her own family model by living in a world full of fantasy and imposing her own rules, but in accordance to the Victorian period.

The girl who was forced to grow up -Wendy- is always the one taking care of her brothers in Neverland, as well as her mother does in London. Moreover, Freire adds that young girls usually identify themselves with their own mothers, and that is the reason why Wendy tries to be the best mother: "Girls naturally identify with their mother as they grow up, and that this makes them into mothers" (242). At the same time, as a Victorian female, she is in search of the perfect boy:

Peter: ... we are rather lonely. You see, Wendy, we have no female companionship.

Wendy: Are none of the other children girls?

Peter: Oh no; girls, you know, are much too clever to fall of their prams. (31)

The quote above evidences one of the reasons why Wendy wants Peter to be her spouse. Besides, when Wendy meets Peter, she feels very comfortable and the reason behind this is that Peter is really nice with women. Moreover, she sees in him a perfect gentleman and this image absolutely improves when he tells her than women are better than men:

Peter: Wendy, don't withdraw, I can't help crowing, Wendy, when I'm pleased with myself. Wendy, one girl is worth more than twenty boys"

Wendy: (peeping over the shit) You really think so, Peter?

Peter: Yes, I do.

Wendy: I think it's perfectly sweet of you, and I shall get up again. (27)

After having this conversation, Wendy starts to think as an adult and she feels both praised and happy about his words, so she moves and "sat with him on the side of the bed" (27). In this precise moment, Wendy contemplates Peter as the typical English gentleman who acts

politely (Freire 245), and due to the education she has received, she wishes to feel protected and loved by Peter. Moreover, there are more occasions when Peter admits that women are special, such as when he declares that “girls are much too clever to fall out of their prams” (31). Furthermore, he also believes that the fact that women want to be protected by other people is quite positive (Freire 246). Following this, Peter treats women with respect and in the case of Wendy, this respect derives in the representation of Wendy adopting the role of the mother.

In accordance with these ideas, it is clear that Wendy is fascinated with Peter and his gallantry, since he clearly represents the husband that all women wanted to have in the Victorian period. Unfortunately, Peter does not want to have a wife by his side, he simply contemplates Wendy as if she was his mother. When Wendy realises Peter’s feelings and that he does not want her as his wife, she becomes disillusioned:

Wendy: (knowing she ought not to probe but driven to it by something within). What are you exact feelings for me, Peter?

Peter: (in the classroom) those of a devoted son, Wendy.

Wendy: (turning away) I thought so.

Peter: You are so puzzling. Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.

Wendy: (with spirit) not, indeed it isn’t.

Peter: Then, what is it?

Wendy: I isn’t for a lady to tell. (56)

ShIPLEY believes that the men of this story are the ones who control every single situation (147) and, at the same time, she also explains that if women should have the possibility of talking within the story, *Peter Pan* would get a completely different story (148). To reinforce this idea, she explains that there is a passage at the beginning of the story where Peter tells Wendy to leave the nursery room due to the following two reasons: first of all, because he does not want her to grow up and, secondly, because Peter knows that The Lost Boys need a mother. Afterwards, as the story goes on, it is highlighted that the role Wendy plays in Neverland is to become The Lost Boys’ mother. Furthermore, ShIPLEY also indicates that the male characters think that Wendy’s obligation is to become the mother of The Lost Boys. Therefore, when Wendy arrives to Neverland, the boys expect her to become their housewife and satisfy their needs: “I have brought a mother at last for you all” (66).

At the end of the story, Wendy goes back home to London with her brothers and The Lost Boys. Instead, Peter decides to stay in Neverland because he does not want to grow up.

After some years, Peter decides to visit her and he realises that Wendy is not young anymore and that she has a daughter. Unfortunately for him, this sad reality affects him negatively:

Peter: What is it?

Wendy: I am old, Peter. I am ever so much more than twenty. I grew up long ago.

Peter: You promised not to.

Wendy: I couldn't help it. I am a married woman, Peter.

Peter: No. You are not

Wendy: Yes, and the little girl in the bed is my baby. (183)

All considered, we have appreciated in this section that Wendy goes from wanting to be a mother figure who imitates Mrs. Darling and establishes a matriarchal family structure in Neverland to returning to London and satisfying this desire by getting married and having a beloved daughter. In addition, in the last scenes of the novel we could perceive that J.M. Barrie decides that his feminine character will follow the contemporary Victorian rules by having a prototypical family, while Peter will not.

Conclusion

Based on the data that has been provided during this research, this last section will support the completion of the study by summarizing what has been previously explained within this study and providing some conclusions that could be derived from this dissertation.

In this paper, the novel *Peter Pan* has been analysed in order to prove that one of its main characters, Wendy, represents a standardized model of a prototypical woman in the Victorian era. To achieve our purpose, James Barrie's life and the reflection of his personal life in *Peter Pan* have been presented firstly. After that, a general description of what Children's Literature is and how *Peter Pan* fits into the genre have completed the background information of our analysis. In addition, the role of the women characters in Barrie's *Peter Pan* has been analysed by taking into account how the family structure in the Victorian era was and using Wendy's family as an example. Then, we have gone one step further by presenting the role that women, specially Wendy, have in the novel.

I would like to indicate the conclusions that could be drawn from this study. First of all, J.M. Barrie followed the characteristics that were present in the contemporary Victorian society for his novel. Moreover, we have appreciated that the prototypical patriarchal family structure is present in the novel. Secondly, by analyzing the role Wendy displays all through the book, we have justified that she follows this patriarchal scheme, even when she establishes her own matriarchal hierarchy in Neverland.

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