EXPLORATIONS OF CHILDHOOD GENDER-FLUIDITY AND THE SUBVERSION OF MASCULINITY IN *PETER PAN*

by

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ABSTRACT

RYAN PATRICK WEBER. Explorations of Childhood Gender-Fluidity and the Subversion of Masculinity in *Peter Pan*. (Under the direction of DR. MARK WEST)

In declaring Peter Pan as the only child who will not grow up, J.M. Barrie has developed a character with an unmatched capacity for subverting masculine forms of normalization, social acceptance, and gender appropriation. Through Peter's consistent power through performativity as well as J.M. Barrie's own depictions of the adult male, *Peter Pan* demonstrates a succinct critique of the male at the dawn of the twentieth century. This thesis explores how Peter Pan subverts concepts of cultural construction, the performance of childhood gender, and the progress of maturation from the gender-fluid child to the fully gendered adult. The systems of power which seek to normalize a child's gender manifest through masculine institutions – namely marriage, family, church, education, and the financial system – and force the abandonment of childhood and the acceptance of normative gender. Peter Pan, as eternal child and innate fantasy, holds singular agency over this process of maturation and is able to playfully perform his way out of heteronormative maturation. J.M. Barrie presents two ideas of death in the novel: a passage from childhood to adulthood, and physical death. Mr. Darling, espousing the masculine institutions of marriage, family, and economy, illustrates an imprisonment of the male to the first death, each child is destined to pass away into a man. Captain Hook symbolically represents the institutions of the church and education system, and tries to usher Peter's demise, yet meets his own physical doom. Peter, however, continues to show mastery of performance and gender-fluidity as eternal youth.

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CHAPTER 1: EXPLORATIONS OF GENDER-FLUIDITY IN *PETER PAN*

Everyone grows up, everyone will die, except one very exceptional child. J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* offers readers this immediate tension which weaves through the entire narrative. The recognition of this maturation and progress toward death, as Barrie relates it, stems from the overt influence and authority of a child's parents. After commenting that "all children, except one, grow up," the narrator introduces Wendy, who quickly recognizes her own mortality:

> One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, 'Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!' This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end. (Barrie 7)

Barrie's introduction demonstrates two overarching ideas of death: The first death is one in which the child "passes away" into adulthood, and the second death is the physical death of all humans. Peter Pan sees neither form of death: he is the perpetual child, and this eternality establishes him as a character of immense complexity and power. It is this narrative truth which provides the foundation for a complex gendered reading of *Peter Pan*; Peter does not become a man, nor does he want to become one, and Peter's role as a perpetual child allows his gender and identity to remain in a constant state of fluidity, circumventing authority, and providing him with singular agency. This particular agency holds the unique ability to subvert the masculine institutional influences as depicted

through the two primary figures of male authority in the novel: Captain Hook and Mr. Darling.

Judith Butler's conversations about gender and performativity are particularly illuminating in understanding the unique role that Peter plays within children's and adolescent literature. She argues in *Gender Trouble* that "Gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler 34). This performative element of gender is not defined by the individual's choice or agency, but rather through socially mandated and constructed norms. The specific gender identity of a man or woman is unavoidably linked to cultural appropriations of that gender, and these appropriations seek to ultimately define the identity of the being. Butler continues to question this societal framework:

> To what extent is 'identity' a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity? In other words, the 'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. (23)

These norms of gender intelligibility work to govern and mandate the ways in which an individual interacts within his/her society, creating normative gender roles to which a person must comply. These manifest in stereotypical ideas of gendered behavior. The man is the breadwinner who goes to work, boys are interested in trucks and sports, and they don't play with dolls. The woman's place is in the home, girls are interested in playing dress-up and having tea parties, and they don't play with trucks. These are all

culturally appropriated stereotypes which are perpetuated through these socially instituted norms and force people to perform gender roles based on their anatomical sex. It stands to reason that it is the goal, whether unconsciously or overtly, of institutions of authority, particularly the parental unit, to seek the repression and conformity of children to successfully perform the gender roles defined by their anatomical sex. In short, children perform gender roles because their parents, their schools, their churches, their societies influence them to do so.

This understanding is vital to a proper gendered reading of *Peter Pan* and the unique role he plays as a character within children's literature. Jacqueline Rose, in *The Case of Peter Pan*, discusses these distinctions of gender and sexuality and how they are culturally defined. She argues that sexuality is defined by two specific questions which must be resolved by the child: questions about the child's own origins and of its sexual identity, or gender difference. Her argument about how children answer this question is illuminating:

> In one sense both of these questions can be answered – children are born of parents and the difference between the sexes is there for all to see. But equally they cannot be answered – behind the question about origins is the idea of a moment when the child did not exist, and behind the question about difference is the recognition that the child's sexual identity rests solely in its differentiation from something (or someone) which it is not. There is a level, therefore, at which both of these questions undermine the very identity which they simultaneously put in place. We answer them *for* the child at the cost of deceiving ourselves. (Rose 16, emphasis in the original)

The influence placed on children by "we," or institutional authority as represented by family, school, religion, and the economy, work to define, categorize, and repress children in a way that is altogether comprehensive. If "we" define origins and gender, "we" define overarching identity and behavior. Childhood for the adult then, becomes a problem to solve and a question to answer. Within this understanding and context, childhood for the child becomes completely passive, subject to authority's cultural definition of gender, and their subsequent passage from boys and girls into men and women as a part of normative development.

The need to appropriate childhood gender roles yields the notion that childhood itself is an existence where identity and gender roles are, by nature, more fluid, ambiguous, and prone to alternative and ever-changing forms of exploration. Rona Knight explores this period during a person's "middle childhood," saying that increased gender fluidity is normal within the child's developmental process:

> The ability to continually elaborate opposite sex feelings and behavior continues past the oedipal period through the child's ongoing capacity for flexible cross-gender identifications. The gender role fluidity found in these normal children supports that theoretical position and suggests that gender role fluidity is a normal process that is not just found in children with gender identity disorder. (36)

This capacity for gender flexibility provides children a necessary tension through their development, and Jean Piaget calls this developmental tension a state of disequilibrium and that it becomes the individual's goal to ultimately achieve equilibrium: "When disequilibrium occurs, it provides an individual the motivation to further assimilation and accommodation and achieve equilibrium. These processes are based on the idea that the

organism finds new equilibrium after a state of disequilibrium (transition) in which all earlier self structures are synthesized into a new structure" (Noam 12). This natural state of gender fluidity, or disequilibrium, typically influences the child and places them in a state of dependence upon authority figures to learn and accept normative gender roles in order to achieve this desired equilibrium, or "the norm," as Butler would define it.

However, Peter Pan is a child who remains in a constant state of disequilibrium and is thereby not bound to the same developmental rules of maturation as other children. Knight supports this as it relates to childhood development: "The disequilibrium of self structures in middle childhood gives children the opportunity to try on different possibilities of gender role identity. As structures remain fluid and discontinuous, so gender identification also becomes fluid" (Knight 35). Structures for Peter are always fluid and discontinuous; therefore his gender identification remains fluid. He doesn't go to school, doesn't attend church, is not immersed in the economic system of Great Britain, and he makes it quite clear from the outset that he does not have parental/familial influences: "'Don't have a mother,' he said. Not only had he no mother, but he had not the slightest desire to have one. He thought them very over-rated persons." (Barrie 26). The discontinuous and fluid structures in Peters life demonstrate a complete reversal in typical child development as it relates to gender identity, Knight shares three different influences which contribute to this discovery of gender equilibrium: "Cross-gender identifications with caring figures are one influence on gender role identity. The social environment of the growing child is another. Another impact on gender role development is the continual changing of self and other structures throughout development" (Knight 35).

That Peter exists outside of all of these social institutions of gender influences gives him lasting power and agency throughout the novel: He lacks caring authority figures, he is the creator and sustainer of his own social environment, and his *self* remains unchanged and ambiguous. The very fact that the narrative begins with all *children*, except one, grow up, instead of all *boys*, augment this idea of gender fluidity. Boys become men, girls become women, but this particular *child* is not bound to social constructions of gender and can therefore keep his gender fluid. He won't become a man because he stays a child forever. This disequilibrium gives Peter the unique ability to keep his gender in a constant state of fluidity.

The goal of this thesis is to prove that, as an extension and byproduct of J.M. Barrie's life, Peter Pan's place within the canon of children's literature is unique because of this perpetual gender fluidity, and this eternality empowers him to subvert masculine institutions of authority as they are symbolically represented through Captain Hook and Mr. Darling. It is important to establish Peter's distinctive place as a character who perpetually inhabits this disequilibrium as a necessary foundation for this subversion. As Rose states, "we" define the origins and sexuality of the child, but Peter represents a child whose very existence is defined by indefinition. He destabilizes his existence as a normal child and ultimately can perform any role he desires apart from gendered influences. Chapter one of this thesis will explore this particular element of Peter Pan's existence. He is a child whose genesis stems from a cultural and historical environment where the very ideas of childhood were transforming and being questioned. He emerges as one who destabilizes self-hood, thereby solidifying his place as one who is free from masculine gender appropriation and can thus perform any act of subversion independent of cultural

construction. Theories of power and repression, and performativity undergirded by gender fluidity from critics like Althusser, Butler, Foucault, and Lacan help illuminate Peter's unique situation as an agent within a masculine system. Peter's place as a perpetual child, which ultimately stems from the instability and indefinition of his character, grants him lasting power as a gender fluid being to subvert masculine authority.

Chapter two will demonstrate how Peter utilizes this power to subvert institutional influences as they are symbolized by Peter's primary nemesis, Captain Hook, who represents institutional authority through his leadership within a masculine subculture of Neverland. Hook's attempts to subdue and prepare Peter to meet his doom ends in frustration and defeat. His primary goal is to stamp out that which is perpetually childlike; Peter represents a being who, by his very nature, is immune to masculine influences to conform him to gender roles therefore it is Hook's primary obsession to kill this child. Peter engages in a subverted Oedipal conquest in order to overcome this attempt to subdue him and maintains his mastery of gender appropriation through his mastery of performance. There are also instances of narrative symbolism which proffers an analysis of the text which highlights Hook's institutional authority. Both Captain Hook's own educational background and subsequent obsession with good form as he learned it in school, as well as a particular instance of symbolic religious subversion, brings awareness to an understanding of masculine authority which is associated with the education and religious systems of England. Peter's triumph over Captain Hook represents not only a defeat over a primary nemesis, but of a dominant male authority figure whose goal is to remove Peter, as a representative of perpetual childhood, from power as a gender fluid and indefinite being.

Chapter three will focus on the influence of Mr. Darling who, as exhibited through his brief introduction and interaction with his family, demonstrates masculine gender norms which Peter altogether subverts in Neverland. Mr. Darling represents stereotypical masculine submission to the economic system of capitalism, adhering to his own place as a laborer within the economy of Britain. The economic undertones also depict a line of thinking about children only in terms of their negative economic impact on families and societies. Mr. Darling also is the patriarchal leader of the Darling family and is the primary influencer for all of the Darling children to find equilibrium within their culturally appropriated gender norms. Mr. Darling's family exhibits a wife whose only duty is to support the husband and raise the children in a domestic setting, and the Darling children are shown throughout the development of the narrative as fully embracing their culturally accepted gender roles. Peter Pan, again through performance and his ability to remain in a state of gender fluidity, displays a subversion of the family unit and upends patriarchal influence by making a playful mockery of Mr. Darling's familial influence. Peter is a child who stands in defiant disobedience against everything that the familial system espouses for children: to see them grow up into men and women who successfully contribute to the reproduction of culturally constructed gendered roles and immersion into the institutions which bind children to these inevitable ends.

Ultimately this gendered reading of *Peter Pan* only begins to probe the depth of Peter's unrestrained power as an undefined, self-less, gender fluid child. He is the only being who holds the ability to accomplish true freedom and mastery over figures and institutions of authority, he is the only being who is unbound to cultural and societal appropriation, and he is the only being who accomplishes what every other being can

never accomplish: to live unquestionably free from influence and to exist as an agent of his own choosing and to reject the two deaths that Barrie depicts in his novel. Peter Pan is a transcendent child, shattering seemingly every limiting boundary which seeks to encapsulate and imprison all other children. He is not bound to the pages of a book or script, nor can he be contained by images and portrayals of him in theatre or film. He is a child who transcends self-hood, gender, and categorization, elements that seem innately necessary to the existence of any being. Peter also transcends time and space, outliving his own creator and existing in a fantasy landscape which is both his only source of containment yet is in itself uncontained. Peter Pan's ultimate power over gendered authority point to a character whose immortality is unlike any other character in a work of literature. This thesis demonstrates Peter Pan's ability to successfully and eternally overcome that which seeks to repress him: outright categorization and definition, Captain Hook, and Mr. Darling; and display a character who, in relation to an exploration of gender norms, will forever be a "Betwixt and Between."

CHAPTER 2: POWER, PERFORMATIVITY, AND THE FLUIDITY OF CHILDHOOD AND GENDER

"All children, except one, grow up." This line places the character of Peter Pan in the unique position of extricating himself from what is typical of the genre of children's literature: the child hero generally learns to establish him/herself within their immediate environment, learning something of their own sense of self and personal power. This sense of self stems from an innate understanding of the sources of power, which seek to repress, define, and categorize in order to develop children into heteronormative, productive members of society. Most children's literature portrays characters within a system and environment that assumes the inevitability of growing up, becoming a man and woman, and the child is a subject, willing or not, to these ends. After all, this is the fate for all children, they grow and mature from boys and girls into men and women, then they die, except one.

On December 27, 1904, at the Duke of York's Theatre in London, play-goers would have received a program for a play entitled, "Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up." This was not a boy who *couldn't* or *shouldn't* grow up, but a boy who simply *wouldn't*, implying choice. The agency therefore given to this particular boy supersedes those pioneering characters in children's literature who precede him. Alice would eventually leave Wonderland and "would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman" (Carroll 138). Tom Sawyer's tale is told as the "history of a boy," meaning the story simply could not continue without including the natural progression of time, becoming the "history of a man." But for Peter, there is no such subjection to the inevitability of growth, aging, maturation toward manhood, and death; he simply chooses

not to do it. In so doing J.M. Barrie, as an extension and byproduct of his own childhood experiences, establishes a character that confuses the categorization of childhood and thereby promotes the idea that childhood gender roles themselves are fluid, performed, and undefinable. The eternality of Peter's childhood, as a gender fluid being, elevates him to a position of power that no other fictional character has been able to achieve.

The historical background of J.M. Barrie's life provides a unique perspective into his own views of childhood, augmenting an overt understanding of childhood which is subject to cultural gender norm appropriation. Barrie's family lived in a remote agricultural center in Kirriemuir, Scotland which has a history of more primitive industrial techniques. During the nineteenth century, a substantial increase in food production took place due to enclosure and advances in agricultural and industrial technology. This growth led to a sizable boom in the industrial labor force, and the Industrial Revolution saw an overwhelming increase in people's need to relocate to towns rather than rural villages. However, both Barrie's mother and father were raised in an environment that avoided such mechanization of industry and instead relied on the work of one's hands. While many of the overt masculine and feminine influences in Barrie's life will be discussed in the following chapters, it is clear from the economic and social realities of the Industrial Revolution and from specific episodes of Barrie's family history that childhood is seen to have been commodified, performative in nature, and subjected to the adult tendency to manipulate and define the child's gender identification and normativity.

The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain saw a great utilization of child labor for widespread manufacturing, and the nineteenth century witnessed an increased focus of

parliamentary legislation which passed through the British government and solidified an impression of childhood that is altogether fluid and transforming. Legislative tension arises between a child whose gender is appropriated through an ever-decreasing emphasis on their utilitarian function and a child whose gender is appropriated through the institution of education. A brief historical exploration of this ideological shift will highlight this dichotomy. In the Cotton Factories Regulation Act of 1819, the minimum working age for a child was set at nine and the maximum number of hours allowed was set at twelve. The Regulation of Child Labor Law of 1833 established that paid inspectors were to enforce the previously passed Cotton Factories Regulation Act; this easily assumes the possibility that between 1819 and 1833 the requirements for that act were not readily adhered to, leading to the supposition that children were vastly overworked. The Ten Hours Bill of 1847 limited the number of working hours for women and children to ten. The Act of 1902 (two years before the first performance of Peter Pan at the Duke of York Theatre) raised the minimum age of employment to twelve years. The institution of these laws exhibits a government, and by extension a society, that is well aware of the cultural and economic issues stemming from child labor, as well as a development of cultural constructions of childhood. Notions of childhood, as an extension of these laws and the enforcement of them, were vastly changing.

Because the overwhelming majority of child labor took place in textile mills and mines, it is difficult to confirm whether these laws would be as easily adopted, let alone enforced, in a remote and agricultural environment such as Kirriemuir, whose economic and industrial emphasis was spinning and weaving cloth by hand. It is clear, however, that childhood itself was undergoing a transformative shift, gradually adjusting its

emphasis from the economic impact of children in the workforce to the development of childhood education as a national value in Britain. Stemming from the ideology of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Emile* and *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, "Something of a consensus emerged portraying children, in the words of the historian Harry Hendrick, as 'innocent, ignorant, dependent, vulnerable, generally incompetent and in need of protection and discipline'" (Heywood 142-143). This altered the conception of the child from one of quantified economic value to one of repression and dependence upon institutional authority, namely the educational system. In terms of gender normativity, the assumption is that children will not know how to develop their gender roles by themselves and are dependent upon the discipline of authority to receive it. Rousseau argues that children must "broken like a horse" and that if children remain uneducated, "everything would go even worse," and they "would be the most disfigured of all… all the social institutions in which we find ourselves would stifle nature in him and put nothing in its place" (Rousseau 12-13). Instead of a child whose gender is quickly defined by their economic value and work, a shift is beginning to take place where the process of labeling childhood gender norms is moving into the classroom. Without these social institutions, the child becomes "disfigured," or gender fluid, which stifles nature within him. The implication is that these social institutions define what is "natural," and without the social institution of the classroom, gender norms are not fully defined and not fully accepted by the child. The classroom gives institutional authority to defining childhood gender normativity in a way that child labor simply could not.

This ideological shift combined with a growing national interest in formal education demonstrates a clear alteration in the conception of childhood in the collective

mindset of Britain. The dichotomy presented between a monetized child and an educated one is a clear pattern within the development of childhood in the nineteenth century. Carolyn Tuttle echoes this sentiment, "Once education is a viable alternative, the childhood of working-class and poor children is spent is school, not in factories, workshops or mines" (Tuttle 254). This complicated and interwoven paradigm between competing conceptions of childhood, and the undergirding source of gender appropriation, as is demonstrated by the history of the Barrie family, was the backdrop for J.M. Barrie's development of his complex ideas about the nature of childhood as they exist in *Peter Pan*.

Barrie's father David had been put to work at an early age as a hand-loom weaver. Lisa Chaney, in her biography of Barrie, writes, "Many weavers, such as David Barrie, had been put to the loom while still children to help supplement the family income. From dawn till dusk, and sometimes beyond, the clatter and thump of the looms could be heard all along Kirriemuir's narrow streets" (Chaney 7). The quantity of cloth that was made in Kirriemuir was said to have been greater than that of any other town in the country. Kirriemuir was one of the last Scottish towns to remain independent of the powerful drive toward industrial influence and mechanization. David Barrie's childhood experience was therefore entirely pragmatic and industrious, working quite literally with his hands every day from a very early age. Childhood for David, then, represented a submission of his gender fluid self and an acceptance of his gendered role to work with his hands, contribute to the economy, and support the family. His childhood was centered on the very masculine role of utilitarian value and production.

Barrie's mother, Margaret Ogilvy, grew up in the house of a stonemason in a local sandstone quarry. Her mother passed away when Margaret was eight years old. She had a younger brother named David, who was five, and his father never remarried. Because of her father's employment and need to financially support his family, there is no record of the Ogilvy's being supported at home by any extended community or family members. Therefore it is widely accepted that Margaret became a surrogate housewife and mother in the Ogilvy household. Margaret's childhood was sacrificed defined by a gendered appropriation through child labor, supplementing the gender normative ideas that the wife and mother figure must stay home to tend to domestic duties while the husband and father figure works to provide for the overall growth of the British economy and the sustenance of the family unit. For both Margaret and David, their own conceptions of childhood and developing gender roles were mired and combined with traditional adult roles of masculinity and femininity and were defined by the economic value and utility of children.

Even within the narrative of *Peter Pan* itself, Barrie shows Mr. Darling as being wholly preoccupied with the economic impact associated with the arrival of his children: "For a week or two after Wendy came it was doubtful whether they would be able to keep her, as she was another mouth to feed. Mr. Darling was frightfully proud of her, but he was very honourable, and he sat on the edge of Mrs. Darling's bed, holding her hand and calculating expenses, while she looked at him imploringly" (Barrie 8). The Darling family is met with the same economic problem that met Great Britain as a result of the rapid expansion of industry and population in the nineteenth century. Because of the Industrial Revolution and the economic boom it precipitated, population in Great Britain

soared, leading to the idea that higher population meant more mouths to feed. It is this very problem that rends the issue at the heart of the changing definition of childhood at the end of the nineteenth century. Wendy Darling becomes the literary example of these troubling economic times as well as the transforming perceptions of childhood in Britain, she should (according to Rousseau) no longer contribute to the economy as a child-worker, which would all but solve Mr. Darling's intense financial crisis (if only he could send her to work in a factory, doing gender appropriate work to contribute to the Darling family economy). It is now the goal of the institutions of power to educate and ideologically shape her into a gender normative and conforming member of British society. It is clear from this brief example within *Peter Pan* that the tension between what ideologically defines the child was firmly and satirically planted in the collective mindset of Britain as it is represented in institutions of masculine authority.

In contrast to David and Margaret Barrie, J.M. Barrie's childhood reflects the changing ideological landscape within Great Britain. Barrie left home when he was eight years old to live with his older brother, Alexander, in order to attend Glasgow Academy, where his education in classics begin. The rest of his adolescence is defined by various moves around Scotland and subsequent enrollment in Forfar Academy, Dumfries Academy, and finally Edinburgh University where Barrie began his career as a writer. It is clear through this rapid shift between Barrie's parents and Barrie himself that labor was becoming an extinct source of gender appropriation and recognition of the self, and it was being rapidly replaced with the ideological system of education. Instead of forcing gender roles upon the child through immediate entrance into the workforce, the child ideologically and systematically accepts their gender role through an ideological

institution which, according to Althusser, represents an Ideological State Apparatus, which is meant to repress and conform citizens into their proper categories and cultural function.

The ramifications of these depictions of childhood demonstrate a vital dynamic within the development of the ideas of childhood as it relates to power, repression, and ultimately childhood/gender performativity. To fully establish *Peter Pan's* unique and powerful place as a work of children's literature and how it weaves through these dynamics, it is important to discuss the nature of power and repression, and the role by which performativity itself manifests within this system. Roberta Seelinger Trites argues in *Disturbing the Universe* that all children's and adolescent literature is about power:

> Children's literature often affirms the child's sense of Self and her or his personal power. But in the adolescent novel, protagonists must learn about the social forces that have made them what they are. They learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad of social institutions within which they must function, including family; school; the church; government; social constructions of sexuality; gender, race, class; and cultural mores surrounding death. (3)

She proceeds to discuss the various conceptions of power as it has developed ideologically through Althusser, Foucault, Butler, and Lacan. Althusser argues that "institutions have a self-perpetuating interest in instilling their ideologies into the masses in order to retain their hegemony" (4). As it relates to sexuality/gender identity, she argues that adolescent novels "usually contain within them some sort of power dynamic wherein the character's sexuality provides him or her with a locus of power. That power needs to be controlled before the narrative can achieve resolution" (83).

These ideologies manifest themselves in *Peter Pan* through the institutions of class, gender, family, religion, and government. These institutions work to help the child achieve gender "resolution," or equilibrium, and this carries adolescent narratives through to their conclusion. Therefore, the ideas of childhood gender identity stem from a system of power and repression over child who is forced to perform culturally mandated tasks in order to retain the hegemony of Britain's institutions by defining their appropriate gender role. Trites continues her discussion surrounding ideas of power by culminating in Lacan's combination of Butler and Foucault's ideas, "Focusing like Butler on the interior formation of the subject and like Foucault on the exterior forces that repress the subject, Lacan describes individual power in terms of *assomption*: the individual's active assumption of responsibility for the role into which society casts her or him" (5-6). This assumes the external institutional influence working to appropriate gender roles onto the child, and the child's internal reception of these roles to achieve equilibrium or resolution.

Trites analyzes various works of adolescent fiction to prove that this network of power and repression exists to mature the child (both child protagonists and child readers) into grown adults who become perform their normative gender roles and contribute to their society, and to fall in line with the authority of the institutions meant to govern them. The idea that Trites proffers suggests that it is only through subversive and culturally allowable acts of rebellion do these adolescents gain the understanding to grow, "Adolescents do not achieve maturity in a YA novel until they have reconciled themselves to the power entailed in the social institutions with which they must interact to survive" (20). The goal of these institutions of power within the context of adolescent

literature highlights society's overarching power dynamic, which Althusser describes as "a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of its submission to the ruling ideology for the workers" (Althusser 89). The adolescent therefore works to "disturb the universe" of this ruling ideology by striving to "interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual rather than focusing on Self and self-discovery as children's literature does" (Trites 20). The relationship that is forged between the society and the individual is grounded upon these social constructions of normative gender roles while in adolescence and childhood. This relationship is undergirded by the desire of authority to exert power over the individual by illustrating these social constructions as normalizing gender categorizations.

Foucault similarly discusses the nature of power as it relates to categorization and the norm, saying that disciplinary power "measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define the difference in relation to all other differences, the external front of the abnormal" (Foucault 195). True societal discipline and training stems from a system which specifies:

> Acts according to a number of general categories; not by hierarchizing, but quite simply by bringing into play the binary opposition of the permitted and the forbidden… The disciplinary mechanisms secreted a 'penalty of the norm,' which is irreducible in its principles and functioning to the traditional penalty of the

> law… Like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age. (195-196)

The social constructs which restrict, inhibit, and ultimately classify and categorize individuals are meant to correctly train and force them into submission to the ruling power. Cultural categorization, labeling, and the comparison between normal and abnormal are the marks of successful exhibitions of power and dominance, "For the marks that once indicated status, privilege, and affiliation were increasingly replaced - or at least supplemented - by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body, but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization, and the distribution of rank. In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity" (196). Recognition of this element of normalization speaks to the power of social construction and categorizing what is acceptable of children and adolescents and what is abnormal. It is "normal," then, for children to learn socially constructed gender roles and accept them as they mature, and it is "abnormal" for children to remain in a state of gender fluidity; equilibrium and social acceptance only come from a submission to and acceptance of the normative gender roles thrust upon the child.

These social constructions lead to the concept of childhood itself as inherently performative, lending the assumption that childhood lacks true selfhood, agency, and subjectivity. If a child performs his/her expected role successfully, they are a normal, submissive, contributing, and productive future member of society. J. Hillis Miller, working from the foundational work of Butler and Derrida, defines performativity succinctly: "'Performativity,' it now appears, means, among other things, the assumption that human beings have no innate selfhood or subjectivity but become what they are

through more or less forced repetition of a certain role" (Miller 225). While Judith Butler's discussion of performativity centers primarily on gender, childhood itself could be understood as an augmentation of her ideas. Childhood is inherently gender fluid because of the vast amount of cultural and institutional influences working to conform the child into their normative gender role. Childhood itself then can be viewed as not as a state of selfhood or subjectivity, but of forced repetition of a certain role because of the social constructions placed upon the child for the purposes of this ideological repression and categorization. The child plays her/his role as a child because s/he is forced to. David Barrie was forced to repetitively play the masculine role of hand-loom weaver, therefore he accepted the gendered male role. Margaret Ogilvy was forced to repetitively play the feminine role of the domestic, therefore she accepted the gendered female role. Their childhood is fused with this repetitive gender performance, so their sense of self and subjectivity are grounded in a social construction and are thus performed. However, the ability to recognize the performative nature of gender identity and capitalize on that knowledge gives the performer certain power over the institutions working to socially construct the child. And for Peter, the ability to exist outside of these institutions allow him to remain in a gender fluid, and thus, a powerful state. Miller provides telling insights into this idea:

> That's what 'social construction' means. You play the role of being straight, or gay, or an English professor long enough and you become straight, or gay, or an English professor… This is a depressing theory because it assumes I am not innately anything. It is an exhilarating theory because, apparently, it blows the gaff on the familial, social, ideological, and political forces that have made me

> what I now think I am by forcing me to repetitive performances of that role. Once I understand that, the way is open to change society so I can be different, or even, so it appears, to take my identity into my own hands and 'perform' myself into becoming some other person. (225)

The recognition of the performative nature of gender and childhood allows for the subversion of socially constructed repressive institutions and provides an avenue for a representation of the self which is altogether of one's own making. When the child protagonist gains mastery over the social construction of existence through performance, it grants him/her an unmatched demonstration of agency and power.

Any overt recognition of the disciplinary and corrective systems outlined by Foucault, Althusser, Butler, and Lacan affords the individual an ability to perform oneself into becoming something outside of that system. Performativity allows for a child to escape the restrictive "normal and abnormal" binary and exist in a realm of subjectivity and true selfhood. A child who can thus perform his way around the familial, social, political, and ideological forces working to repress and define him by rejecting categorization truly escapes the means for gender normalization and holds the agency to reject such systems of power. Performativity, then, highlights both the problem and the solution within *Peter Pan*. If one performs his way into social repression and normative gender roles through institutions, one can equally perform his way out of social repression and gender roles and create an image of the Self that is altogether defined by the Self. Peter's power comes in his decision, he is the child who *wouldn't* grow up, subverting the natural progression of time and maturation. Because of these ever-present institutions of power, the conditions necessary to create this system of overarching

subversion must exist outside of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Great Britain. The creation of Neverland becomes a necessary fantasy landscape which serves as the antithesis to Great Britain, with its repressive institutionalized systems and changing social constructions of childhood. Barrie gains the ability to question the systemic categorization of children, and its desire to socially and ideologically construct their gender identity, creating a character existing not only outside of normal biological maturation, but apart from institutional systems of repression which demand a repetitive performance of gender; this separation eternally establishes Peter Pan as a timeless, complicated, subversive, gender-fluid being.

J.M. Barrie's complicated childhood shows an individual who, from an early age, understands the power of performance and its role in shaping childhood identity, fostering the creation of Peter Pan. As Barrie grew up, in relating her mother's history in a work called *Margaret Ogilvy*, he describes the death of his teenage brother David, a favorite son of his mother's, as devastating for her: "She was always delicate from that hour, and for many months she was very ill… I peeped in many times at the door and then went to the stair and sat on it and sobbed" (9, 13). J.M. Barrie was so deeply distressed by the grief of his mother that he sought to alleviate her pain in any way that he could. He worked tirelessly to make his mother laugh, but there was always a sense of hopelessness about these endeavors as it was soon realized that the only cure for her mother's grief was the return of her child, David. The one solace Margaret took with her was that David would, in memory, always be a child who never grew up and leave her. Barrie relates that "I was often jealous, stopping her fond memories with the cry, 'Do you mind nothing about me?' But that did not last; its place was taken by an intense desire…

to *become so like him* that even my mother should not see the difference" (16-17, emphasis added). Barrie seemed to innately understand the role of performativity for the child, repetitively performing the role of his brother David. His actions were widespread, "The little boy practised his brother's mannerisms, learnt his whistle from friends, the way he stood, even donning a suit of David's clothes so as to carry off more successfully the impersonation for his mother" (Chaney 20). The fact that this memory is deeply engrained in Barrie long after the incidents took place (Barrie was 37 when *Margaret Ogilvy* was published in 1897) demonstrates an author deeply married to the idea of the performative identity of children, facilitating the creation of the perpetual child, Peter Pan. Because of the eternal nature of Peter's youth, as well as his performative power over identification and categorization, the ability to fully define Peter Pan the character and *Peter Pan* the novel are as complicated and ambiguous as, it seems, Barrie's own history.

Peter Pan's indefinition, lack of categorization, and existence as the perpetual performer are the foundation for his ability to subvert many of the institutions of power working to define his gender through social construction. If one cannot inherently define Peter, or the work of *Peter Pan* itself, he cannot therefore be subject to normative gender roles. And if he cannot be subject to normative gender roles, he holds power over the ideological institutions seeking to repress and define the gender of children. He is the ultimate performer, an actor who can play any role at any time, thereby recognizing performative power and working to destabilize self-hood, which is grounded in social construction. It is this very deconstruction of the self that is vital to Peter's ability to subvert systems of repression, yet it is this very deconstruction that is the cause of

ambiguity surrounding his character. However, this deconstruction is the source for his prolonged power through the narrative because it exhibits Peter as a gender fluid being existing outside of cultural construction. Peter's indefinition is evident not only in how his character is portrayed in the novel, it is also clear in trying to define a particular genre for this work.

To revisit Trites' argument about childhood sexuality and adolescent literature's place in the role of gender definition and normativity, she states that adolescent novels "usually contain within them some sort of power dynamic wherein the character's sexuality provides him or her with a locus of power. That power needs to be controlled before the narrative can achieve resolution" (83). It is important for Peter's lack of stable self-hood and gender fluidity to establish *Peter Pan* as an undefinable work of adolescent or children's literature. If it is the goal of adolescent literature as a genre to bring the character into gender resolution, *Peter Pan* must exist outside of genre definition. Attempting to define *Peter Pan* as a work of children's or adolescent fiction, again revisiting Trites' definition of the two genres, is confused: "Children's literature often affirms the child's sense of Self and her or his personal power. But in the adolescent novel, protagonists must learn about the social forces that have made them what they are. They learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad of social institutions within which they must function, including family; school; the church; government; social constructions of sexuality; gender, race, class; and cultural mores surrounding death" (Trites 3). Peter's role throughout the novel affirms his role as an agent of power, namely defeating Captain Hook and playing the child hero. Yet, as will be discussed in further chapters, Peter's character exists in a subversive context around these ideological

social institutions. There is much discussion and negotiation throughout the novel regarding the nature of institutional power. Therefore, any effort to define *Peter Pan* as a work of children's fiction *or* adolescent fiction fails. This work accomplishes both and ambiguously fails to accomplish either. Peter's sense of Self remains fluid and undefined, and there is no negotiation of the myriad of social construction. Peter's "negotiation" is simply rejection.

Trites also defines the two major genres of children's and adolescent novels as the "*Entwicklungsroman*, which is a broad category of novels in which an adolescent character grows, and the *Bildungsroman*, which is a related type of novel in which the adolescent matures into adulthood" (Trites 9). Trites proceeds to discuss the major players within children's literature and their own existence within the power structures they find themselves in. She systematically works through themes of power and its relation to adolescent literature, and relates, "Without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness, the adolescent cannot grow. Thus, power is even more fundamental to adolescent literature than growth. During adolescence, adolescents must learn their place in the power structure. They must learn to negotiate the many institutions that shape them: school, government, religion, identity, politics, family, and so on" (Trites x). Children's and adolescent literature can therefore be critically interpreted in light of a child's ability to grow into gender definition and normativity under structures and systems of power. This is the basic function of the *Entwicklungsroman* and the *Bildungsroman*. Her analysis of children's and adolescent fiction is wide ranging and seemingly exhaustive in its critical scope. There is, however, one conspicuous absence from the discussions in her book, absolutely no mention is made of J.M. Barrie or of

Peter Pan. Peter represents a complication in working to define itself as a work of fiction in the children's/adolescent literature canon, nor can it probably be described as *Entwickslungsroman* or *Bildungsroman*. In Peter, there is no growth or maturity from a boy to a man. However, Barrie's work holds the unique ability to explore the ways in which childhood as a perpetual entity is able to both overcome and exert its own lasting agency and power over systems and institutions meant to label and categorize children into gender normative categories, and the ultimate subversion of authority figures and the power they represent. That Peter, the only child who does not grow up and is therefore exempt from all structures of the *Entwicklungsroman* and the *Bildungsroman*, should be wholly absent from such a consequential work in the scholarship of children's literature robs his character and the story of its critical complexity and ability to speak to the identity, power, and agency of childhood gender fluidity over systems of authority and power.

The lack of scholarly ability to fully define the character of Peter Pan has been equally perplexing, "When Barrie's narrative is allowed to stand as its own master, it functions first and foremost to reveal in Peter a protagonist who is imagined, written, and thus defined above all else by his resistance to definition" (Padley 274). Even Mrs. Darling finds herself puzzled at the nature of Peter Pan, "Occasionally in her travels through her children's minds Mrs. Darling found things she could not understand, and of these the most perplexing was the word Peter" (Barrie 12). If Peter cannot be fully defined, neither can his normative gender role; and if his gender role remains fluid because of his indefintion, his power over the institutions of authority seeking to categorize him are legitimized. Trites admits the difference between adolescent and

children's literature saying that in children's literature, "Much of the action focuses on one child who learns to feel more secure in the confines of her or his immediate environment, usually represented by family and home" (Trites 3). Peter has no family and no home, so scholarly ability to define his role as a perpetual child within children's literature is often confused and half-formed. Perhaps Barrie's greatest contribution to the literary canon is a character that cannot be rightly defined by the linear nature of time, or the adult tendency to subjugate and label/categorize children, thus removing him from the ultimate confines of power and authority exerted over him. It is clear that the primary adult foe in Peter's life was deeply concerned with the ideas of categorization in terms of gender normativity, for he seemed to understand that proper gender categorization was the only way to gain mastery and power over this enigmatic and undefined being.

Captain Hook, during his final interaction with Peter, asks him this all-important question: "Pan, who and what art thou?" (Barrie 135). Hook is attempting here to reestablish his dominance over Peter as a male authority and illuminates an important element of Foucault's ideology: the examination. Hook asks simply, "Who and what art thou?", and it is through this brief interaction that Hook works as the examiner, and this, according to Foucault, "combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish" (Foucault 197). Hook's question is meant to qualify Peter, to classify him, and place him in a position of subjection and able to be normalized at this crucial moment in the narrative. If Peter answers in a normalizing and classified fashion, Hook will gain the means to correctly punish Peter, or perhaps more appropriately to help Peter meet his doom as a gender fluid being who is subject to death:

both the death of the gender fluid child into gender defined adulthood, and eventually physical death. Peter's answer provides telling ambiguity: "'I'm youth, I'm joy,' Peter answered at a venture, 'I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg.' This, of course, was nonsense, but it was proof to the unhappy Hook that Peter did not know in the least who or what he was, which is the very pinnacle of good form" (135). The narrator divulges a bit of commentary into Peter's response here: "Of course" it is nonsense that Peter could provide any definitional insights into his identity, yet to the eye of the adult examiner, Peter's inability to answer correctly into the nature of his existence is the pinnacle of good form. He is youth – implying a gender fluid state of being, Peter does not define himself here as a "boy;" he is joy – a vivid emotion arising from a state of well-being, presumably his joy comes from his gender fluid state of youth; he's a little bird (again a gender-neutral statement) that has broken out of the egg. The narrator's commentary subverts Foucault's examination theory in that Peter's answers are nonsense – a failed examination – yet the commentary proffers a confirmation to Hook that Peter's nonsensical and gender fluid response is the pinnacle of good form.

The irony of the prose here cannot be overstated, as Peter's nonsensical, ambiguous, and clearly *wrong* answer implies; his response is immediately contradicted by the narrator, who speaks of Peter's good form. And form, if taken quite literally from the Oxford English Dictionary, lends the idea that Peter's response demonstrates "The visible aspect of a thing; now usually in narrower sense, shape, configuration." Peter's good form, something that should provide a narrower, gender specific, and clearly visible definition of him as a gendered being, consequently bringing further clarity to Hook's (and the reader's) understanding of him, instead yields nonsense, Peter doesn't know in

the least who or what he was. Hook's effort to make a normalizing judgment of Peter Pan – to quantify and classify him in order to subsequently punish him – end in failure, yet it is in this very utterance of indefinition and a lack of gender classification that Peter avoids punishment and subjection, and instead becomes victorious over Captain Hook. Peter's victory comes as a result of his vain endeavor to provide self-definition as misguided nonsense, which speaks to the nature of Peter as an unselfconscious being. This indefinition (which Barrie relates as good form) subverts gender categorization and self-hood, which destabilizes every endeavor of authority and power working to subject Peter to its own ends.

Peter struggles with his identity and sense of self through the entirety of the narrative, though, and ultimately produces an image of a character lacking complete self-consciousness. This is perhaps nowhere more prevalent than in his troubling dreams: "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 those dreams, though he wailed piteously in them. They had to do, I think, with the riddle of his existence" (Barrie 115). There have been numerous psychoanalytic readings of *Peter Pan*, and these center mostly on the concept of Peter's existence in the realm of the unconscious. It is intriguing that Peter would have these troubling existential conflicts in dream state, for as Rosalind Ridley argues, "Sleep can tell us a great deal about the fragmentary nature of consciousness" (Ridley 44). Peter's painful and troubling dreams associated with the riddle of his existence are connected to the ideas of the conscious and unconscious self while dreaming. Jacqueline Rose relates that in dreams, a child can be in two places at once, both the unconscious dreamer and the conscious child doing the dreaming, and that

the unconscious and conscious self (in terms of Jean Piaget's psychological analysis) coalesce in a unified existence in the mind of the child. This mimics the gendered reading of disequilibrium, and the desire of the child to find equilibrium through an acceptance of gendered cultural norms. Peter's riddle is more painful than other "boys," for boys are able to escape this "dream state" and discover gender equilibrium by accepting their progression into their performative male gender role. Peter has no such cohesion, therefore he is stuck in a state of gender fluidity; and that this disunity exists in the unconscious is telling, Rose argues against this notion of a unification of the conscious and unconscious self: "It is, however, the very meaning of the unconscious to undermine exactly this unity, and it is not by chance that Freud first formulated how it does so in relation to the interpretation of dreams… For it can be argued that the concept of the unconscious has been refused at exactly the point where it throws into question the idea of our subjectivity as something which we can fully know, or that ultimately can be cohered" (Rose 15). Peter is a being who cannot seem to find cohesion in himself or fully know the nature of his existence, he could not be separated from these dreams. In the same way, he cannot be separated from his own gender fluidity. It is in this lack of cohesion, or perhaps equilibrium or resolution, that Peter is able to exert his power, and by extension it demonstrates the power of the child over systems of repression.

The idea that childhood gender is a fluid and culturally constructed entity is an important element in Barrie's subversive narrative outcomes. He is able, through Peter, to create a being which lacks categorization and objectivity, much like the existence of the unconscious, "Childhood is not an object, any more than the unconscious, although that is often how they are both understood" (Rose 12-13). If childhood gender normativity can

be destabilized through perpetually unconscious disequilibrium, so can the systems of repression and power that work to categorize and ultimately conform children into productive members of a capitalistic ideology. Ridley continues her arguments for this sort of power over repression through the unconscious self:

> The conscious mind comprises that which we freely acknowledge and can talk about, while, according to Freud, the unconscious mind comprises ideas, memories, desires and feelings that are forbidden from being expressed, recognized or acknowledged, by a mechanism called repression. Freud thought that his unconscious part of the mind had a structure and type of content comparable to that of the conscious mind, except that it was hidden… According to some psychoanalytical schools, the content of the unconscious part of the mind can circumvent repression by appearing in symbolic form in dreams. (39)

The unconscious existence of Peter Pan, lacking any semblance of categorization or overt definition, holds the unique ability to circumvent repression by its very nature. Peter's role then, as the perpetual child and as is demonstrated through the narrative, works to subvert this repression through his mastery of performance and play. Amanda Phillips Chapman confirms the power of the performative role that Peter plays: "Without any stable sense of a self of which to be conscious, Peter exists suspended in a state of pure possibility. He is all that the Romantics could ask of a child: presocial, authentic, free, autonomous, boundless, unselfconscious. But another wonderful consequence of lacking a defined self is that Peter can perfectly inhabit any role from moment to moment" (Chapman 142). It is evident through the narrative that Peter holds the unique ability to perform any role he wishes with complete gender fluidity, and while many of these

particular examples will be discussed in further detail in upcoming chapters, it succinctly highlights the performative nature of a completely gender fluid childhood and how Peter utilizes it to attain power.

It is fitting that Peter would emerge at the end of the nineteenth century, as conceptions of childhood were continually undergoing evaluation and change. As the perpetual child, Peter represents Barrie's cumulative understandings of childhood power and the ways in which it is performed. The performative nature of childhood, as it relates to play, were changing concepts in England at the end of the nineteenth century: "Newer ideas, such as those championed by the growing Kindergarten movement or, later, the theories of Karl Groos and Caldwell Cook, dignified play as the free and healthy expression of the essence of childhood" (Deane 691). The combination, then, of the expression of performativity (as it is *played* through the narrative) and the fluid essence of childhood gender provides the subversive power of *Peter Pan*. The fact that Peter exists as an unconscious and perpetual child, performing throughout the narrative provides the answer to the riddle of his existence, "The answer to this riddle is that Peter has no self of which to be conscious, and that by having no self he combines unselfconsciousness and theatricality - highly valued but seemingly antithetical characteristics attributed to the child in the nineteenth century" (Chapman 137). Peter embodies gender performativity, lacking a self assumes the lack of defined gender, and he is therefore completely unbound and unhindered by social constructs of gender. He simply can be who he wants to be. It is this combination that provides Peter active agency to subvert repression as well legitimatizing performativity as an exercise of power within the narrative (Miller 224). Peter's inability to be rightly defined as a child, as well his

separation from the normative cultural and ideological gender constructs which seek to define and subjugate children, place Peter in a unique situation: holding power as a subject and validating the power of perpetual childhood over authoritarian social institutions. It is important for Barrie to establish this distinction for Peter, for it is only a being who exists outside of a culturally appropriated and socially constructed sense of self who can ultimately subvert that which is oppressive and repressive to the self. Peter's unwillingness to find gender resolution or equilibrium grants him agency over the institutions which seek to repress and define gender for all other children. He does not play by the same rules as every other being in existence, and in Peter Pan-like fashion, playfully and easily topples that which has bested every boy and girl who inevitably passes away into a man and woman.

CHAPTER 3: THE SUBVERSION OF CAPTAIN HOOK'S SYMBOLIC INSTITUTIONAL POWER

The historic doubling of the parts of Mr. Darling and Captain Hook in theatrical productions of *Peter Pan* creates an obvious comparison of their roles within the novel. The same actor who portrays the petty, superficial, material, and consumer-driven father figure of Mr. Darling also plays the part of the domineering, authoritarian, fear-mongering Captain Hook. The connotation is that Mr. Darling is far more aggressive in his role as father, husband, and breadwinner in the home and Captain Hook is meant to remind readers and viewers of Mr. Darling, the father. Captain Hook as father figure becomes symbolic of the institutions of power that seek to repress Peter Pan, and thus he performs a vital role which manifests in many adolescent and children's novels: "Parent-figures in YA novels usually serve more as sources of conflict than as sources of support. They are more likely to repress than to empower" (Trites 56). For Peter, who lacks actual parents, Captain Hook is a created representation of a father figure, fulfilling a Lacanian desire to rebel against and murder a father figure as a struggle with the Symbolic Order.

According to Lacan, this is a crucial moment for the child, as the father represents a binding to the Law and thus helps the child find subjectivity: "Showing that if this murder is the fruitful moment of debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law, the symbolic Father is, in so far as he signifies this Law, the dead Father" (Lacan 199). In order to find cohesion as an actualized subject, Peter must struggle against a father figure, who represents the Law or difference in sexuality. Utilizing Roberta Seelinger Trites' interpretations of Lacanian theory as it relates to children's and adolescent literature, adolescent characters like Peter, who have no parents, create them:

"The propensity of adolescents with neither actual nor effective surrogate parents to create imaginary parents against whom to rebel in a classic reenactment of the Lacanian principle of creating the Name-of-the-Father" (Trites 61). Peter's creation of Captain Hook as an imaginary parent against whom he can rebel becomes a necessary condition of Peter's essence as a child.

While it seems counterintuitive for Peter as an eternal child to have (and most certainly desire) a symbolic parent, his very state as a child demands it. Trites continues: "Why would the adolescent create a parent to make trouble for him- or herself… The idea of the parent is so seductive, so central to the subject's sense of self-definition, that the process becomes inevitable" (61). Peter's process of self-definition, which eternally differs from that of every other child, must therefore exist to solidify an understanding of the self that is undefinable and gender-fluid. The narrative mentions Peter's antipathy for mothers: "Not only had he no mother, but he had not the slightest desire to have one. He thought them very over-rated persons" (Barrie 26). The novel mentions nothing of Peter's desire for a father, which must necessarily occur to maintain Peter's existence as child. This desire is undoubtedly a subconscious one for Peter, however his creation of an object of paternal rebellion is vital not only to Peter's sense of self, but for his subversion over all masculine institutions seeking to repress and mature him into a man.

It is Peter's confrontations with Captain Hook and the "laws," or institutions which seek to define sexual difference, that a child must engage in. Terry Eagleton discusses the implications of this process for the child growing into adulthood: "Its identity as a subject, it comes to perceive, is constituted by its relations of difference and similarity to other subjects around it. In accepting all of this, the child moves from the

imaginary register into what Lacan calls the 'symbolic order': the pre-given structure of social and sexual roles and relations which make up the family and society" (145). Because Peter does not move from the "imaginary register," his battle with the father figure never gets fully resolved. He is able to defeat and overcome the masculine influences of Captain Hook, but he never resolves himself to accept socially constructed sexual roles. He is caught in a complicated and intricate Lacanian web: As a child he must engage in this confrontation with Hook, the father figure; but as a child who eternally remains a child, he must also reject the movement from imaginary register to the symbolic order.

Peter's quest for this self-definition manifests through the creation of an *in loco parentis*, a surrogate or imagined father figure. Captain Hook certainly doesn't actively assume the overt role of parent for Peter, but Peter's open rebellion against Captain Hook illuminates an understanding of a child who is engaged in a struggle with a created parental figure. Trites continues by arguing that "In Lacanian terms, then, it is no mystery why an adolescent would construct a parent to murder out of the Symbolic Order as a necessary precondition to understanding herself as a subject constructed of language. S/he must do battle with the Symbolic Order over the phallocentric obstacle to her/his desire in order to become an actualized subject" (Trites 69). Hook's name clearly implies a battle over phallocentric obstacles, Peter symbolically castrates Hook by removing his right hand and it is replaced by an equally phallic and more dangerous obstacle in a claw/hook/sword. The desire for Peter to become an actualized subject as an eternal child, rather than the rebellious effort of "all children," subverts the normative process of seeking gender equilibrium.

Captain Hook is the Lacanian manifestation of this Name-of-the-Father, an *in loco parentis* for Peter Pan. Peter's existence as a perpetual child necessitates his need to rebel against and kill a created and symbolic father figure. If it is the rite-of-passage for every child to undergo this progression to attain maturation from childhood to a gender constructed adult, it seems logical that Peter, as a child who is stuck in childhood, would remain within an endless and recurring battle with the Symbolic Order. Captain Hook, as I will show, represents only one of many battles in which Peter engages to perpetuate his state as a gender-fluid and eternal child. Not only does Hook represent this Lacanian struggle against the Symbolic Order for Peter, he represents all institutions of masculine authority seeking to repress and categorize him as a gendered being. Much like the parent works to construct the identity of the child, the institutions that Hook represents – namely the education and religious systems – work to transform Peter from a gender-fluid child to a heteronormative male. Peter, through his ability to perform, subverts these institutional efforts from Captain Hook and emerges victorious, steadfastly maintaining agency over his undefined, fluid, and ambiguous self.

Peter's confrontation and subversion of the religious system as it is represented through Captain Hook is defined symbolically through Peter's conflicts with him. As Peter works through this determination to slay the *in loco parentis*, the religious imagery proffered make it quite clear that Hook's efforts to topple Peter are inexorably linked to the religious system's wish to categorically define the gender of children who mature to adulthood. The development of such gender construction within this theological institution stem from the early understanding of a God who, from the very beginning, created humanity defined gender differences and roles: "So God created mankind in his

own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (*New International Version*, Gen. 1:27). Ken Stone offers a critique of this biblical account of humanity's creation, saying, "The structure and content of the text as it stands do seem to encourage interpretations that grant a foundational status to binary sexual division as a crucial defining feature of humankind" (82). The Bible's clear definition of this sexual division lends an understanding of gender that is not just culturally constructed but divinely constructed, that it is inherently "natural" for humanity to exist with these defined gender differences.

Christian theology is historically a male dominated discourse, which assumes that immersion into a Christian religious system will lead Peter, as a gender fluid child, to become enveloped into a masculine-centric cultural system. Throughout the New Testament, the church is personified as the male body of Christ, childhood and female agency are historically and scripturally non-existent, and church leadership as exhibited through the Bible and how it has manifested throughout history is overwhelmingly male. Therefore, acceptance into this institution implies complete submission to and immersion into a male body and a masculine system. For Hook, then, to destroy Peter's child-ness through biblical imagery leads to an understanding of maturation which sees gender fluid children progress to socially constructed males. Karen Trimble Alliaume argues that the history of Christian theology "is a heavily sexual theology, obsessed with the regulation and control of sexual performances, roles and behavioural patterns of people… Gender roles are not an extra element but a constitutive one of an understanding of being church" (127). The church is historically and overwhelmingly interested in constructing the gender of all children to fulfill the divine roles that God has assigned to all humanity.

J.M. Barrie was born into and raised in such a strict theological environment. His father David became deeply invested in the religious traditions of the Auld Licht sect of Christianity. In Barrie's biography, Lisa Chaney describes this sect as being "fierce in their espousal of what they thought were the most fundamental Christian beliefs, referring back to the earliest Apostolic church. 'If any man have not the spirit of the Lord he is not one of His' was their creed. They held that true worship only occurred when there was nothing in it reflecting the 'carnal work of man'" (13). The "carnal works" described were anything of an artistic or musical nature, including songs, or literary creations. Their way of life was reflected by austere living, stripping life of any excess. David, as a devoted follower of this sect, was dedicated to the idea that there needed to be an "underlying seriousness in the household, an intense, fervent attitude to life noticeable in all the Barrie children" (13). The main tenets of the Barrie household were "fear of God, great diligence and a reverence for education" (13). This specific sect of Christianity in Scotland was frequently under attack from more moderate Presbyterian church leaders and satirists, who frequently excoriated the Auld Licht sect, saying, "a dark misanthropic perversity was typical of Auld Licht Presbyterian beliefs, which nurtured cruelty and a lack of generosity in personal dealing with others and their inevitable human frailties" (McLean 97). Not only does revealing this biographical information illustrate Barrie's possible aversion to the austerity of Christian doctrine as outlined by his father, a strictly masculine representation of the institution of church, but it allows for the possibility of Peter's existence as a total subversion of this Christian theology which stoically sought the nurturing of cruelty, exhibiting a lack of generosity with others and their frailties, traits that oddly seem to align closely with the overarching

characteristics of Captain Hook. This is the religious framework by which Peter engages in his ideological battle against this fearsome pirate.

The Christological imagery proffered in Barrie's representation of Peter Pan is consistently linked with his clashes with Captain Hook. At the mermaid's lagoon, immediately following the pirates' initial assault on the Lost Boys, an encounter between Peter and Captain Hook is described: "His [Hook's] iron claw made a circle of dead water round him, from which they fled like affrighted fishes. But there was one who did not fear him: there was one prepared to enter that circle" (Barrie 84). The narrative then describes Peter descent into this circle of dead water, preparing to battle his arch-nemesis. The positional imagery offered by the narrator is telling in its biblical commentary, it illustrates that "Hook rose to the rock to breathe, and at the same moment Peter scaled it on the opposite side" (84). The rock here symbolizes Satan's (Hook's) triumph over Christ (who is symbolized as Peter Pan, who will ultimately show his superiority over Christ) at the rock of Golgotha, the place of the skull. Interestingly enough, the rock upon which Peter and Hook have this important encounter in Walt Disney's 1953 production of the story is a rock in the shape of a skull, further illuminating this typology.

Peter's physical altercation with Hook is short in its description but, again, telling in its Christological imagery. Peter quickly gains the upper hand and is about to drive his knife home, "when he saw that he was higher up the rock than his foe. It would not have been fighting fair" (84). It is after this recognition of Peter's ascendant position and his subsequent descent that Hook "bites" him with his claw. This exhibits a biblical parallel in that after discussing the ascension of Christ, the apostle Paul proclaims, "What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who

descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the universe" (*New International Version*, Eph. 4:9-10). Peter is shown to descend in his two confrontations with Hook, the "circle of dead water" in this scene and the final battle where Peter enters "that circle of fire" (134). Peter symbolically enters these lower, earthly regions of hell to engage Hook and is prepared to sacrifice himself for Wendy and the Lost Boys, a typological atonement. Gendered understandings of these encounters are equally clear, Peter descends to challenge Hook, and the prose turns undeniably phallic in nature. The narrative relates that Hook "bites" Peter with his claw, each person carrying their own sword, and Hook hopes to end the conflict "with a favourite thrust," and to "give the quietus with his iron hook" (134). The phallic imagery of Peter's descent to these lower, earthly regions are connected to Hook's desire to dominate and kill Peter's childhood in order to see him a gendered man.

Peter's supremacy over these Christological images doesn't arrive through an atoning death and resurrection, but an avoidance of death altogether. The narrator seems to recognize the permanent nature of death as s/he addresses Tiger Lily's perilous situation at the mermaid's lagoon: "For is it not written in the book of the tribe that there is no path through water to the happy hunting-ground?" (Barrie 78). The prose here is a veiled allusion to biblical prose, "For is it not written," and the revelation of the path to the happy hunting-ground is through a book, alluding to Christian Scripture. Tiger Lily's salvation doesn't come through overt obedience and recognition of the truth of these scriptures, but through a rejection of what is written in this book. Captain Hook is the representative of this religious institution which controls the discourse about death. To subvert these aims, Peter plays the voice of Captain Hook, leading the pirates to release

Tiger Lily through the very waters that are meant to be her doom. His performance is a superior source of power over Captain Hook who holds Tiger Lily captive physically and the religious tradition which holds her captive spiritually. The religious system's powerful hold over the discourse of death suddenly becomes a victim to Peter's ability to perform and play through it. The tendency of the religious system to dominate this discourse proves instrumental when considering death's role in perpetuating the maturation of children and immersing them into an institution meant to conform their gender fluidity to culturally acceptable gender norms.

The very idea of death itself is an instrument of power used by religious institutional authority to exert power over adolescents. Barrie's opening paragraph of the novel sets up this tension as he describes two kinds of death: the death of childhood into a culturally constructed and gendered man or woman, as well as physical death. Peter's confrontation with and supremacy over death works as an extension of religious ideology. Peter must battle against the reality of death as Barrie describes it in order to maintain a gender fluid state, and his conflict with death manifests primarily through his clash with Captain Hook. Trites argues that "humans have created numerous institutions surrounding the biological reality of death to help them control its power: most religions, for example, have institutional investments in explaining death to people" and that "death has far more power over the adolescent imagination than any institution possibly could" (Trites 117, 119). The progression of the child who exists under the permanence and inevitability of death ensures their maturation and subjection under the religious institutions meant to conform the child. If the child comes to understand his/her mortality, s/he accepts a role of powerlessness, dependency, and subjection to an

institution which seeks to explain death and control his/her subsequent behavior; this recognition in the child is vital, therefore, for the continuation of this institutional power and, as an extension of religious ideology, they must accept their traditional gendered role in order to achieve resolution and avoid cultural ostracism. Therefore, Hook's desire to see the death of Peter becomes an all-encompassing obsession to see Peter accept his gender role and see to the death of the child. Trites discusses this process of maturation as it manifests within adolescent literature: "In adolescent literature, death is often depicted in terms of maturation when the protagonist accepts the permanence of mortality, when s/he accepts herself as Being-towards-death" (119).

Martin Heidegger's philosophical development of the Being-towards-death proves to be illuminating for Trites' analyses of adolescent literature, however when viewed in the context of Peter Pan's development, the complexity of Peter's existence as an unselfconscious, perpetual, gender-fluid child proves problematic. Mario Perniola and Chris Turner summarize Heideggerian Being-Towards-Death: "The privileging of anxiety, understood as the opening-up to authentic existence; meditation on death regarded as the moment when man becomes conscious of himself; the certainty that man is only ever 'living on borrowed time,' is only ever a death delayed, a dead man walking; and, lastly, the acceptance of one's own radical culpability" (Perniola 349). Captain Hook is the purveyor of this experience for Peter, as Hook forces him to identify himself as a Being-towards-death on this symbolic rock: He is "afraid at last. A tremor ran through him, like a shudder passing over the sea" (Barrie 87). Peter at last discovers this privileging of anxiety and the narrative does nothing but augment a picture of Peter's mortality: "Next moment he was standing erect on the rock again, with that smile on his

face and a drum being within him. It was saying, 'To die will be an awfully big adventure'" (87). The discrepancy between popular depictions of this scene and the actual narrative must be noted. While the original play script denotes a stage direction that the drum in Peter's breast is beating "as if he were a real boy at last," he verbally proclaims the phrase, "To die will be an awfully big adventure." In the book, no such utterance is made, it is the beating drum – seemingly a mortal heart – within him that is speaking. Peter's agency and recognition of his immortality in the novel prohibit the verbalization of his own death, as if he knows this death is an impossibility. Hook creates all of the necessary conditions for Peter to experience himself as a Being-towards-death, but Peter quickly rejects them.

This representation of Peter's mortality presents him with ample opportunity to meditate on his own death, and as Perniola would describe, this is the moment when "man becomes conscious of himself." However, this consciousness of mortality, and the subsequent process of maturation towards gender equilibrium, is immediately contradicted and negated by Peter's playful and amnesiac tendencies. Peter consistently and quickly forgets any interaction or experience he has while in Neverland, and this particular episode is no exception. As soon as Peter experiences this moment as a Being-towards-death, and extending Heideggerian philosophy, recognizes his mortality in order begin the development from boy to man, he encounters the Never bird, who engages him in a very childish argument. Peter quickly forgets his approaching and perilous doom and instead engages in play with a creature of Neverland, which ultimately leads to his salvation. This again subverts a long-held understanding of Christian theology and demonstrates Peter's superiority over Christian doctrine. The Bible presents a picture of

Christ who is intimately connected to the world in which he is immersed, but when this moment of death occurred, his environment abandons him: "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (*New International Version*, John 1:10-11). For Peter, however, his physical environment not only recognizes him in his moment of greatest need, but Neverland itself perpetuates Peter's role as a subversive master over death. While the Bible presents a picture of Christ who was ultimately rejected and killed by an environment and a people that were his very own, Peter is saved from the death Hook desires and is sustained by the creatures of Neverland who engage in Peter's performative/play tactics to overcome this perilous situation. This act of play not only places Peter in a position of power over the religious system as it is illustrated through Captain Hook, his amnesia over these precarious situations solidify his place as a powerful agent of gender fluidity.

This inability to remember even the most consequential and defining moments of his life all but solidifies Peter's place as an unselfconscious child who is unable to grow from boy to man. Amanda Phillips Chapman comments on Peter's inability to remember and its ramifications:

> When the child tucks away the memory of vicissitudes of childhood into the unconscious, he gains an identity, leaves childhood behind, and becomes an adult with the history of the child-that-was as the interior self. Peter, who remembers little, and thus has no history, cannot perform this act, and thus cannot begin the process of developing a self, which would lead to growing up. (146)

Barrie engages in contradiction and ambiguity as he presents a character who clearly possesses every circumstance, every vicissitude, necessary to achieve maturation, but because of his innate indefinition and unselfconsciousness, Peter again is stuck in perpetual childhood, and thus cannot find gender equilibrium. Trites argues that this recognition of Being-towards-death is pivotal for the adolescent's understanding of power: "This confrontation with death seems essential for adolescents to gain knowledge of death's power and of their own powerlessness over it" (Trites 120). Hook's attempts to normalize his gender through these symbolically religious confrontations with death are met with a character who simply forgets he is supposed to quiver under the knowledge of death's power. Peter, while procuring a certain knowledge of death's power, proclaims his own power over death, calling death an "awfully big adventure," and ultimately *child-ing* his way over it.

Similarly, before Peter meets Hook in their final confrontation, the narrator relates that, "Odd things happen to all of us on our way through life without our noticing for a time that they have happened… Now such an experience had come that night to Peter… He had seen the crocodile pass by without noticing anything peculiar about it, but by and by he remembered that it had not been ticking. At first he thought this eerie, but soon he concluded rightly that the clock had run down" (Barrie 127). Peter recognizes again at this moment that his time has run out; the clock has stopped ticking and he should prepare himself for the death of his childhood and acceptance of heteronormative gender roles before he meets Captain Hook for this decisive battle. Yet again, Peter utilizes his advantage as perpetual child to find a way out of this inevitability: "Peter began to consider how he could turn the catastrophe to his own use; and he decided to tick… As he

swam he had but one thought 'Hook or me this time.' He had ticked so long that he now went on ticking without knowing that he was doing it" (127). Peter subconsciously understands that if he can force time to continue, he has agency and power as perpetual child over Captain Hook. When Neverland seems to recognize that all other children would meet their doom and "die" to their gender fluidity and embrace gender normativity, Peter refuses. "Hook or me this time" exhibits Peter's dominance over any overt apparatus seeking to see him grow, showing through Hook that what is as natural as divine power or time itself has no power over him. His institutional subversive power stems from this eternality, yet every circumstance yields a situation intended to foster growth and maturity in the child. Peter is repeatedly stuck in this cycle of progressing towards an end (growing up and accepting gender normativity) that he will never see because he is simply too busy playing and forgetting what culture demands of every other child.

Along with the religious system, Hook also represents an adoration for and adherence to the institutional power of education. Schools became the dominant ideological institution after a decline in the practice of child labor in the late nineteenth century. As an institution working for the social construction of the child, the classroom serves as one of the primary entities which serve to normalize and categorize children. Stemming from the ideological concepts of Rousseau, the primary attributes of children are dependence, ignorance, vulnerability, and the need for protection and discipline. This discipline, as it relates to gender construction, creates an immediate environment where the normal and abnormal are primarily and continually reinforced for the students. The education system works to normalize and construct the gender identity and

heteronormativity at very early stages in a child's pedagogical development. Kerry H. Robinson speaks to this process, saying, "the construction of heterosexual desire and identities in early childhood is an integral part of children's everyday educational experiences" (Robinson 19). This stems from an innate and subconscious adult fear that if left unchecked and undisciplined, children will be left in a sexually ambiguous and gender fluid state. Education, therefore, encourages the forced repetition of gender normative behavior and reinforcement of acts and discourse which undergirds heteronormativity.

That children are inherently more fluid in terms of gender and sexuality is assumed by the dominant discourse within the classroom: "The presumption that children are asexual, 'too young' and 'innocent' to understand sexuality is contradicted by the fact that the construction of heterosexuality and heterosexual desire is an integral part of children's everyday experiences, including their early education" (23-24). The educational system provides a vital avenue to construct and maintain gender norms within a society, and it becomes the children's necessary response to find gender equilibrium as a byproduct of their educational success and social advancement. Education ties the ability to develop gender identity to the ideals of capitalism: do the necessary work (construct gender norms as they are expected) and receive the appropriate reward (progression through school to a gender appropriate career, and ultimate inclusion into normative society).

Upon recognizing her brothers' forgetfulness as it relates to their way of life in Britain, Wendy attempts to recreate the institutional power of the education system within Neverland to reestablish the institution's repressive power over gender construction: "She tried to fix the old life in their minds by setting them examination papers on it, as like as

possible to the ones she used to do at school." (Barrie 72). Fixing the old life in their minds assumes that the children engaging in this activity are willing objects of the purposes of this institution. By creating this system, they are seemingly trying to reestablish what they have forsaken and live under the authority of education in order to continue the formation of their gender identity. This particular episode is a clear demonstration of Foucault's examination theory which is intended to normalize and qualify the children; it combines multiple elements of institutional authority meant to subjugate the children to institutional ends, namely heteronormative gender roles.

The examination itself, as the narrative relates, is "as like as possible to the ones she used to do at school" and the content of the examination itself are descriptions of the Darling parents, another system of repression and gender formulation; when a student could not answer a question correctly, he was "told to make a cross; and it was dreadful what a number of crosses even John made" (72). The religious and familial systems of authority are found within this practice of the education system. John accepts this corrective and normalizing process without question, quickly repenting over his incorrect answers. This stands in direct contrast to Peter, who "did not compete… He was the only boy on the island who could neither write nor spell; not the smallest word. He was above all that sort of thing" (Barrie 72). While John represents a boy who is destined for and desires immersion into the education and religious systems meant to normalize his gender from a fluid child to a defined man, Peter stands "above all that sort of thing." There is no interest to enter this system to be normalized and surveilled.

Through veiled narrative allusions, it is learned that Captain Hook is also ever representative of the institution of education. This particular institution seems inexorably

linked to a very distinguishable separation between good and bad form. The narrator relates that Hook "had been at a famous public school; and its traditions still clung to him like garments, with which indeed they are largely concerned… and he still adhered in his walk to the school's distinguished slouch. But above all he retained the passion for good form. Good form! However much he may have degenerated, he still knew that this is all that really matters." (Barrie 121). This educational ideology has been steeped so deeply within Hook that he audibly hears this ideology provoking him day and night: "From far within him he heard a creaking as of rusty portals, and through them came a stern tap-tap-tap, like hammering in the night when one cannot sleep. 'Have you been good form to-day?' was their eternal question" (121). Good form, as Hook learned it at Eton College, becomes a driving and eternal obsession, and this obsession rears itself through the last words Hook utters in both the play and novel. After Peter defeats him in the original version of the play, Hook's last words are "Floreat Etona" ("May Eton Flourish"), while in the novel, he cries simply, "Bad form!" This link between Eton College and Hook's preoccupation with form becomes an important factor when considering the term "good form" as gender normativity and "bad form" as gender fluidity.

If one develops gender equilibrium, their self is resolved and they are given "good form" when they accept their normative gender role. That Hook combines the system of education with this idea of good form speaks to the power of this institution's hold over the gendered development of the individual. Monique Chassagnol talks about this gendered development within the narrative:

> Hook, with deft irony, is represented as a refined and educated gentleman, who in the past mingled with the elite. He once attended the best public schools in the

> country where the flowers of English manhood were educated according to the strict rule of military discipline. Harsh competitiveness and bullying that verged on cruelty were meant to turn British little boys into true males: dominant, insensitive, tough in body and heart. (203)

The narrator inserts commentary which links Hook's past experiences with Eton College to his current state of good form, it is stated that "in the end he was true to the traditions of his race… as he staggered about the deck striking up at them impotently, his mind was no longer with them; it was slouching in the playing fields of long ago, or being sent up for good, or watching the wall-game from a famous wall. And his shoes were right, and his waistcoat was right, and his tie was right, and his socks were right" (Barrie 137). Peter's final clash with Hook presents a stark dichotomy between Hook's development as a man who himself was gendered through the system of education and that of Peter who, through his actions, has caused Hook to strike "impotently" after him. Peter has removed the manhood from Captain Hook, who is left impotent in Peter's presence, and he reminisces about the days he was ideologically formed by Eton College; and in so doing, Peter has completely subverted Hook's understanding of form.

Hook's goal is to see Peter develop good form, to transform from a gender-fluid child to a gender-normative man, and it is a telling commentary that the novel ends with Hook's pronouncement that Peter displays bad form. He is unwilling to commit the militaristic, "gentlemanly" act of murder by sword, he doesn't take up what is historically phallic to murder his enemy; instead Hook himself seems to perpetuate the subversion of form: "He [Hook] invited him with a gesture to use his foot. It made Peter kick instead of stab" (137). It is as if Hook understands his failure to appropriate and normalize Peter, so

he forces Peter to commit an act completely contrary to his own understanding of good form as he learned it from Eton, thus solidifying Peter's perpetual place as a gender-fluid child. Hook's failure to see Peter's good form as he has understood it through Eton College is directly tied then to Peter's existence as gender fluid. To further confirm this, directly following this culminating interaction with Hook, Peter "had one of his dreams that night, and he cried in his sleep for a long time, and Wendy held him tight" (138). This dream, associated with the riddle of his existence, speaks to Peter's nature as an eternal betwixt and between, forever existing in the realm of ambiguity and fluidity. Peter's subversion comes through Hook's proclamation that he shows "bad form," which is revealed through Peter's lack of a unified and resolved self as, in fact, the pinnacle of good form.

Not only do these representations of Captain Hook offer a critique and subversion of the institution of education, there are historical ramifications as it relates to censoring *Peter Pan* within British schools. Much discussion and debate occurred over the inclusion of the novel within the curriculum of public schools in Great Britain shortly after it was published. Oddly enough, it was the inclusion of these narrative critiques on the education system as they are represented by Captain Hook that became the subject of controversy. Speaking of the overt references to Hook's attendance and immersion in the educational culture at Eton College, Jacqueline Rose states "that in 1915, when the London County Council's Books and Apparatus Sub-Committee accepted Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* as a reader for use in the schools, every vestige of this reference was systematically cut" (Rose 117). Likewise, any mention of Hook's high social status he gains from his education at Eton, existing as a "man unfathomable," and that he was "one

of a different caste from his crew" are likewise subject to censor: "Along with all mention of Hook's educational history, this language is edited out of *Peter and Wendy* when it is accepted by the schools. Thus the censorship does not apply only to the explicit references to the institutions of schooling" (117-118). While Rose argues that this act of censoring hinges primarily on controlling language, it demonstrates the capacity of the system of education to control such language in terms of ideological repression. If the school system gains agency and power over the explicit language of the novel, it controls the overt messages it can convey. Therefore, this censoring of Peter's subversive acts becomes necessary for this institution, for Peter demonstrates that rejecting normative gender roles and subsequent acceptance of overall placement within British society comes through toppling the education system. Not only is this institution represented by the arch-nemesis of the hero, but this institution is clearly shown to be powerless against Peter as a child. Peter successfully rebels against and topples both the education system and religious systems and sets up the binate relationship between Hook, the *in loco parentis*, and Peter which points to a broader understanding of his nature.

The concept of the Lacanian mirror is telling in the ways it is exhibited through the novel. Captain Hook, as Peter's symbolic parent against whom he must rebel and kill, is seen to be a symbolic mirror to Peter in multiple stages through the narrative. As Peter boards the Jolly Roger to rescue Wendy and the Lost Boys, the pirates assume that there is one more on board the vessel that can be accounted for. The pirates immediately recognize the potential mirroring of Captain Hook and Peter Pan: "'They say,' said another, looking viciously at Hook, 'that when he comes it's in the likeness of the wickedest man aboard.' 'Had he a hook captain?' asked Cookson insolently" (Barrie

132). When Peter and Hook finally meet before their ultimate clash, the narrative offers further mirrored imagery: “Thus suddenly Hook found himself face to face with Peter. The other drew back and formed a ring around them. For long the two enemies looked at one another” (134). Yet again, following Peter’s defeat of Hook, Peter mirrors his nemesis by sporting “Hook’s wickedest garments,” and that he “sat long in the cabin with Hook’s cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which he bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook” (140). This seemingly resolves the rebellion of the Symbolic Order as Peter quite literally kills his symbolic father figure.

However, as an extension of further Lacanian theory, Peter’s mirror stage isn’t an overt recognition of his own separation from his parents and an understanding of his separated self. Instead, his mirror ultimately becomes what he could have been and what he has subverted. Peter mockingly plays the part of the man he was destined to become had he fully embraced and accepted his normative gender role. Thus Peter’s recognition of the self is altogether fastened to that which he perpetually struggles against in Neverland. He remains on the commandeered Jolly Roger while the narrative is clear that it “must now return to that desolate home” (140) of the Darlings to resolve the gender disequilibrium of the Darling children and the Lost Boys. While they re-immerse themselves into the dominant institution for gender normalization and categorization (the family/home, which will be discussed in the next chapter), Peter returns to Neverland to forever continue the pattern of identifying adult representations of institutional repression and perpetually subverting them through his gender fluid state as a child.

This subversive repetition is confirmed as Peter interacts with Wendy after she had grown up and had children of her own. She wishes to reminisce about her own

adventures with Peter in Neverland, but she is met with an amnesiac boy who is more interested in current adventure than past conquests: "'Who is Captain Hook?' he asked with interest when she spoke of the arch enemy. 'Don't you remember,' she asked, amazed, 'how you killed him and saved all our lives?' 'I forget than after I kill them,' he replied carelessly" (Barrie 152). The fact that Peter forgets this all-important interaction with Captain Hook suggests that Peter's clash with him was merely a temporary attempt by Hook and that more male figures have and will emerge to challenge him. Peter's immersion into the Lacanian Symbolic Order is a perpetual one, as no separation from the symbolic parent truly exists; as soon as Peter kills one, another takes his place. Therefore, no culturally constructed and defined self can exist. Not only does Peter continue to kill "them," or representations of the father and masculine institutions of authority, they will continue to replicate themselves for Peter, and this clash will continue *ad infinitum*. These male representatives will continue to attempt to conform Peter to heteronormative gender roles, and he will continue to kill and subsequently forget them, remaining the eternally gender-fluid child. It is only through this paradigm that Peter can truly remain a child forever: for a boy stuck in perpetual childhood must also always be stuck in the unending Lacanian struggle to kill the symbolic parent.

CHAPTER 4: MR. DARLING AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE PATERFAMILIAS

Peter Pan's enigmatic role as a subversive, perpetual child against masculinity and masculine norms is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in what J.M. Barrie had originally intended to call his play: "Barrie's original title for the play *Peter Pan* when he first showed it to Charles Frohman in April 1904 was *The Great White Father*. Frohman liked everything about it except the title. By the time it was performed, the play had been retitled *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*" (Billone 164). Had the play kept its original title, interpretations of Peter's role as perpetual child surely would have commingled with his role as a subversive and superior father to the only true father figure in the story, Mr. Darling. Instead of the primary clash existing physically between Captain Hook and Peter, the focus would have shifted to a more ideological battle against Mr. Darling, the Great White Father.

Peter Pan fully embraces this title as his own in the novel, after rescuing Tiger Lily from a perilous fate at the mermaid's lagoon. He receives their praise and adoration, "They called Peter the Great White Father, prostrating themselves before him; and he liked this tremendously" (Barrie 91). Peter not only receives this auspicious title, but he stands before groveling subjects who exist to worship and protect him. Mr. Darling, whose role is the parent, husband, and breadwinner within a patriarchal system, should receive similar adoration and protection from subjects under his authority. However, Mr. Darling is shown to himself be a transitioning "Betwixt and Between," stuck between desires to remain in childhood yet culturally and ideologically bound to progression into manhood and acceptance of heteronormative male roles. Monica Chassignol argues that

male characters in Barrie's fiction consistently "find it difficult to perform a satisfying, coherent part. Each of them in his own manner painfully oscillates between various identities, constantly changing masks." (209). Once Mr. Darling accepts the inevitability of a culturally mandated, heteronormative male mask, he gains the same societal approval Peter achieved in Neverland, however he is jailed by cultural constructs of gender. His influence, therefore, lead his wife, children, and the Lost Boys to accept their own heteronormative roles and seek cultural acceptance through gender performance.

The living situation in which J.M. Barrie was born provides a backdrop for the conception of the male authority figure lacking immersive influence and respect among the family. As the Barrie family grew, it became even more important for David Barrie to financially provide for his wife and four children, ushering a lengthened work day and a diminished relationship between David and his children. Barrie's siblings were raised by neighbors, other family members, and David also hired three paid helpers to care for Barrie's mother and the children in their distress. Their financial stability quickly consumed him: "David was increasingly concerned he would be unable financially to survive. In spite of his persistently hard work there was little enough money" (Chaney 10). This biographically correlates to the early representations of Mr. Darling, who is described as being solely tied to his work and has a knowledge of stocks and shares. Barrie creates an immediate dichotomy between the present mother who is intensely interested in her children, and the distant and working father, who seems only to care for his own reputation, pride, and economic and social standing. Though none of these features figure prominently in the life of David Barrie, the lack of a consistent male authority in Barrie's life illuminates a reading of the novel that supports the idea of the

male/father figure being distant and solely concerned with financial stability. David and Mr. Darling both seek resolution to hardship, and by extension, financial success and the ability to care for their family as confirmation of their success as heteronormative males.

Mr. Darling shows himself to be the what Peter Pan could have been had he succumbed to the aggression and desires of Captain Hook. Hook longed to kill Peter's childhood, enslaving him to maturation and culturally constructed gender norms. Conversely, Peter represents all that Mr. Darling wishes he could ultimately attain as one holding on to childhood and the cultural ambiguity it brings to sexuality and gender roles. The first two chapters highlight an individual in Mr. Darling who is struggling between a conception of adulthood that is seeks cultural acceptance, and a desire to remain in childhood, which leads to a sense of abnormality and a lack of respect among those considered to be under his patriarchal authority. From the beginning of the narrative, Mr. Darling is depicted as a conflicted adult trying to find equilibrium in the form of respect, admiration, and cultural acceptance. Yet the ways in which he seeks this equilibrium are mired in acts that can only be described as inherently childish.

Mr. Darling's first attempt to find equilibrium as a heteronormative male is through the institution of marriage, the most obvious representation of acceptance of heteronormative roles. The manner by which Mr. Darling "wins" Mrs. Darling's hand in marriage has absolutely no bearing upon Mr. Darling's status as a heteronormative man. There is no wooing, no courting, not even an overt proposal of marriage; instead the narrative states that Mr. Darling simply "took a cab and nipped in first, and so he got her" (Barrie 7). Not only does this act imply the stereotypical heteronormative depiction of man as conqueror and woman as object to be conquered, but Mr. Darling's pursuit and

conquer of Mrs. Darling's hand in marriage is related to a simple race, an activity typically reserved for children in a playground-type setting. He won her because he got there first. Notwithstanding the almost offensive implications this scene implies, removing women's agency in Mr. Darling's childish pursuit of Mrs. Darling, it also yields an illustration of marriage that is completely passionless. Mr. Darling, the winner of this race, is said to have gotten "all of her, except the innermost box and the kiss. He never knew about the box, and in time he gave up trying for the kiss" (7). Mr. Darling receives all of Mrs. Darling, except the innermost box of her passion and the kiss, representative of sexual desire and fulfillment.

The idea of a sexless marriage not only seems to confirm Mr. Darling's state of arrested development, but it also is corroborated by Barrie's own background and literary depictions of love. Sarah Green speaks of Barrie's own definition of love as it is revealed through the cannon of his fiction: "Love, as Barrie defined it, was a form of idealism. In romantic relationships, its highest form, it was possible only when both partners recognised a similar ideal of life, an ideal repeatedly juxtaposed against and so distinct from sexual passion" (Green 187). Romantic relationships saw as their foundation an ideological union rather than any sexual or erotic one. Lisa Chaney argues in Barrie's biography that his "Marriage was almost certainly not consummated. Indeed it would seem reasonable to assume that it was an impossibility" (Chaney 277). Mr. Darling exemplifies Barrie's ideals in that he attempts to discover gender normativity through seeking sexual intimacy with his wife; yet he exists in the tension Barrie creates in that true love stands outside of what is purely sexual, and instead focuses on ideological similarities, which is a far more desirable source of love for Mrs. Darling.

As the object of male affection and pursuit, Mrs. Darling's character illustrates the culmination of a life subjected to this sexual objectification. She is pursued by suitors all attempting to win her hand in marriage, resolving their own gender disequilibrium as they mature into adulthood and fulfilling culturally mandated, heteronormative roles. Mrs. Darling's kiss is a symbol of victory for those seeking heteronormativity, but she reserves it only for those who ultimately reject those norms. Mr. Darling "never knew about the box," and even Wendy attempted to procure it: "Her sweet mocking mouth had one kiss on it that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in the right-hand corner" (Barrie 7). Excusing the incestuous implication and that it would have been impossible for Wendy to attain this kiss as Mrs. Darling's biological daughter, she is barred from receiving it because she is shown through the novel to be undeniably progressing towards heteronormative ends. She loves to keep house, she wants to play the role of wife and mother, and eventually does settle into those roles as wife and mother at the end of the novel.

Mrs. Darling simply cannot provide her kiss to someone who is destined for such aims; instead, it is reserved only for those who reject maturation. Mrs. Darling's wish for her children is that they "remain like this [in childhood] forever," so the fulfillment of love for her isn't in the institution of marriage that Mr. Darling is culturally forced into, instead it is taken, as if by right, by Peter Pan, the one being who fulfills Mrs. Darling's wish for her own children. At the novel's conclusion, before Peter's departure from Wendy following their adventures, "He took Mrs. Darling's kiss with him. The kiss that had been for no one else Peter took quite easily. Funny. But she seemed satisfied" (151). Mrs. Darling's love, an entity that is culturally expected to have been given through the

institution of marriage, is taken by Peter Pan. It seems the childhood performance demonstrated by the perpetual child is the only way to achieve Mrs. Darling's love and affection. This again correlates to J.M. Barrie's own childhood, as he coveted the attention of his mother, Margaret. Her attention and favoritism, however, was securely fastened upon his deceased brother David, who would in her mind remain a child forever, which was her one consolation (Birkin**)**. Childhood love is shown to be a much more perfected form of love than the performed and flawed institution of marriage. Peter therefore exhibits mastery over the institution and shows dominance over Mr. Darling's performative attempts to find gender equilibrium through this heteronormative act, an act which Peter Pan consistently rejects.

The two times Wendy seemingly proposes to Peter, seeking a romantic heterosexual relationship, Peter quickly denies it: "'What are your exact feelings to me?' 'Those of a devoted son, Wendy.' 'I thought so,' she said, and went by herself at the extreme end of the room. 'You are so queer,' he said, frankly puzzled (95). Not only does Peter immediately reject this proposal for romantic love, he describes this heteronormative desire as queer. Peter discursively subverts heteronormativity here by queering what has historically been one of the only markers of what is not "queer": a heterosexual marriage relationship. And again at the novel's conclusion, Wendy broaches the subject of marriage, to which Peter likens to a complete submission to all masculine institutions of authority:

> 'You don't feel, Peter,' she said falteringly, 'that you would like to say anything to my parents about a very sweet subject?'
>
> 'No.'

'About me, Peter?'

'No.' (149)

Immediately following this rejection, Peter understands that acquiescence in the area of marriage also means a submission to the institutions of school, an office, and manhood, the idea of which leaves Peter repulsed: "Keep back lady, no one is going to catch me and make me a man" (150).

Whereas Peter recognizes the heteronormative shackles into which marriage tie the individual to the inevitability of growing up, Mr. Darling is culturally forced to this task in order to find resolution of the self and attain cultural acceptance. Mr. Darling simply cannot attain the resolution he desires through this institution at the outset of the novel because he still clings to and performs childish acts while culture demands that an adult must find equilibrium through performed, culturally acceptable heteronormative gender roles. Peter, as the perpetual child, can procure this love because he performs his acts as eternal, gender-fluid child, free from heteronormative expectations.

Likewise, Mr. Darling's role as father should ideologically lead to acceptance and respect from his family members, confirming his gendered self to a place of resolution and equilibrium. Yet the father figure in the novel is consistently derided and made a mockery, in fact the institution of fatherhood is depicted as being as ideologically damaging to children's maturation as any other institution. When describing Mrs. Darling's nightly activities, cleaning up the children's minds presumably to assist in keeping the children in a state of childhood for as long as she can, the narrator describes the evil elements she must tuck away to maintain their innocence: "It would be an easy map if that were all but there is also first day at school, religion, fathers, the round pond,

needle-work, murders, hangings, verbs that take the dative" (11). The complicated mind-sweeping Mrs. Darling engages in to purge the mind of "naughtiness and evil passions" include a complicated web of institutional influence. Not only do the children's minds need to cleaned from institutions like school, religion, governmental punishment, and domestic duties, their minds also need to be cleansed from the overwhelming ideological influence of father, which oddly is linked not only to institutional influence but also to murders and hanging. The implication is that these entities ultimately lead to a loss of life, hearkening back to the opening paragraphs of the novel, which discuss death in two forms. Simply put, it is the father who perpetuates the death of the child, and the mother who maintains childhood innocence. As father figure, Mr. Darling's institutional influence as head of the household and a patriarchal society should be unquestioned and authoritative. But because he does not find resolution and cultural acceptance early in the novel, the methods by which he seeks this approval are misguided. Again, it is due to the idea that Mr. Darling cannot seem to release himself from the cultural demands to put to death his childhood and fully embrace his role as authoritative father.

As Mr. Darling attempts to coerce Michael into taking his medicine, he sets himself immediately as patriarchal authority figure and attempts to condition Michael for this performed act by commanding his young son to "Be a man, Michael" (20). He recognizes his own role in forcing Michael to perform socially constructed male roles by this command, but his command is quickly negated by the childish behavior he engages in with his youngest son. Symbolically, the "medicine" represents taking what it inevitable and forced upon the person to sustain growth and maturation into manhood. Taking his medicine is thereby associated with doing what is necessary to become a man.

Wendy, who tries to encourage Michael in this process of maturation, challenges Mr. Darling to demonstrate his own manhood by taking *his* medicine, showing how easy it is to perform the role of a man. Instead of successfully performing the role of father, Mr. Darling regresses and begins engaging in childish behavior:

> 'The point is, that there is more in my glass than in Michael's spoon.' His proud heart was nearly bursting. 'And it isn't fair; I would say it though it were with my last breath; it isn't fair.'
>
> 'Father, I am waiting,' said Michael coldly.
>
> 'It's all very well to say you are waiting, so am I waiting.'
>
> 'Father's a cowardy custard.'
>
> 'So are you a cowardy custard.' (21)

The example Mr. Darling sets for his young son, then, is to avoid taking the medicine all together and instead, engage in childish rhetoric, complaining about unfairness and resorting to name-calling. Not only does Mr. Darling engage in this behavior, he stoops to Michael's level of maturity, leveling their hierarchal relationship; which in turn fosters an environment where Michael goes completely unpunished for calling his father a "cowardy custard."

To continue, not only does Mr. Darling trick Michael into taking his medicine while slipping his behind his back, but he conjures an idea to play a prank upon Nana and give her the medicine instead. Mr. Darling thus engages in typical "bad boy" behavior by seeking to rebel against an authority figure that he himself set up for the children. Tim Prchal discusses this phenomenon in children's literature as it relates to boys and their tendency toward rebellion through jokes: they "aim their practical jokes less against other

boys and more against entire communities or specific authority figures" (Prchal 200). That Mr. Darling plays this elaborate practical joke on Nana, an authority figure, certainly highlights his complete regression from patriarchal authority figure to rebellious young boy. Mr. Darling, in this domestic scene, should be the figure rebelled *against*, not the character performing the rebellion. However, it is such performances by Mr. Darling which solidify his inability to achieve societal acceptance as a fully gendered man. Upon witnessing this practical joke, the roles briefly reverse and the children assume the role of authority figure: "The children did not have their father's sense of humor, and they looked at him reproachfully as he poured the medicine into Nana's bowl" (Barrie 21). The children's look of reproach not only solidifies their lack of respect for this figure of authority, but it augments the fact that Mr. Darling's maturity has regressed to a hierarchal status lower than that of his own children. Mr. Darling recognizes the role he should play as father and breadwinner for his family; but because of his performance, he doesn't attain resolution and acceptance from those who should exist underneath his authority. Instead, he continues to complain: "Nobody coddles me. Oh dear no! I am the only breadwinner, why should I be coddled - why, why, why!" (21). He doesn't seem to understand at this point in the narrative that he cannot be coddled because he is not a child and isn't performing the socially constructed acts associated with his gender. It is only then that he will achieve resolution of the self and gain the respect and admiration of his family and society.

As a subversive alternative, Peter Pan shows himself to be a superior performer to Mr. Darling as it relates to fatherhood and primary breadwinner for the Darling children. As soon as Peter leads the children out of the Darling window, the narrative describes

Peter's ability to literally put food in their mouths: "Did they really feel hungry at times, or were they merely pretending, because Peter had such a jolly new way of feeding them? His way was to pursue birds who had food in their mouths suitable for humans and snatch it from them" (38). Wendy immediately grasps Peter's unusual and playful methods of breadwinning, noting that "Peter did not seem to know that this was rather an odd way of getting your bread and butter, nor even that there are other ways" (38). Peter holds the ability to perform in absurd ways to feed the Darling children, however the ease by which he is able to feed them stands in direct opposition to the worried and frenzied appeal to the calculator by Mr. Darling. He immediately combines the presence of his children with the exorbitant cost of feeding them, illustrating the difficulty by which Mr. Darling plays the role of father and breadwinner. Peter, however, is able to play his way to nourishing the children, merely snatching food from the mouths of birds.

Peter's interaction with the Lost Boys and Indians in Neverland likewise speaks to his ability to garner respect and admiration as a father figure in ways Mr. Darling never could. The Lost Boys declare that they are "So afraid of Peter" (60) and they knew that "Peter must be obeyed" (64) and "nothing escapes his eagle eye" (66). After Peter saves Tiger Lily from certain death at the mermaid's lagoon, Peter is adored by everyone around him: they "prostrate themselves before him," and "groveled at his feet" (91). His words hold indisputable authority: "Always when he said, 'Peter Pan has spoken,' it meant that they must now shut up, and they accepted it humbly in that spirit;" his authority also grants him the loyalty and respect of the wife and mother figure, Wendy who "was far too loyal a housewife to listen to any complaints against father. 'Father knows best,' she always said" (91-92). Peter undoubtedly, through his mastery of

performance as gender-fluid and eternal child, has gained a level of respect, admiration, and cultural acceptance for which Mr. Darling yearns. Mr. Darling plays in much the same manner that Peter does, but as an adult, his societal acceptance is contingent upon his successful performance of socially constructed gendered roles of the adult male, which he ultimately fails to accomplish.

Along with his failure to appropriately perform the role of father, Mr. Darling is equally unable to achieve success and social acceptance through his performance of the capitalist laborer and economic breadwinner. Throughout the narrative, Mr. Darling's desire for cultural acceptance through performing heteronormative male roles is often associated with his yearning for higher social status through his role as businessman and is linked to his constant economic failure and worries. The narrator introduction of Mr. Darling is an immediate mockery of his immersion into a utilitarian landscape: "He was one of those deep ones who knew about stocks and shares. Of course no one really knows, but he quite seemed to know, and he often said stocks were up and shares were down in a way that would have made any woman respect him" (8). The narrator admits that Mr. Darling "quite *seemed* to know," implying that his knowledge is only a performative act, utilized to gain the respect and admiration of women. Mr. Darling exhibits power as male because of this elusive knowledge, in the vein of Foucault's ideas of power/knowledge. However this knowledge is quickly shown to be a farce at the introduction of his role as father. When calculating the expenses associated with raising and supporting children, a fundamental aspect of performing the role of father, Mr. Darling finds himself confused at the numbers, and yet again the narrator mocks him: "He was very honourable, and he sat on the edge of Mrs. Darling's bed, holding her hand

and calculating expenses… and if she confused him with suggestions he had to begin at the beginning again" (8). These calculations, sped through the narrative at a rapid pace, are "at-times inaccurate" (Billone 161), and proves Mr. Darling's utter ignorance about stocks and shares, casting doubt on the authenticity of the respect he receives.

The narrative pictures Mr. Darling as unable to receive cultural acceptance, an illustration of achieving gender resolution and incorporating into society as an acceptable norm, because he consistently upsets the static role of adult male as father/husband/breadwinner and confuses his performance with that of a child. In a particularly illuminating scene, Mr. Darling enters the children's nursery "like a tornado" (18), disturbing the stability of the gender-fluid childhood influence associated with Mrs. Darling's matriarchal authority. He enters this space seeking the approval, respect, and admiration of his family and business associates by seeking to successfully perform the culturally constructed masculine role of breadwinner by attending a business party, seemingly to advance his prospects as an employee. However, he is shown to be inept and inadequately positioned to perform this masculine role because he is caught between a desire to remain child-like and the acceptance of the inevitability of cultural demands to mature.

Mr. Darling's attempts to find resolution and social acceptance through his utility are met with conflict as he cannot adequately dress for the part: "It is an astounding thing to have to tell, but this man, though he knew about stocks and shares, had no real mastery of his tie" (18). Even though Mr. Darling has a farcical working knowledge of stocks and shares, the initial source of Mrs. Darling's respect for him, he proves that such knowledge without successful performance is a sham. He cannot convincingly perform this role, and

will not achieve gender resolution and cultural acceptance, because he has no mastery over the costume he is to wear: “This tie, it will not tie… Unless this tie is round my neck we don’t go out to dinner to-night, and if I don’t go out to dinner tonight, I never go to the office again, and if I don’t go to the office again, you and I starve, and our children will be flung into the streets” (Barrie 19). Mr. Darling understands the performative role he must play to fulfill his role as husband, father, and breadwinner, knowing that unless he can perform, the livelihoods of his entire family is at stake. However, he cannot perform the simple task of tying his tie and is thus unable to appropriately costume himself in order to play the part.

As if in recognition of this failure, Mr. Darling again wavers back and forth between his desire for acceptance by means of childish performance and the cultural pressure toward heteronormativity which demands he successfully perform the adult male or be ostracized. As soon as Mrs. Darling properly costumes Mr. Darling, he “at once forgot his rage, and in another moment was dancing round the room with Michael on his back” (19). Now properly adorned to perform this masculine task of businessman and breadwinner, he reverts instead to the child-like performances of dancing and romping around the nursery. The environment around him cannot allow such ambiguity of character from an adult male figure, so the entities which socially construct the performance of adult must upend and resolve this instability of Mr. Darling’s now fluid existence between child and adult: “The romp ended with the appearance of Nana, and most unluckily Mr. Darling collided against her, covering his trousers with hairs…. And he had to bite his lip to prevent the tears coming” (19). Mr. Darling is immediately met with an inevitable tension between an adult male costume and childhood performance;

the environment itself yields a demand that such a costume must only be accompanied with heteronormative male performance, and thus works to upset Mr. Darling's childish performance. Immediately following this unfortunate accident, upon cleaning himself up and seemingly recognizing the adult male role he must now play, he questions the validity of childhood existence as a viable entity. Mrs. Darling entreats her husband that Nana is sure that the child "have souls," to which Mr. Darling replies, "I wonder… I wonder" (19). He seems to have an evolving understanding following this particular scene that performing childhood for a heteronormative adult male will leave the individual in ambiguity, lacking a soul, and leaving an absence of gender-resolution, which ultimately leads to a lack of social acceptance as performing the norm.

Mr. Darling's odd binate relationship with the Darling family's nurse, Nana, also proves to be illuminating when considering Mr. Darling's status as laborer and head of the family unit. Running a successful and socially respectable family is obviously a very large marker for his own success in performing heteronormative male roles. If he can "keep up with the Joneses," as it were, surely admiration and an acceptable conforming to cultural norms will be achieved. Procuring a nurse for his children is apparently one of the benchmarks of successful fatherhood and social success: "Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbors; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, owing to the amount of milk the children drank, this nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog, called Nana, who belonged to no one in particular until the Darlings engaged her" (9). Not only does Mr. Darling again equate their poverty with the presence of his children – not his own failings as a businessman – he adopts what can only be described as a stray dog, belonging to "no one in particular," to care for them. Nana is not only

shown to perform the parental role better than Mr. Darling himself, she also is a living reminder of Mr. Darling's inadequacy as a performer of capitalistic enterprise and financial success.

Nana is often looked down upon by other nurses, who "ignore her as of an inferior social status to themselves" (10), and Mr. Darling, as a male striving for social acceptance as breadwinner, grows concerned over the public's perception of Nana: He "sometimes worried uneasily whether the neighbors talked. He had his position in the city to consider" (10). His fledgling success as a businessman is consistently brought to his attention simply by Nana's presence in his home. He equates his position in the city, and by extension his success as businessman and provider for his wife and kids, to society's perception of his desperate and inferior choice for a nurse. It is no wonder, then, that Mr. Darling would expel Nana from the nursery when his frustration reaches a climax. He claims that her "proper place" is in the yard, where she would be tied up. This act of removing Nana from the nursery and placing her outside of the home which becomes the catalyst for Mr. Darling's transformation in the novel. Mr. Darling "was determined to show who was master in that house, and when commands would not draw Nana from the kennel, he lured her out with honeyed words, and seizing her roughly, dragged her from the nursery" (22). Mr. Darling's determination to prove that he is master of the house can only be accomplished through the now empty kennel, which becomes the symbolic source of Mr. Darling's self-recognition later in the novel as he is finally able to achieve resolution and social acceptance.

Leading up to his self-imprisonment in the kennel, Mr. Darling shows a sharp decline from his childish actions and an acceptance of heteronormativity. He becomes

completely stricken with grief at the departure of his children. In recollecting the day the Darling children left with Peter, Mr. Darling makes it quite clear that he is to blame for his children's departure. The narrator states that the fateful day was a Friday, coinciding with the end of the work week and fatherly responsibilities as breadwinner, Mr. Darling takes full responsibility, "'I am responsible for it all. I, George Darling, did it. *Mea culpa, mea culpa*.' He had had a classical education" (Barrie 17). Mr. Darling understands that the role he has played thus far in his children's lives have served to imprison his children to cultural expectations and norms, forcing them by way of living example that a true man must play the role of the man, regardless of whether or not he wants or intends to do so. These ideological forces have led the children to rebel and fly to Neverland, though Mr. Darling is unaware that the ideological pressure of masculine institutions have already chained the Darling children to an inevitable progression to heteronormative adulthood. At the time of the Darling children's departure from the home, Mr. Darling seems keenly aware of his role in the rebellion and wishes to undo what has been done.

Mr. Darling consistently teeters between a desire to live in a state of boyhood but is unavoidably affixed to the cultural norms of manhood. He exhibits a person who desires to play practical jokes, dancing with his children in the nursery; the narrator even admits "he was quite a simple man; indeed he might have passed for a boy again if he had been able to take his baldness off" (141-142). Yet he seems also bound to a constant striving for social acceptance and resolution of the self in his performative roles as husband, father, and businessman. Because he is inescapably bound to these cultural constructions, his attempts to rediscover boyhood continually fail. He seems to discover that it is the imbalance of his desire between boyhood and manhood that are the cause of

his children's departure, so he illustrates his imprisonment to gender performance by locking himself up in a kennel.

With deft irony, Mr. Darling is shown to have achieved the desired cultural acceptance for which he had been yearning only after he had locked himself up in this kennel. By recognizing the invisible chains which fetter him to social construction, he realizes his place as a prisoner to manhood: "To all Mrs. Darling's dear invitations to him to come out he replied sadly but firmly: 'No, my own one, this is the place for me'" (142). All of Mr. Darling's attempts to reclaim boyhood, gaining acceptance through the gender fluidity that childhood allows, end in utter failure, and it is with despondence that Mr. Darling comes to fully accept the death of his childhood and enters the kennel, an ideological prison of masculine norms. Foucault discusses the power of confinement through institutions and their ability to produce docile bodies, such punishment, he argues, situates a man "in a whole series of their possible positive effects, even if these seem marginal at first sight. As a consequence, regard punishment as a complex social function" (Foucault 170) The kennel, then, performs the social function of a corrective disciplinary entity for Mr. Darling. He ideologically punishes himself, making his body docile to social construction, and "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (180).

Mr. Darling's self-imposed imprisonment forces corrective action, which "transforms and improves" Mr. Darling's performance of masculine roles. He is now subjected to cultural pressure and forced work, which receives the attention of others: "Every morning the kennel was carried with Mr. Darling in it to a cab, which conveyed him to his office, and he returned home in the same way at six. Something of the strength

of character of the man will be seen if we remember how sensitive he was to the opinion of neighbors: this man whose movement now attracted surprised attention" (142). His agency and choice is stripped away as a result of this incarceration and he is whisked from one masculine role to another - husband/father to businessman back to husband/father - and it is through this imprisonment that he now finally attains cultural acceptance and resolution.

Mr. Darling is said to have suffered inward torture but maintained a calm exterior for these social spectators. Not only does he receive the attention of the public, he receives their unremitting admiration: "The great heart of the public was touched. Crowds followed the cab, cheering it lustily; charming girls scaled it to get his autograph; interviews appeared in the better class of papers, and society invited him to dinner" (142). The recognition of his role as gendered man, fettered to the cultural expectations given to the father, husband, and breadwinner/employee leads to a physical manifestation of a prison. Bonnie Gaarden, in discussing the masculine role of Mr. Darling, argues that he "becomes Barrie's case study in which the reader first sees the cultural bindings of the middle-class male - office, marriage, fatherhood - formed and knotted." (75-76). Not only does Mr. Darling discover acceptance through his gendered role as male, his ascent up the social ladder is complete: he receives invitations to interview for a "better class of papers" and is welcomed into society. Once he allows himself permanence within this shackled space, cultural acceptance and social ascent follow; this ushers Mr. Darling's acquiescence to what Foucault would call the power of the norm. He finds gender equilibrium through an act of grief and mourning, stemming from both his children's

departure and his own understanding of his imprisonment to adulthood, and conforms to cultural pressure to achieve the norm.

Mr. Darling's heteronormative kennel came after years of attempting and failing to bypass natural maturation. For the Darling children, however, their "kennel" exists in a much broader, ideological sense. Theirs are the invisible shackles of an environment whose singular focus is to see the heteronormative performance of its children. The institutions by which Mr. Darling is imprisoned has also ideologically chained the Darling children as the offspring of masculine performance. As the children leave the Darling house and fly with Peter to Neverland, they are met with environmental opposition: "Nothing horrid was visible in the air, yet their progress had become slow and laboured, exactly as if they were pushing their way through hostile forces. Sometimes they hung in the air until Peter had beaten on it with his fists" (Barrie 44). That Peter has to beat on the air with his fists to allow their entrance into Neverland demonstrates an alteration in the natural progression from childhood to adulthood for the Darling children. These hostile forces are indeed the institutions of social construction, woven into the space of Great Britain itself, which are meant to normalize the children and see them through to gendered adults. It is a battle for Peter to help them escape this institutional prison, and while the children are in Neverland, they consistently play to gendered expectations. Wendy is the teacher, housewife, and mother; John is the student and loyal subject of the crown; Michael is the child completely dependent upon the provision of parents for survival. The ideology of the institutions of Great Britain keep the children tethered to reality while they are in this imagined space so they and the novel

are only resolved when they escape Neverland and find equilibrium back in the nursery of the Darling house.

The heteronormative influence wrought by Mr. Darling's influence is indeed so strong that the inbred ideology within the Darling children forces the Lost Boys to accompany them back to Great Britain. Upon their arrival Mr. Darling assumes he is a "cypher in his own house" (149), entirely lacking influence or importance within the household. However, the Lost Boys immediately recognize Mr. Darling's vital role in their own presence in the house, "It turned out that not one of them thought him a cypher; and he was absurdly gratified, and said he would find space for them all in the drawing-room if they fitted in" (149). Of course Mr. Darling would find space for the Lost Boys, of course they will fit in, because as an extension of masculine influence within the masculine structures and institutions of Great Britain, these Lost Boys and the Darling children are now forever bound to cultural gender construction and heteronormativity. Their imprisonment, their cultural kennel, is complete, and there is no option for recourse; they are bound to grow up and fully accept institutional influences to perform roles to which their culture now demands: "Of course all the boys went to school… Before they had attended school a week they saw what goats they had been not to remain on the island; but it was too late now, and soon they settled down to being as ordinary as you or me or Jenkins minor (151). Their childhood, now on the way to death because of this ideological imprisonment, only speeds the second death, confirming that all children, except one, grow up, are chained to performance, and eventually die.

CHAPTER 5: THE IMPLICATIONS OF PETER AS FANTASY

Peter Pan's unique position as a character who subverts gender normativity rests in his, and the work's, groundbreaking representation of fantasy as an element of subversion. This thesis has proven Peter's dominance over institutional aims to normalize him as a gendered adult, fully rejecting equilibrium as a male tied to culturally constructed norms. He remains gender-fluid through the novel and subverts the power represented through the masculine authority figures of Captain Hook and Mr. Darling. The broader implications of Peter Pan's eternal tactics of subversion point to his incomparable place within the fantasy genre itself. Fantasy, as Rosemary Jackson argues, is innately subversive: "Based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into 'fact' itself. Such violation of dominate assumptions threatens subvert (overturn, upset, undermine) rules and conventions taken to be normative" (Jackson 14). Peter's *fact*, that he will not grow up, overturns all normative processes for maturation and thus upsets the capitalistic intentions of controlling the performative behavior of the child.

This characteristic phenomenon also places Peter in a singular position of power within the fantasy genre as a whole. In her book *Rhetorics of Fantasy,* Farah Mendlesohn discusses four different categorizations of fantasy literature: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal. She enumerates: "In the portal-quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the

immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape" (xiv). Menlesohn illustrates well over one hundred works of fantasy literature in defining these types of fantasy literature. Once again, *Peter Pan* is conspicuously absent from this work. In this work, I have explored Peter's lack of definitive characterization; he is a protagonist who is defined by his indefinition; neither can the work of *Peter Pan* be correctly identified as a work of adolescent or children's fiction nor as a *Bildungsroman* or *Entwicklungsroman*.

Similarly, *Peter Pan* exists outside of these definitive understandings of fantasy literature; elements of the novel can be found to exist in each of these definitions of fantasy, yet it cannot be fully immersed in any. The fantasy landscape of Neverland, it seems, is contingent upon the presence of Peter Pan to awaken it: "Feeling that Peter was on his way back, the Neverland had again woke into life… With the coming of Peter… you would hear the whole island seething with life" (Barrie 49). Peter shows an eternality that transcends not only selfhood, gender, and symbolic institutions of masculine influence, but an eternality that transcends definition and the subjection to narration itself. The reason why Peter doesn't appear in Mendlesohn's work is that he *is* the fantasy. Therefore, he cannot be contained within a definitive genre, nor can he, as it seems, be contained by the very fantasy landscape of the genre. Neverland is alive and continues to thrive as a fantasy landscape only because Peter Pan himself is an eternal and fantastic child.

Peter exhibits dominance over all boys who are destined to grow into culturally constructed men, who in turn are themselves imprisoned to their need for acceptance and normativity. Like Mr. Darling – fettered to the institution of marriage, fatherhood, and employment within a capitalistic system – the male inevitably must conform to that

which is culturally binding him, and these bonds remain in place until death. Like Captain Hook – chained to systems of power as they are represented within the education and religious systems – the male must inevitably die. As Barrie opens his novel explicating an understanding of two types of death – the passage from childhood to adulthood, and physical death – and illustrates two characters against whom Peter openly and ideologically rebels. In Mr. Darling, the reader sees a character experience the painful passage from gender-fluid childhood to a culturally constructed and fully gendered male adult, thus he experiences the first death. Captain Hook has already achieved gender normativity because of his immersion into masculine systems. He tries, and fails, to normalize Peter by killing Peter's childhood and himself gets killed in the process, and Captain Hook experiences the second death. Both characters experience a "growing up" of sorts, both of the authoritative male figures in *Peter Pan* die. Peter does not; when seemingly upon death's door, Peter exclaims, "To die will be an awfully big adventure," he is in truth proclaiming the one adventure he must never have. Peter's eternality not only shows dominance over male power and normativity, it exhibits a mastery over narrative form and genre. If fantasy is the literature of subversion, as Jackson argues, Peter Pan is the fantasy who is the character of subversion. As the incarnate fantasy within this novel, and thereby the source of all subversion, he must live beyond all those who seek to normalize him as an adult, including the power inherently given to the narrator and author of a given text.

Peter's state as betwixt and between and as eternal child not only assumes the avoidance of death, but his eternality suggests a confusion about his origins. To say that Peter Pan is an eternal child proffers that he certainly has no end, and by logical

extension, that which has no end has no beginning. If Peter is therefore a character assuming the traits of the fantastical, he must also exhibit a sense of mastery over any being said to create him or control his actions, like an author and/or narrator. Jacqueline Rose argues from an idea that is altogether founded upon an adult-centric, author/narrator-centric paradigm, where both the child subject/protagonist of the novel and the child reader are secondary receivers to the producer and creator of the work, removing them from a position of power and agency in the narrative process itself. Children's literature, she argues, illustrates "the impossible relation between the adult and child… Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver)… Children's fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and then aims, unashamedly, to take the child *in*" (Rose 1-2). This process of taking the child *in* – which argues that the narrative process itself, stemming from Barrie's own composition of the text and the narrator's explicit control over narrative action – displays some form dominance over Peter. If Peter was created, he is therefore subject to the creator's aims and becomes, as Rose relates, an outsider to his own process and his subversion is in itself the author/narrator's aim. Peter loses agency and power as an eternal child in such a system. If Peter exists under the authority of a masculine system (a novel written by a male), he is therefore subject to the authoritative influence of this male, thus working to normalize him simply as the product of an author's creativity and a narrator's direction. To solidify Peter's power as a gender-fluid, eternal child, he must exist outside of these constrictive aims.

Peter, as an eternal child, does indeed demonstrate agency and power over this narrative process. He is a character that seems to have existed before Barrie wrote him

down, has the power to outlive the narrative, and continues to exist outside the bonds of the novel. In the dedication of the published version of the play, Barrie confesses the puzzling nature of Peter's origins and cannot remember even writing it: "[It is] my uncomfortable admission that I have no recollection of writing the play of *Peter Pan*, now being published for the first time so long after he made his bow upon the stage… I cannot remember doing it" (Barrie, *Peter Pan, Or the Boy,* 75-76). Whether this is artistic hyperbole from an author attempting to elevate the mystique of his work or Barrie truly cannot recollect writing Peter, the statement supposes Peter's pre-existence to Barrie's written work: Peter is simply a being who appeared in a play and has seemingly taken on a life of his own. In another of Barrie's works, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, the question of Peter's origins are enigmatically answered:

> Peter is ever so old, but he is really always the same age, so that does not matter in the least. His age is one week, and though he was born so long ago he has never had a birthday, nor is there the slightest chance of his ever having one. The reason is that he escaped from being a human when he was seven days old; he escaped by the window and flew back to the Kensington Gardens. (Barrie, *Kensington,* 6)

This passage is filled with contradiction and confusion: Peter is old, but is only one week of age; he was born so long ago he has never had a birthday, and he escaped from being human. The mysterious nature of Peter's origins suggest that this is a character that may not have been created at all, not the least of which by a mother and father and certainly not through the mind and fingers of a Scottish playwright.

Similarly, the narrator within the text of *Peter Pan* works to demonstrate a certain mastery and power over the characters of the novel. If the narrator holds controlling

power over the actions of the novel's characters, Peter's subversive actions don't stem from his innate agency and power as a gender-fluid child but are forced performances by a narrator. These forced performances, as I have shown, yield an understanding of the child who is an inevitable prisoner to the aims of culturally constructed gender norms. If Peter is forced to perform through narrative action, he is a subject to cultural performance and not the free and independent child who answers to no masculine authority figure. Roberta Seelinger Trites confirms the power dynamic given to such adult narrators:

> The power dynamic also shifts if the ideological voice is stated by an adult voice rather than an adolescent voice. Some narratives that rely exclusively on adult voices to articulate direct ideologies may offer fewer affirmations of adolescents than texts that allow adolescents to have the power/knowledge necessary to engage with ideological statements. (70)

The adult voice within the narrative demonstrates certain and undeniable power over the occurrences of the novel, s/he has a mastery over the text, and such "textual knowledge empowers narrators" (71). The narrator in *Peter Pan* holds omnipotent power within the narrative itself, holding character's fates on a whimsical string, severing lives whenever appropriate to the progress of the story. For instance, to exhibit Captain Hook's diabolical heinous nature, the power is given to the narrator to both control Captain Hook's murderous behavior and to end the pirate Skylights' life. The narrator cruelly exclaims, "Let us now kill a pirate, to show Hook's method. Skylights will do" (Barrie 52). This narrative aside gives the reader the astute sense that the narrator is, in a sense, holding the characters of the novel hostage via puppet string. He can use one character at any time s/he chooses in order to kill anyone they desire for the advancing of the story. Skylights'

only purpose within this novel becomes twofold: to illustrate Captain Hook's villainy and force his murderous actions, and to portray a narrator holding complete and callous power over the fate of its characters.

In the same way, the narrator works to establish narrative power over Peter in the way certain events are chosen to be revealed through the story. In choosing which story to relate to demonstrate the vast adventures Peter experienced while in Neverland, the narrator seems to have particular agency and control over which of these adventures s/he should relate. In an inward back-and-forth, the narrator seemingly soliloquizes: "The extraordinary upshot of this adventure was – but we have not decided yet that this is the adventure we are to narrate" (Barrie 73). This reads as if the narrator is holding a symbolic carrot in front of the readers, exhibiting that s/he holds knowledge that the reader doesn't have and, by extension, that s/he holds unique power over Peter's actions. In the end, the novel relates Peter's adventures in the mermaid's lagoon because of a simple coin-toss: "Which of these adventures shall we choose? The best way will be to toss for it. I have tossed, and the lagoon has won" (74). Of course the lagoon has won because the narrator *says* that the lagoon has won. The reader, and Peter, are forced to read about Peter's adventure in the mermaid's lagoon because the narrator chooses to relate that particular story over all the others. It is fitting that this adventure yields Peter's closest encounter with death. It's as if this narrator, along with the masculine influences of Mr. Darling and Captain Hook, are actively working to see to Peter's death. It can be stated, then, that Peter's actions throughout the novel are not of his own power as gender-fluid agent, but completed because they are a forced performance by this omnipotent narrator.

The narrator's power underscores discussions on power/knowledge, and Trites discusses how this contributes to adolescent repression: "The knowledge a narrator has translates into various manifestations of power, depending on how the narrator shares that information with readers. Moreover, in adolescent literature, the power/knowledge dynamic often underscores the didactic impulse of the narrative" (71). This didactic impulse, namely to assist the child or adolescent to conform to normative gender roles, forcing its characters to grow into adults after rebelling as children. The power they possess through holding knowledge "represents the highest goal: truth. No adolescent is given the opportunity to be as wise. The only way teenagers can obtain that goal is to grow, to quit being adolescents themselves, to become like the insiders, the adults" (79). This truth, that all gender-fluid children must conform to normative gender roles as adults, is a knowledge that is only passed to the adolescent once they give up their hold on childhood. The narrator, therefore, inherently holds this power over Peter through the narrative structure itself. However, Peter is able to escape this narrative booby-trap by his very essence as a subversive and eternal fantasy child.

At the conclusion of the novel, the narrative provides the necessary escape for Peter to remain a subversive, gender-fluid child grounded in fantasy. While throughout the story, the narrator controls Peter's action by disseminating his activity to readers, he becomes a more mysterious and free character as Wendy and the other characters grow up, accept jobs, grow beards, find spouses, and obtain titles – all representative of children who have succumbed to every form of masculine institutional power formed to normalize the child's gender. Peter, however, is uncontrolled by the narrator at this point, disappearing for years at a time, not knowing he had forgotten to fetch Wendy for their

yearly visits. Wendy waits, the reader waits, and the narrator him/herself seems to wait for Peter's return, and it is obvious he refuses the confines of not only institutional structure but narrative structure: "Next year he did not come for her… Peter came next spring cleaning; and the strange thing was that he never knew he had missed a year. That was the last time the girl Wendy ever saw him" (152). From the period of Wendy's adolescence to the point where she herself is a mother, Peter is absent from the narrative and his adventurous subversion continues.

When at last Peter does return, it is clear that the pattern of repetition will continue long after the novel itself, long after the author and narrator's power to share his story, come to a close. He will return when he chooses, have adventures as a gender-fluid agent with whomever he chooses, and subvert/kill all institutions and symbols of masculine power along the way. Peter will continue to be the fantasy, the being who will continue to subvert all forms of gender appropriation, forever and ever. All children, but one, grow up. And that one child, who exists now far outside the pages of a book and the performances of play, takes Neverland with him wherever he goes. This fantasy allows for the rejection of all male influence, says that this child doesn't need to become a man, and will continue to have adventures "so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless" (159).

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