

SECOND STAR ON THE RIGHT AND STRAIGHT ON 'TIL MORNING:
THE RECEPTION OF J. M. BARRIE'S *PETER PAN*

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DEDICATION

For my darling husband, Joshua. Thank you for your endless support
and words of encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of my research is to illuminate the long-standing reception of J.M. Barrie's most famous story: *Peter Pan*. There are three distinct mediums for the story, theater, fiction, and film, and I unveil the successes and failures of each category. My research centers on the theories produced by Hans Robert Jauss and Hans-Georg Gadamer. I utilize Jauss' work in reception studies to address how *Peter Pan* changes over time without losing an audience. Gadamer's work in hermeneutics enables my research to highlight the language and conversation produced by Barrie's tale over time. Throughout my thesis, I come back to the overall success of *Peter Pan* and discuss why it has been so popular over the past century.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

All children, except one, grow up. Yet, even in their adulthood, all children remain faithful to their imagination. From the time a child engages in his or her first imaginary play, whether it be with real or imaginary friends, he or she begins a lifelong journey of imaginative development. Childhood worlds, such as pretend house or far-off lands, are created in an attempt for children to maneuver their way through life. They are meant to act as discovery puzzle pieces that assemble themselves neatly in the psyche of humans. These imaginary worlds represent the collection of a child's greatest desires—an aim at a perfect world in which the child makes the rules and meals and friends.

The story of Peter Pan, the boy who never grows up, is the ultimate example of imaginative play not only in children's literature, but also in all genres of literature. J.M. Barrie's story has been capturing audiences and readers since its first production on the Edwardian stage in London, 1904. Since then, Peter has flown effortlessly throughout the century, finding a welcoming audience in each new generation. He truly is the boy who never grows up, and he is also the boy who will never die.

Although many people know the story of Peter Pan, there has been a lack of exploration of the long-standing reception of Barrie's work. My desire to unveil exactly why this tale has been accepted so widely and lovingly across the globe began when I

realized how few scholars have actually credited Barrie for his genius story. I will look at the question “Why has Barrie’s *Peter Pan* been received so exceptionally, without a break between any generations, for over a century?” I will explain this question using Hans Robert Jauss’ reception theory with an incorporation of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s ideas on hermeneutics.

In his essay “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” Jauss notes that a literary piece can only “continue to have an effect only if future generations still respond to it or rediscover it—if there are readers who take up the work of the past again or authors who want to imitate, outdo, or refute it” (11). With *Peter Pan*, it is evident that his story has continued because of generational responses. Since his introduction to the world in 1904, Peter has been accepted in each consecutive generation. During the early years, audiences clung to Barrie and the sparkling stage production “Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up,” eventually asking Peter to come to their own homes by way of novel. With the completion of *Peter and Wendy*, new audiences formed around the bedside or fireplace of family homes in order to continue Barrie’s work. Only a decade later, Peter flew his way into motion pictures, beginning his fame on screen. Reception studies were “initially a way of explaining an author’s development,” but have now become a way to explore the historical inquiry to examine the “changing ‘reading formations’ or ‘interpretive communities’” that govern the reader (Machor xiv). My research will not only include the average reader-viewer, but will include the numerous critical receptions of the plays, texts, and films.

While reception studies, namely the ideas of Wolfgang Iser, can focus on the reader-text relationship approach, my thesis cannot focus only on this relationship. Because I discuss the overall reception of the story of *Peter Pan*, which includes theatre, novel, and film, it is necessary to look at the writer-viewer relationship, too. In doing so, I will briefly touch on the life of Barrie and how his personal life directly correlated to the writing of his most famous work.

Robert Holub describes reception studies as “a reaction to social, intellectual, and literary developments” (iii). I argue that part of *Peter Pan*’s success is due to the story’s ability to engage in a reaction to each one of these categories: social, intellectual, and literary. By viewing the numerous reviews of and reactions to *Peter Pan*, it becomes clear that his story goes beyond the basic viewer-writer or reader-author relationship. Rather, his story created a new type of story-telling: one where the author, director, audience, and reader all work together to build a social, intellectual, literary piece of art.

From its very origin, *Peter Pan* has been a work of the people, for the people. It is a piece of sociological exploration, counting on the masses to tell the story in new, exciting ways. In some fascinating way, we all attribute to and own a portion of *Peter Pan*. His story belongs to Barrie, yes, but it was Barrie himself who shared the spark, the idea, of Peter with the world and graciously asked the audience to create and adapt with him. As childhood collides with adulthood, *Peter Pan* evokes the imaginations of all, beckoning storytellers of all types to share his clever tale.

Because of this, Gadamer’s theories found in *Truth and Method* help to establish understanding the tradition of *Peter Pan*. Gadamer writes that a document, in this case

Peter Pan, is not only “the bearer of tradition but the continuity of memory” (392). *Peter Pan* is not just a play, a book, or a film. Rather, Peter himself is the memory of the world that humanity continues to cherish. This story is a magnificent representation of how one story can be passed on from generation to generation, ebbing and flowing with the changing technological demands, in order to live forever.

CHAPTER II

BARRIE BREAKS THROUGH

Before embarking on the journey to Neverland and beyond, one must first understand the legend of the author, James Matthew Barrie. Sometimes it is not necessary to study the biography of an author in order to consider the reception of his work. Yet, as Boris Tomasevskij states, when an author works across various genres of literature as Barrie did, “only their lives could have united the various forms of verbal creation into a system” (Tomasevskij 118). As we will discover, Barrie’s *Peter Pan* was not just one piece of work. It cultivated over the course of his life, appeared a theatrical production, transformed into in a novel, and rapidly flew across the world from there.

Barrie began his story-telling career at a young age. When he was only six years old, his brother David died unexpectedly in an ice-skating accident. This event sent Barrie’s mother, Margaret Ogilvy, into a deep depression that left her bedridden and delusional. Upon the suggestion of his sister, Jane Ann, young James ventured into his mother’s bedroom in an attempt to cajole the grieving woman. As he entered the dark chamber, Barrie remembered his mother asking, “Is that you?” to which he sadly replied, “No, it’s no ‘him’ it’s just me” (Margaret 12). Barrie was disturbed by his mother’s unintentional rejection and began to cry himself.

From this moment on, he took it upon himself to bring cheer to his mother's increasingly depressing state. Drawing upon his adventurous play in the Scottish mountainside, Barrie would create and vocalize stories to his mother. From this young age, Barrie began perfecting his craft with words—his mastery of story-telling. Soon, Barrie took to counting each time he could make his mother laugh. He meticulously documented this number in order to present it to Margaret's doctor. Once he showed his list to the doctor, the adult suggested the child show his documentation to the mother, in hopes of procuring another laugh. Doubtful, Barrie approached his mother with the laughter list and, much to his surprise and reward, she not "only laughed then, but again" when he counted the laugh on his paper, marking it as two counts of joy (Margaret 15). This was the beginning of Barrie's comedic writing career.

Barrie began to act, dress, and talk like his brother David in order to break his mother's distress. When describing the effect that this character-change had on the young Barrie, biographer Andrew Birkin claims, "If Margaret Ogilvy drew a measure of comfort from the notion that David, in dying a boy, would remain forever, Barrie drew inspiration" (5). While the story of Peter Pan would not appear for decades, the spark was ignited in the moments where Barrie, acting as his deceased brother, comforted his mother in the dark gloom of her bedroom.

Keeping in mind his skill in story-telling, when it was time for Barrie to graduate university, he continued with the desire to be an author, which remained influential throughout his writing career. After securing a job writing articles for the *Nottingham Journal*, Barrie made a name for his writing, albeit infamous¹. His tone generally had a

sense of sarcasm and wit, which was often left unappreciated by the journal's editors. As a journalist, Barrie moved to London in order to pursue higher opportunities. However, he soon became bored with the idea of writing non-fiction and took to penning the fantastical ideas created in his mind.

Barrie's first novel was published in 1888; it found little appeal to the general public, seeing as Barrie's writing seemed much too sophisticated for the average reader to understand. Yet, his hopes were not diminished and he published *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1890). Both of these novels were well-received and brought Barrie into the London light as an author. After his fame grew from his novels, Barrie turned his attention to writing for the theatre. William Lyon Phelps declares that Barrie's brain was "divided into two compartments; with one he writes novels and with the other, plays. He never makes the mistake of using the wrong implements for the allotted task, an error common to literary men, and to not all literary" (40). Barrie's talent continued to reveal itself through the next decade of publications.

From 1891 forward, Barrie's plays could be seen on the stages of London. He wrote about anything from social commentaries (*The Admirable Crichton*) to comedy (*Jane Annie*). Barrie's works had a variety of reception, depending on the work itself and the work's reception to the public audience. However, he was a famous author by 1902, so much so that "his name was such a draw that more than one of his plays was often on in London at the same time" (Chaney ii). Because of this, his name was evidently attached to success in all literary realms.

The year 1902 also saw a turning point for Barrie's novel writing when he finally introduced Peter's character to the world in his novel *The Little White Bird*. In this book, readers were asked to remember their childhood in order to waltz through the Kensington Gardens of London to meet the bird-boy Peter Pan as he rode his little goat. As mentioned earlier, Peter was first crafted in the imagination of young Barrie in search of his brother's identity. Through this memory, and Barrie's obsession with "time," he created this boy in hopes to better understand the implications of growing older (Chaney iv). Later, it was the relationship Barrie had with the Llewelyn Davies family that enabled Peter to fully develop in the author's mind.

While some theorists will argue that the author's life has little to no relation to the artist's work, mainly seen with Tomasevskij, *Peter* can only be attributed to Barrie's life experiences and would not have been as successful if another author tried to pen his storyⁱⁱ. Peter Hollindale describes that even though biographical interpretations have become an unpopular study within literature, Barrie "remains a continuing subject for this kind of exegesis" because there is "an exceptionally close and visible interaction between Barrie's life and his work" (vii). Simply put, Peter is the portion of Barrie that he held within himself for years. This clever boy is the manifestation of Barrie's child's play—his never-ending desire to capture the eternal heart and soul of one who evades time. This boy materialized even further as Barrie spent more and more time with the little Llewelyn Davies boys.

At their first meeting, Barrie and his St. Bernard, Porthos, happened upon three of the Llewelyn Davies boys playing in Kensington Gardens. After completing several

tricks with Porthos, Barrie entertained the boys with his fantastical stories of pirates and adventures, often including the boys' names in the adventures (Tatar lxxxiii). Over the years, the adventures grew more wild and dangerous, and the boys would add their own stories to the long-standing adventure tales.

In 1901, the boys, along with their adult friend, embarked on a journey that would forever change the course of their lives. For much of the summer, “Barrie and the boys sailed on the *Anna Pink*, sharpened spears, built a hut, explored primeval forests, and killed a tiger” (Tatar 190). The group hunted savages, captured the evil captain's dog—the valiant Porthos—and they hunted pirates. The end result of said adventuring were two copies of *The Boy Castaways*, in which Barrie compiled the photos from the fun and Peter Davies, child number three, wrote an introduction on behalf of himself and his brothers.

Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up, seemingly wrote itself after this. Barrie, in his “Dedication to the Five,” confesses that he has “no recollection of having written” *Peter Pan* because the story unwrapped itself over the course of many years. Yet, Barrie is adamant in giving the boys credit for the character of Peter, noting that the boy came about by “rubbing the five of [them] violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame” (1928 *Peter Pan*). The boys would forever remain famous as the real-life “Peter Pans,” even though each of them grew out of their boyhood, much to the regret of Barrie.

Barrie's fame initially catapulted the success of *Peter Pan*, for it was his previous successes in theatre and fiction that enabled him to present *Peter Pan* in the first place.

Since its first production, though, *Peter* has embarked on his journey as the cocky little fellow who dances through the minds of all children. As a man, it was said that Barrie was “at his best with children; in fact, he becomes a child himself, bringing to that role endless resources of fantasy, inventiveness and fun” (Lucas 185). Knowing this, it is no surprise that his tale continues to dazzle children and adults, alike. Any artist who can fully immerse himself in his work, blurring the lines between reality and imagination, will make his mark on society. It is much more than an “escapist fantasy,” but rather it is a “mature investigation into childhood and its implications for the adult who must eventually grow old” (Chaney iv).

In the end, *Peter* remains Barrie’s most famous, cherished work. At his death, he requested that all of the rights and riches of *Peter Pan* be granted to The Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital in London. He also requested that the total monetary amount be concealed, leaving all to question just how much financial aptitude *Peter Pan* had gained. To this day, it is still unknown to the public how great was Barrie’s generosity and love for helping charity. And much like his imagined character, Barrie has yet to die in the arena of literary greatness. Even though Barrie himself never had children, he was able to produce one of the most captivating children’s stories of all time. Whether he knew the extent of the magic his story would hold for future generations, Barrie created one of the most cherished stories—a fairy tale—that would last for centuries to come. *Peter Pan* is not only the wished eternal life of Barrie’s brother David, but it is the desire that all adults have for children: the desire that they will remain young and innocent forever.

CHAPTER III

PETER IN PLAYS

During the late nineteenth century, Barrie had established himself in the Edwardian world as an author who represented both Victorian and modern Edwardian ideas. Barrie began his theatrical career on the later side of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, two playwrights who had bridged the way from Victorian theatre to comical Edwardian theatre (Auerbach 3). Building upon their use of satire, Barrie's plays of "comic drama and sentimental and musical fantasy were well represented" in the period of 1890-1904 (Poplawski 558). Originally rejected for his sarcastic tone and humor, it took some time for Barrie to be recognized as a satirical author. Also, his plays were faithful to the human experience, as was revered and necessary to the Victorian mind, including representations of real-life English citizens, while mixing in the comical atmosphere of Edwardian appeal (Atlick 274). It was from this real-life, fantastical aspect that he wrote *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*.

"My advice to everyone who has children is to take them to the Duke of York's Theatre without delay. Those who have no children should immediately borrow some for the afternoon." This quote appeared in a review, "Letter to Mr. Barrie," in *The King* newspaper on January 14, 1904, just days following the first production of Barrie's *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*. At first, it seemed impossible that this play would be successful. Amy Billone explains just how expensive the play was, seeing

as it “required massive sets and a cast of more than fifty, including a dog, a fairy, a crocodile, an eagle, wolves, pirates, and redskins, and at least four cast members would be required to fly” (xix). Yet even with these expenses, Barrie found a way to get his imaginative world on stage.

Peter Pan was inspired, in part, by Barrie’s trip with the Llewellyn Davies boys to an original pantomime *Bluebell in Fairy Land*, by Seymour Hicks (“Victorian Pantomime”). Initially, pantomimes were used by traveling performance groups as a “very physical type of theatre that uses dance, music, tumbling, acrobatics and buffoonery” (“Victorian Pantomime”). They generally included stock characters and plots. However, once the late-Victorians began to develop pantomimes to fit the culture of 19th century England, pantomimes transformed from a burlesque-type performance to one geared more towards childrenⁱⁱⁱ. *Bluebell* was one of the first pantomimes that created an original plot and non-stock characters (“Victorian Pantomime”). Following this, new-styled pantomimes were produced in various areas of England.

When Barrie began writing *Peter Pan*, he said that he was writing a pantomime. The critics and audiences of his day knew that the play was framed in the way of pantomime (White x). Some of the stock characters were included in Barrie’s story, including the animal character. *Peter Pan* has many animal characters, actually, all of which were played by humans in “skin costumes” (White xv). It was said that Barrie further improved the presentation of the pantomime because he incorporated bells and lights to represent the fairies, specifically Tinker Bell, in his play. From beginning to end,

the extravagance of *Peter Pan* exuded from the stage and reinstated how expensive the play cost.

Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up originally consisted of three acts. Barrie was constantly rewriting and adding to the script, sometimes just hours before the actors were set to rehearse. Maria Tatar explains, “Barrie attended rehearsals and was constantly cutting, revising, and adding new material, collaborating with the actors and actresses to improve dialogue and staging” (xxii). From this, Barrie crafted a sort of co-narration process in which he and the actors would participate in imaginative play, romping around Neverland—or the Duke of York Theatre—in order to perfect a scene. The result of this type of writing-acting was the continual adaptation of the play. Many of the productions were adapted to fit the actors and their talent (Hanson 7). While some writers may have been frustrated by such disorganization, Barrie was delighted by the ever-changing nature of the play. This is one of the reasons why he neglected to pen a final version until twenty-some years later.

The actors, too, felt empowered to add their own pieces of imagination to the play. Barrie gave little advice on how to accurately portray his characters, so the actors maneuvered throughout the script acting as they believed best fit. They understood the general direction Barrie wished to go, so they added creative lines that fit precisely into place. This type of co-narration that Barrie and the actors had lends itself to Gadamer’s idea on communication. He writes that in order for communication to be clear and for a person to be understood, others must come to an understanding “about the subject matter, not to get inside another person and relive his experiences” (385). Because the actors,

director, and producer understood Barrie's world of Neverland, they were able to collaborate on the existence of such a world and brought it alive on stage.

Gadamer also believes that communication—that is *genuine* communication—flows only when the two communicating are led by the conversation, allowing the twists to reach their own conclusion. “No one knows in advance what will ‘come out’ of a conversation,” Gadamer says in *Truth and Method* (385). At each rehearsal Barrie and the crew discussed, reenacted, and tousled with the script; they were engaging in the flow and twists of communication. On the night of the first performance, *Peter Pan* had already expanded from the mind of one man and exploded into the atmosphere of language and adaptation. It became a type of living, evolving organism that Barrie and the cast added to, subtracted from, and adapted to fit their ever-changing moods and audiences.

When Barrie and his team first tried to cast the role of Peter, they found themselves in quite a predicament: Peter, as played by a man, would physically overpower the rest of the cast of boys. Each character would have to be scaled in such a way as to present this man-Peter as a child-sized actor. However, this task was nearly impossible. If the character were to be played by a man, then the lost boys would have to be played by children. During this post-Victorian age of children's rights, it was illegal to have a child under fourteen work past nine o'clock in the evening^{iv}. Therefore, Barrie decided to resolve the issue by having the character of Peter Pan be played by a female. As we will come to discover, the casting of Peter Pan was vital to the play's success.

The first woman that Barrie himself selected for the role was actress Nina Boucicault. Boucicault was the daughter of famous actors, Dion and Agnes Kelly. She previously held a role in *Charley's Aunt* (1892) and *Little Mary* (1903) from which she gained fame (Birkin 108). Her brother, Dion, was the director of the play and, thus, the job seemed fit for the woman. The actor cast for Captain Hook was also to play the role of Mr. Darling, and, thus, needed to be a man of spectacular talent. Gerald de Maurier had previously appeared in a variety of Barrie's play, including *The Admirable Crichton* and *Little Mary*; he was also uncle to the young Davies boys (Hanson 25). The choice to cast Maurier proved rewarding because he "not only provided the new play with his talent but also with his attraction at the box office (Hanson 27). With a cast that attracted the London theatregoers, *Peter Pan* was set to air December 24, 1904. Due to complications with certain scenes, though, the play premiered on December 27th.

When the evening of the play arrived, everyone was unsure as to how the audience would receive the play. The director was especially concerned that when Tinker Bell's famous death scene arrived and the audience was asked to save her life by clapping that there would be a silence across the theatre. Therefore, he informed the orchestra musicians to "initiate the clapping if the audience was slow upon their cue" (Hanson 39). To the surprise of the whole cast, the audience, though mainly made up of adults and theatre critics, applauded with such enthusiasm that it brought Nina to tears. Boucicault responded to the first audience's reaction saying, "The gasp of surprise that greeted me as I flew in through the window and the enthusiasm at the end of the first act were well worth all the hard work. The audience were splendid; I don't think they missed a single

point” (33). However, Barrie and the cast had to wait for the following day to see the critical reception.

On December 28, 1905, reviews of *Peter Pan* came flowing across the pages of nearly every well-known periodical. *The Telegraph* declared the play as “so true, so natural, so touching, that it brought the audience to the writer’s feet and held them captive there.” The discussion of Barrie’s creativity was also addressed among reviewers. *The Times* review stated, “Every second of speech is a new invention, always unforeseen and almost always delightful. Even those who least relish it must admit that no such play was ever seen before on any stage. It is absolutely original—the product of a unique imagination.” The Edwardian theatre-going public, mainly made up of middle-upper class citizens, relished the idea that a humorous piece could relate to any type of person regardless of their socioeconomic background. Audiences had never been shown such a performance of comedy, extensive set design, love, and corruption, and professional talent.

Yet, something about the play seemed familiar. If not the fantastic land of Neverland, nor the inclusion of a vast group of characters (pirates, fairies, Indians, lost boys), then it was for the revelation of childhood dreams. Barrie’s theme of growing old, death, and the beauty of life, were all relevant to realistic ideologies. Hans Robert Jauss writes:

A literary work, even if it seems new, does not appear as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its readers to a very definite type of reception by textual strategies, overt and covert signals, familiar

characteristics or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of the familiar, stirs particular emotions in the reader and with its beginning arouses expectations for the middle and end, which can then be continued intact, charged, re-oriented, or even ironically fulfilled in the course of reading according to certain rules of the genre or type of text (12).

Upon seeing *Peter* for the first time, the first audience had few expectations as to how the play would progress, aside from their previous knowledge of Barrie's works. From the opening scene, however, they could picture themselves in their own childhood nursery, or the nursery of their children. The audience was made deeply aware of their need to remember childhood fancies and dreams.

Peter Pan does not fit neatly into any one category; it is both fantasy and reality. In this sense, it is difficult for the viewer to connect any familiar characteristics to other plays previously attended. However, through the course of the extensive scenes, filled with emotional highs and lows, the audience's reception aligns itself with Jauss' theory by the awakening of their memories and the stirring of emotions. Oscar Parker, reviewer for *The English Illustrated Magazine*, described the necessity of Peter's story for all ages:

Why should adult audiences fill the theatre...but that Mr. Barrie plays upon an almost universal chord of sympathy with this attempt to recall not only the actual visions of childhood, but the whole mental life of the child, when reality and dreams merge into one another (40).

This, too, reveals just how clear Barrie understood his subject matter and his audience. He enables, and requires, his adult audience to call forth their innocent past in order to

reengage in the beauty of life. The audience is asked to look to Peter Pan, his strengths and his shortcomings, in order to self-examine their own strengths and shortcomings.

And, thus, the one chosen to portray Peter was of vital importance. If Peter were not conveyed as the mischievous youth that he is, then the audience was sure not to believe his story as the consolidation of hope and tragedy. Peter meant everything to Barrie just as a great Peter meant everything to the play's reception. He loved watching the actresses bring the boy to life onstage, to watch him reveal more and more about his character with each performance (Tatar xviii). With such needy and specific qualifications, Barrie's choice for the next actress to play the role seemed impossible.

Following the first year of shows, the London stage shared *Peter* with the American stage. Andrew Birkin believes that "the American public embraced *Peter Pan* with a fervor that made its London success seem almost trivial" (126). This proves true since nearly every well-known Peter since Boucicault has come from America. The producer of the play, Charles Frohman, already had a capable actress in mind for the role, which he readily shared with Barrie on his first visit to the States. Maude Adams had been chosen for the role of Lady Babbie, one of Barrie's earlier plays. He and Frohman immediately knew that Adams would be perfect for the role of Peter. On November 6, 1905, *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, appeared for the first time in America to "extremely enthusiastic reviews" (Hanson 56). Much of the play's success was attributed to Adam's acting skills.

The next day, the reviews were extraordinary, once again. *The New York Tribune* noted the actress's success, stating, "What the play would be without Maude Adams is

difficult to say. She was the chief medium by which it was made alive last night.” *The New York Herald Tribune* wrote “to theatergoers surfeited with the stale dramatic conventionalities which pass for real life in the theatre, [Peter] was like a drought of fresh air, a sight for sore eyes.” Another critic discussed the importance of children being present, for it was a delight “to see the miniature straining in their seats...in the boxes, looking in the perfection of their faith, as if at any moment they might attempt to fly out across the auditorium” (Woolcott 198). Ironically, many children would wait until getting home to try their flying abilities. It became such an issue, actually, that Barrie had to add the description that one also needed a touch of pixie dust in order to complete the task.

Adam’s ability to represent Peter became so well-known that it was difficult for Americans to imagine another in her place. The actresses who would play Peter later on the American stage were always left to comparisons against Adam’s work. After her performance, it was nearly impossible for an actress to receive such glowing reception from the critics. Marilyn Miller was cast for the Broadway position following Adams, and she received such poor reviews namely because she was not acting the part exactly like Maude Adams^v.

Meanwhile in London, *Peter Pan* was going under various revisions. Nina was no longer in the role of Peter after being “dropped from the cast, and replaced with the inferior Cecilia Loftus” (Birkin 128). Loftus was not known for her success, but the play was still successful due to the other cast members who stayed on from the previous year. She was soon replaced with Pauline Chase, one of Barrie’s favorite actresses to play Peter. After Chase’s debut in 1906, she held the role for another seven years due to her

popularity. For her time, Chase “did not have to worry about losing the role of Peter as she was adored by the critics, audiences, and Barrie himself” for her boyish portrayal of the character (Hanson 86). Barrie was quoted, “There are only two possible ways of playing Peter. Either he must be the whimsical, fairy creature that Nina Boucicault made him or he must be the lovable tomboy of Pauline Chase. There is no other way.” From this, later actresses and actors would have a hard time in living up to the role of Peter Pan.

In 1928, actress Eva La Gallienne directed and starred in *Peter Pan* on the American Broadway stage. The public still clung to their beloved Maude Adams, making La Gallienne realize “that ‘Peter Pan’ meant ‘Maude Adams’ to most Americans” (3). Yet, La Gallienne was successful. She included numerous flying scenes, one of which included her flying into the audience—the first time Peter attempted such a feat. The reviews following the performance showed that the audience and critic reception had turned from criticizing Peter for his lack of resemblance to the original actress. Rather, the critics appreciated the memory of the familiar sets and characters, while they cherished the re-orientation of the story. During the 20’s, people wanted to be entertained in new ways; they wanted to live in a way to fill the gap left from war’s delusion. Knowing this, La Gallienne made Peter into a form fitting the times. *The Morning Telegraph* stated, “It is doubtful if a more perfect or more tasteful production has ever been given.” Similarly, *The New York Times* said, “Nothing was left undone and everything was well done, from the stage settings to the wag of Nana’s tail.”

By now, audiences had a horizon of expectations for the story of *Peter Pan*. Martyn Thompson says that the horizon of expectations are “not solely accumulated by literary experience, but by [viewer’s] social, economic, and political experiences” (255). In this, viewers had a preconceived idea of how the plot should move along and how the characters should be performed. When the play did not meet the expectations, the audience or critic seemingly discredited the whole production. The bias, or horizon, held by the viewer inevitably contributed to the outcome of the play’s reception.

Barrie’s story, specifically as shown throughout its years of performances, continually changed with society’s change. The unique aspect of *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up* is that it was never penned in publishable form until 1928. Because of this, the actors could improve, or add with co-narration, ideas and phrases that would appeal to the modern audience. *Peter Pan* was constantly relevant to the times, ever-changing yet remaining faithful to its original form. It was because of this originality that Barrie’s play succeeded so vehemently for decades.

There was a small break of *Peter Pan* performances in England between the years before the start of World War Two and a few years during the beginning stages of the war. In order to better focus on procuring awareness for the war effort, it was decided that all stages would be closed. While only one theatre, The Windmill, remained open during this time, the other theatres were able to open their doors once again in 1941 to eager audiences (Hinchliffe 414). After this, the theatre began to change to further appease the changing culture. Theatre was becoming much more than renditions of old plays; it was

evolving with the sounds of the musical culture and incorporating elements of Broadway in many aspects. Therefore, *Peter*, too, evolved to fit the needs of the population.

After World War Two, many Americans were in a better place financially than before the war. This created a dynamic shift in the American theater-going public. This new prosperity and overall financial and social stability paved the way for exciting changes within the culture of entertainment (Browne 2). Musicals, both on screen and stage, were booming. The years 1945-1950 saw the production of classical favorites like *Annie Get Your Gun*, *South Pacific*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Peter Pan*. The quality of musical performance was exceptional and, therefore, any theater production had to meet high standards in order to be critically acclaimed. Instead of viewers wanting to see the traditional three-act play, they wanted action, extravagant dancing, flying, and singing^{vi}. The evolutionary element of *Peter Pan* allowed for these additions to be made with ease.

The Broadway performance of *Peter Pan* became the dominating medium for the play. In America, the revitalization of the performance was Leonard Bernstein's 1950 Broadway production. The star of the play was Jean Arthur, a very famous actress who had starred in plays and films since the early thirties. Captain Hook-Mr. Darling was played by Boris Karloff—the actor who gained fame from his memorable roles in *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935).

On April 24, 1950, the performance captivated the audience in the Imperial Theatre in New York. Bruce Hanson writes that “there are some who consider it to be the best *Peter Pan* ever done on Broadway, with Jean's performance as a prime factor” (190). Nearly all of the critical reviews agree with this statement. Howard Barnes of *The New*

York Herald Tribunes reviewed the play giving credit to Bernstein for “an excellent musical accompaniment for the action” to such a “bravura performance.” He also noted that this specific performance was “exactly what Barrie’s script called for.”

Peter Pan: The Musical became a huge hit. The producer of the 1950 Broadway show, Peter Lawrence, arranged for the show to go on tour in 1951. In 1954, *Peter Pan* the musical went under yet another revision under the direction of Mary Martin and her husband Richard Halliday. By mid-century, the theatre was obviously changing even more, and “the challenge to cinema gave way to the more serious challenge of television” (Hinchcliffe 432). With this in mind, Martin and Halliday understood the gravity of creating a show that could compete with other mediums of entertainment, and previous renditions of the story. To create a new show that aligns itself with the original while remaining fresh to the modern eye was a daunting task to the couple.

Every audience member who attended the Broadway performance would have their favorite Peter, favorite show, or favorite song in mind while watching the new play. They would have a personal horizon of expectation. Martyn Thompson explains,

Changing receptions are accounted for in terms of the changing horizons of expectations of [viewers], horizons of expectations which are now generally taken to be conditioned not solely by accumulated literary experience, but by [viewer’s] social, economic, and political experiences as well (255).

Thompson is expanding on Jauss’ theory that reveals a reader’s, or viewer’s, expectations when entering a text, or show. Every person has previous experiences and ideas that, subconsciously or not, determine the way one will evaluate a piece of art. In the event

that a new play does not meet the required expectations of the audience, it will not be received as a welcome interpretation of *Peter Pan*. Although critics and audiences had a deep need to see a “new” performance, the tradition of *Peter Pan* was absolutely required.

Martin and Halliday opened the show under the direction of Jerome Robbins at New York’s Winter Garden Theater on October 20, 1954. The reviews raved about the greatness of the production and actors. Maria Tatar notes that the production “opened to awestruck enthusiasm, with expressively eloquent reviews” (331). Mary Martin, it seemed, made the audience and critics forget that Maude Adams ever graced the stage as Peter. There was a loving acceptance of Martin in the role that seemed natural and picturesque. Some newspapers reported that Martin’s performance was one of the truly great Peter Pans of all time. Mary Martin and Cyril Ritchard, the actor who played Captain Hook/ Mr. Darling, both won Tony Awards for the performance in the 1954-55 production of *Peter Pan*.

Peter Pan’s success on stage gained the attention of NBC producers. NBC asked the director and cast to be the first ever full-length musical to appear on color television. On March 7, 1955, *Peter Pan* was aired to millions of American home audiences. This was the first opportunity to break the barrier that divided stage and television. No longer was it impossible for Broadway to compete with the ever-increasing popularity of film. Since this performance, the show has been broadcasted across televisions worldwide. There was another wave of critical enthusiasm for the production. Jack Gould of *The New York Times* wrote,

Surely there must have been a trace of fairy dust from coast to coast this morning. Last night's television presentation of Mary Martin as Peter Pan was a joy. Who could say whether the TV premier was more wondrous than the Broadway opening? It is unimportant...for in millions of homes entire families were transported to Neverland in the happiest of circumstances.

The reception of *Peter Pan* continued to prove the original play's worth. After fifty years, Barrie's story was able to grow, even if at the demise of the main character's refusal to grow up. It listened to the evolution of technology and insisted on progressively moving onward. Patrick Braybrooke notes that "a revival cannot make its appearance year after year unless there is some lasting charm that remains constant through a long period, though the outside world changes and customs alter daily" (43). Not only was *Peter Pan* meeting the expectations within the audience's horizon of expectations, it was broadening those very traditions of what it was to be and present *Peter Pan*.

In 1979, Sandy Duncan was given the chance to provide her interpretation of Peter. On September 6, 1979, *Peter Pan* opened in New York under the direction of Rob Iscove. In 1980, Duncan was nominated for a Tony Award for her performance as Peter. In an interview with my mother, she remembers with great detail watching Duncan's spectacular show.

As the curtains pulled away to their prospective sides, the stage became the nursery. There were brilliant shades of blue, a fireplace and cute little beds. Tinkerbell was a little bright green light that flickered here and there. When Peter Pan entered, I remember thinking, 'I would love to play the role of Wendy and act

alongside Sandy Duncan.’ Then it happened, the children began to fly! And Peter Pan flew over the heads of those sitting in the first few rows. Right then and there, I really wanted to have a part in the show.

She was not the only child to have the dream to fly away with Peter Pan to Neverland. The actresses, including Duncan, who played the role had a huge fan base with young children and adults alike. *Peter Pan*’s popularity truly remained a show for all ages.

The Broadway show was revived once again in 1990 when Cindy Rigby was cast as Peter Pan—she had once been cast to play the role in 1974. The gymnast-turned-actress stepped into the role of Peter and he became a mischievous, acrobatic wonder. Rigby’s talent as an actress, combined with her skillful ability to tumble across the stage, enabled her to reach the success of her predecessors. She was awarded with two Tony Awards for her role as the famous, un-aging boy. Although, not all critics believed in the magic of Rigby’s Peter and this production. Mel Gussow described the play as having “enough entertainment value to make it an appropriate holiday diversion, at least for the very youngest members of the audience.” Despite mild criticism, Rigby was welcomed by fans in 1998 when she went back on Broadway as Peter, and then later again in 2002.

2014 saw the revival of Peter Pan’s Broadway-TV story. When NBC announced that there was to be a new version shown on their network, there was a Peter Pan fever buzzing across both America and England. Allison Williams, a younger actress, was cast in the role of Peter, and Christopher Walken was cast in the role of Captain Hook. In this production, Mr. Darling would be played by another actor, once again stepping away

from the traditional show. As the play showed to millions of homes across the world on December 4th, generations gathered together to watch the actors fly across the screen.

Unfortunately for this show, it premiered in an era of instant social response. Many viewers who disliked the performance for one reason or another were able to voice their thoughts as the show was in progress. Twitter became one of the biggest forms of critical reception, but it was not all negative conversation. Some actual critics, and by this I mean those who hold this position as a career and not merely behind a phone, believed that the performance was successful. In response to Williams's acting, Alessandra Stanley of *The New York Times* declares that the actress "has a lovely singing voice...and was, all in all, a confident, lively and suitably impudent Peter Pan." Mainly noted for her singing, Williams's acting, however, was said to be too dissimilar to the Peter greats of the past. Mary McNamara wrote in her Los Angeles Times review that Williams's Peter "seemed neither cocksure nor afraid, which made his triumph over Hook, and his parting from Wendy, little more than a few bits of familiar dialogue and some stage direction."

In 2013, the Royal Shakespeare Company decided to endeavor on a journey to make Peter "more modern." The play *Wendy and Peter Pan* was written and directed by Ella Hickson. On retelling Barrie's story to modern society, Hickson said, "A lot of what Barrie did on stage in 1904 isn't going to work now. Some of the characters are very saccharine, especially Wendy. A contemporary audience won't buy that" (Dowd 1). Hickson's adaption reveals how *Peter Pan* can transform from Edwardian society to fit into the realm of modern theatre. Her creative liberties held true to the main storyline of *Peter Pan*, but were able to expand the experience to focus on Wendy as an equal to

Peter, just like in Barrie's novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911). Hickson understood that Peter was still relevant in its own way, yet in order for it to flourish there must be bends and twists in the presentation. In completing the modern version, Hickson proves Jauss's theory that a text can remain relevant so long as there are those willing to grapple with the original.

Aside from its success at the national or Broadway or professional level, *Peter Pan* has been acted by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of amateur actors and actresses. It has been performed in nearly every school district across the nation, representing itself as one of the classic plays to cover. *Peter Pan* shows no prejudice towards geography, further proving his popularity amongst all people. Just a few years ago, *Peter Pan* was performed by a cast of students in Waxahachie, Texas. In 2015, *Peter Pan* was showcased in Azle, Texas as well. Students, teachers, and audiences continue to converse with the phenomenon that is *Peter Pan*. His story is still relevant, still exciting and adventurous, still tragic. *Peter Pan* does not seem to be effected by the outside changes of culture. Regardless of the age, there will always be children who refuse to grow up just as there will be adults who struggle with the fear of death.

Peter is so easily adaptable that it allows directors and actors to twist the tale to fit their audience, society, or personal style. In her thesis "Strike A Note of Wonder: A Director's Adventures in Peter Pan," Brianna Sloane writes, "as a director, I felt a sense of permission to bend the rules, to be involved in a sort of co-narration with Barrie himself, taking his story and passing it on to the world through the filter of my own storytelling" (10). Sloane inevitably took on the challenge to make Peter relevant to her

audience, but realized just how simple was the task. Audiences, because of their prior knowledge of Peter Pan, love to see his story retold. They will always size-up the actress, or actor, who is cast in the role of Peter simply because of the past star performances. However, each era, each generation, wants to have a Peter to call their own. Alexander Woolcott describes the play best, stating:

You will go quite mad if you try to decide whether the okay is for children or for grown-ups. You see, it's for both, with something in it for each. 'Peter Pan' is not children at play, but an old man smiling—and smiling a little sadly—as he watches children at play (198).

CHAPTER IV

PETER IN NOVELS

Immanuel Kant describes the imagination as “a powerful agent for creating, as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature. It affords us entertainment where experience proves too commonplace” (37). From the realm of imagination births the idea of fantastic literature. Often, fantastic literature—that is, literature that includes undiscovered worlds, adventures, and creatures—is dedicated to the genre of Children’s Literature. One of the most well-known subgenres of Children’s Literature, and Fantasy, is the fairy-tale^{vii}.

During the Victorian Age, children faced a diabolical transformation from tiny, working adults to youthful images of joy. Specific literature was dedicated to the ever-rising literate children in England; amongst these was the increasingly popular fairy-tale, which appealed to the rising youthful desire for the fanatical and magical (Lyons 328). In 1812, the Grimm Brothers, Wilhelm and Jacob, published their first collective work of fairy-tales. These stories were gathered from masses of friends and interviewees who verbalized the stories in order for the brothers to put them in concrete form on the page (TBG xxi). Originally, the men were not looking to receive credit for the tales; rather, they wanted to initiate a movement that enabled these oral traditions to stay alive throughout future generations. Yet, in completing the written form, they became the fathers of the fairy-tale.

The importance of a written oral tradition not only allows for the world-wide spread of a tale, but it also leaves the words in a forever-form, meaning that the pages will last as long as those willing to encounter them. Gadamer describes that language is granted its ideality when it is written down because it increases the opportunity for “understanding consciousness” and, thus, “acquires its full sovereignty” (392). As the story is written down, the door to eternal remembrance is opened. Further, the document becomes a source of history without necessarily getting lost as a mere fragment of a past era. Instead, a written document can progress forward as a tradition that raises itself “into the sphere of the meaning that it expresses” (Gadamer 392). Therefore, a written piece—in this case, a fantastical story—does not simply act as a window into the literary past; it represents the continuity of memory of one story from older generations to the next.

Peter Pan became a form of literary history when his tale was penned in novel form in 1902 under the name of *The Little White Bird*. Like many original fairy-tales, Peter Pan represents a type of oral to written tradition in which the story is transcribed from its original form, into a solid textual representation. Barrie borrowed the name “Pan” from the Greek god of pastures and theatrical criticism. When Peter is introduced in Kensington Gardens, he is seen riding a goat and playing the pipes—key similarities to the ancient mythology of Pan who cared for the shepherded animals and created the instrument. By keeping elements of the god coupled with characteristics of his beloved Five, Barrie crafted a perfectly clever little boy. He successfully tries his hand at fairy-tale by reinventing and retelling the story of Pan, or at least a type of Pan. In doing so, Barrie created a unique type of god for Children’s Literature and for fairy-tale.

According to Elizabeth Jane Corbett, these types of oral traditions “are a window to the human psyche and hold wisdom” for children and adults alike (9). With Peter, it is evident that his story reveals wisdom for all who read it and choose to engage in Peter’s tragic tale. Because of the nature of the tale of Peter Pan, it inevitably announces itself as a fairy-tale, encompassing both whimsy and tragedy. In all forms of the fairy-tale, there is a realization that there is a tragic tension in life that occurs “between good and evil, between disaster and triumph, and it isn’t a matter of sweetness and light;” intuitively, children are the first to understand this natural element (Sayers 124). Peter Pan’s fairy-tale reveals the darkness of one’s desire to not grow up, to never experience the luxury of wisdom and truth and life in its entirety.

The first installation of Peter’s story after *The Little White Bird* was *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. It was aimed more specifically at children than *The Little White Bird*, which was published as a novel for adults. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* did not fare well with the public (Ellis 129). It appeared that the publication was for the most dedicated of fans since it merely explained Peter’s origins and not much more. Readers were left with a love for the theatrical production of the story, wanting to see more of the adventure come across on page. However, Barrie’s small 1906 chapter book failed to impress.

Yet, when Peter Pan was transformed into a full-length novel—instead of a mention in a couple chapters—nurseries and children around the world gained access to a new type of fairy-tale. Roger Lancelyn Green describes *Peter and Wendy* as a fairy-tale

that is the only story to “escape from literature into folklore” (134). In his book *Fifty Years of Peter Pan*, Green further explains his theory:

Peter alone has crossed the border-land of folklore. Even Alice is only three-dimensional: Peter Pan has broken the fourth dimension of the imagination. For every one person who has seen the play or read the story, there are hundreds who know perfectly well who and what Peter Pan is. Besides being a fairy-tale character, he is also a symbol—of what, precisely, even Barrie could not find the words to describe (134).

While *Alice in Wonderland* is often regarded as a popular story in children’s literature, *Peter and Wendy* interested children and adults in a new way.

Peter and Wendy, unlike *Alice*, is realistic in a way that impresses itself on both children and adults. It inspires the idea of the beauty of aging, while illuminating the fear of growing up. There is an unequivocal allusion to the Victorians and their fascination with childhood’s innocence, while Barrie forces the idea of truthful reality. Eric S.

Rabkin explores this Victorian ideal more closely:

When the fantastic Peter Pan rejects maturity in favor of childhood, we know that a failure to shoulder responsibilities is an iconoclastic assault on the Victorian perspective toward personal achievement; when we find that Barrie’s book is ostensibly directed to children, we know something more about the Victorian conception of childhood and the means by which iconoclasm—escape—may be made acceptable; and when we realize that all those best-selling copies of the book were bought by adults and read to children by adults, we know something

further about the yearnings of normal Victorian adults. In their children's Fantasies are revealed their own perspectives (75).

Rabkin alludes to the idea of the parent to child oral tradition of the bedtime story. This style of storytelling became the modern form of oral traditions in storytelling during the Victorian era. Children would listen to their mothers or fathers voices as they transformed their nursery into the world of make-believe. Rather than relaying histories of past eras, these new fairy-tales were predicated upon the written story, simply spoken by the mouths of parents. Different than fairy-tale oral traditions of past in which the speaker would add to or take from the "original" tale, *Peter and Wendy* was in the first wave of the modern tradition in which people used inflection of voice and incredible reading skill to communicate oral traditions from already written stories.

When the first printing of *Peter and Wendy* was published, simultaneously in New York and London, audiences were entranced with the adventures and the fairies, but especially the message. Parents attributed Barrie's fairy-tale as encouragement to youthful adventure, while also focusing on the reality of growing up. Children, reversely, considered Barrie's tale—as Barrie surely intended—as a crusade to fly, to be freed of the restrictions of societal rules and implications. In an era where children were expected to listen and obey, Peter Pan begged them disregard the "restrictions and impediments that [they] recognize[d]" such as "rules about bedtime, medicine, pajamas, baths, [and] night lights" (Hounhan 76). Consequentially, the story was wholly welcomed by children whose desire was to remain youthful forever, and for those adults who feared aging as well.

E.B. White described that when one writes for children, he must not write down to the child, but rather write up. He says that children are the most demanding of readers because they are the “most attentive, curious, eager, observant, sensitive, quick, and generally congenial readers on earth” (140). Although the text was written primarily for children, it was not only the child who fell in love with the story. Barrie knew his audience would be both child and parent, mixed with something in between. His story appeals to all generations because of the silliness, yet seriousness, of its themes. He endeavors to reveal inherent truths about life, like fear of death, reality, and unacceptance, which pair perfectly with the allusion of fantasy.

Understanding the fantastical element of *Peter and Wendy* is imperative for audiences. Since the play began prior to the novel, audiences and readers had the basic background knowledge of the story and its fantastical elements. Therefore, readers did not come with a type of cognitive emptiness but, as Gadamer’s theory explains, carried expectations and beliefs that resulted from their prior knowledge of the story (Godzich 40). Knowing this, readers would enter the text with preconceived notions not only for the overall telling of Peter’s story, but for the fantastical land of Neverland and the adventures that were ensued by children.

Similarly, readers would enter with preconceived ideas as to how a fantastical story should look in terms of an escape from reality. Cary Wilkins says that all good literature gives the reader a quality escape into new lands and adventures, but it also enables the reader to free the imagination into a realm that is much bigger than the world in which he or she resides (vii). Unlike *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, *Peter and*

Wendy meets the expectations of the public. It gives the reader a grasp on the real-world necessities, such as ironing or sewing or calculating expenses, but encourages the mind to open itself to exploration and adventure. For this reason, audiences reveled in the first publication of the book.

Peter and Wendy was initially popular because of its relevance to its first culture. However, its reception flourished because of its ability to expand farther than this initial reception. In conjunction with Jauss' ideology, *Peter and Wendy*'s relationship with the public encompassed more than the ability to relate to its specifically determined audience of 1911. Rather, its success is attributed to its demonstration of "traditional literary sociology" that is the "classical principle of *imitatio naturae*" (Jauss 31). *Peter and Wendy* is not only a reflection of the Edwardian era, but of human nature in general.

The book's initial popularity can also be attributed to the accessibility of the text. The library system of England and America emerged during the nineteenth century, and created home-access to literature for those who possibly could not afford to purchase books on a regular basis. As early as 1902, many towns, even smaller towns, began to boast a public library (Lyons 332). Lending libraries circulated novels at rapid speeds, allowing readers to devour stories and spread the word of the reception of lovable books. *Peter and Wendy*, then, made its way throughout innumerable homes.

The novel's incredible popularity was and is, in part, due to the illustration completed by F.D. Bedford. Bedford was a well-known book illustrator whose drawn children and animals had an enthusiastic, Victorian edge. *Peter and Wendy*, as a special type of fantastic fairy-tale, naturally offered its story to be retold through the creative

imagination of a graphic artist to be interpreted through beautiful images. Therefore, Bedford's unique style brought to life the worlds Barrie described so eloquently. In the eleven half-tone plates completed for *Peter and Wendy*, Peter was shown in a leafy costume, Hook was mad with rage during sword fights, and the Darlings were so perfectly elegant in their Victorian style. Bedford "captured so enchantingly" the pirates, coves, lagoons, and the tropical locations in way that brought Neverland to life (McCaffrey xv). The cover, a dark-green hardback with gold pictures and inscriptions, shows a singular Peter playing his pipes, surrounded by Neverland creatures. This pays homage to Peter's origin in *The Little White Bird*, and centralizes Peter as the main character. However, the next few pages reveal the Darling family and Wendy, showing that Peter shares the spot of protagonist. It is from Bedford's inspiring illustrations that various artists sought to try their hand at interpreting Barrie's story over the next few editions.

1915 AND 1921 EDITIONS

In 1915, Barrie permitted revisions to *Peter and Wendy*. This new version was authorized as a "school edition" which many public schools in England began to use in their reading curriculum ("JM Barrie" 404). Soon after, the full text was revised once again and published under the name of *Peter Pan and Wendy*. This 1921 edition was illustrated by Mable Lucia Attwell, who was said to be "unsuited to Barrie's story" (Oxford Companion 404). Attwell's illustration revealed a more child-like nature, creating round faces and edges to illuminate the children's literature side of the story. Peter is no longer donning a leaf-styled tunic, rather an outfit very close to the children's

style of the 1920s. On the cover, Peter stands cockily beside a curious-looking Wendy. The story was clearly directed at children. Attwell's fairies and mermaids are less magical looking than Bedford's, and display a sort of alien-like appearance.

Attwell's illustrations are distinctly geared at pleasing a child audience, whereas the former illustrations of Bedford were aimed at adult audiences, too. Yet, her illustrations reveal a portion of the culture in which she created. The style of each culture for both Bedford and Attwell's drawings clearly indicate the style of the age in which they illustrated the story, reiterating the idea that Peter Pan can be transformed to fit any generation.

1928 EDITION

The novel was published by Scribner's and Sons, once again under the title of *Peter Pan and Wendy* and with illustrations done by Mabel Lucie Attwell, in 1928. This same year, Barrie released the script of *Peter, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* for the first time in written completion. Similarly, there was a new demand for the publication of the text since the story was becoming new and revived to the public. Between the years of 1921 and 1928, the play version of the story seemingly went dry. When the play was redone to fit the milieu of the 20's, it created a window for Scribner's to republish the classic novel.

In a review in the *Boston Tribune* in 1928, one book critic realized that "before long, we friends and lovers of [Peter] will be disputing over the text as scholars do when a page of Shakespeare or a speech in Sophocles is in question." While *Peter Pan and Wendy* never quite reached the magnitude of such classical works such as *Julius Caesar*

or *Antigone*, it did create its own legacy, especially within the realm of popular culture. The *Peter Pan and Wendy* of 1928 transcended its original historical context of the Edwardian nursery and established new beliefs and values for the children, youth, and adults of the Lost Generation (Machor 2). These new beliefs pointed to the impending growth of the child and an almost escapist effect for adults who lost hope in humanity post World War One. With *Peter Pan and Wendy*, children could orient themselves to the world around them, using fairy-tale as a way to enrich their lives, regarding it as a “fearless participant in imaginary struggles for justice, goodness, and freedom” (Chukovsky 216). It seems no surprise that there were multiple publications of *Peter Pan and Wendy* during the twenties. Peter’s inevitable ability to halt time with his defiance spoke to the whole decade that was filled with opulence and personal freedom.

Aligned with Jauss’ perception of historical context, *Peter Pan and Wendy* continued to be relevant to the Jazz Age. It was a novel that was “capable of further developing the inexhaustible meaning of the work,” and readers continued to dive deeper into the underlying themes of the story. As it became more well-known and studied, *Peter Pan and Wendy* remained a children’s story, but it was unlike others because it was directed at the children who were outgrowing the nursery, those who wanted to grow up, but still had some remnants of childhood (Gedould 48). It was also directed at those who wished to drink from the fountain of youth and stay forever young. While the children enjoyed the fantastic elements of adventure, adults lavished the beauty of Barrie’s style and shared his agony in the ever-coming fate of life.

Peter Pan and Wendy had a new audience during the 1920s as well. Sigmund Freud's analyses on psychoanalysis led to critics and readers assessing the text in relation to these Freudian theories. Some scholars go as far to say that "a Freudian analysis not only is the key to fundamental meaning of Barrie's greatest work but is also indispensable" in understanding the success of the story overall (Egan 37). Reading *Peter Pan and Wendy* from a Freudian standpoint allows the reader access to the inside workings of the male-female relationships between Peter, Wendy, and Tiger Lily, as well as Barrie, his mother, and Sylvia Llewelyn Davies. Also, there is a deep understanding of tensions within the child's developing mind and their pending ability to fit into the adult society.

In the story itself, Barrie plays within the mind of the child. Mrs. Darling first discovers the existence of Peter when she is "tidying up her children's minds" (Barrie 17). As part of her motherly duties, Mrs. Darling is quite Victorian in her ability to assess the delicacies of her children's thoughts and separate the good from the bad. Barrie describes the scene of our own mothers practicing in the same nightly routine as Mrs. Darling:

You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been

folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on (18).

While it is unclear whether or not Barrie had a deep understanding, or even an idea, of Freud's theories, *Peter Pan and Wendy* reveal connections to understanding the of the mind's map. Barrie's brief mention of the mind—specifically the child's mind—alludes to a larger comprehension of the psychoanalysis data. Barrie's pictures of Neverland, which appear in some form in everyone's mind, are both realistic and fantastic. Maria Tatar additionally describes this Freudian connection in stating, "To adults, the febrile activity and emotional overload of the child's mind make it alarmingly unstable. But the heterogeneous enumeration of what is in Neverland also pays tribute to the richness of the child's imagination and memory" (20). Here it reveals how Barrie's story appeals to all generations: there is both a conscious and unconscious understanding that Peter is both real and fictitious because Barrie makes us believe that somewhere in our past, we, too, have romped our own Neverland with the eternal boy.

The readers of the Twenties were well aware of Freud's theories; they were sure to be accustomed to hearing about Freudian dream theories, too^{viii}. In his book *Dream Psychology*, Freud illuminates the dreams of a child and how the expectation exists that "the explanation of psychical processes in children, especially simplified as they may be, should serve as an indispensable preparation towards the psychology of the adult" (25). Freud and Barrie unintentionally discuss the similar idea that somewhere in their conscious, the adult remembers his or her adventures with the fictional Peter Pan. Once more, Jauss' discussion of the inexhaustible meaning of a text proves that *Peter Pan and*

Wendy had relevance to the culture of the Twenties due to the depth of psychoanalysis that could occur.

No longer was this just a story for parents and children, or those who were fans of Barrie's work. Instead, scholars were looking to *Peter Pan and Wendy* for an understanding of the "Peter Pan Syndrome^{ix}": adult males who remained immature in order to appear youthful. Martha Stoddard Holmes brings an excellent assertion, then, asking "If children no longer read a text apparently written with them as the imagined audience, is the text still 'their' literature?" (132). This quote nods to the complexity of the text itself. Although categorized as Children's Literature, *Peter Pan and Wendy* is totally unlike the usual children's story, especially the typical fairy tale, because the child wishes to grow up while the grown up wishes to be young again (Braybrooke 43). It addresses the interests, flaws, and dreams of any generation, of any age, creating a vast readership in both America and England. At this point, Peter's story expanded from the realm of Children's literature into the area of psychological exploration and intellectual realms.

1930-1946 EDITIONS

Following the stock market crash in 1929, America faced an era where it was difficult to find work, let alone have time to sit and read. The Great Depression affected the reading public in various ways. On one side, the 1933 July issue of *Publishers Weekly* declared that "the reading of books has increased throughout the Depression as shown by library circulation records" (Corrigan 1). This same issue boasted an add that encouraged Americans to "Read the books you've always meant to read." Naturally, many Americans

found themselves with more time due to their inability to find work, but it seems unrealistic that they would overflow bookstores and libraries to get neglected classics. In reality, the fiction being passed through the hands of readers was, what Corrigan calls, similar to the “mass market offerings of 2009”—taking a jab at the teen fiction sellers and “vampire mania” (Corrigan 1). *Peter Pan and Wendy*, alongside other popular texts from the previous decades, was exchanged for quick, “feel-good” reads. Male and female audiences were targeted with different texts: the preceding with texts of “hard-luck male adventures” and later with emotional “chick lit” (Corrigan 1). Rather than delving into the waters of literary criticism and critical thinking, readers of the 30’s wanted to distract their minds from the ever-pressing issue of poverty and homelessness.

There were, however, a few publications of *Peter Pan and Wendy* throughout the decade. Both Hodder and Stoughton and Scribner’s and Sons published editions of the story in 1935. Hodder and Stoughton went on to publish another edition in 1938 as well.

Then the war arrived.

Peter Pan and Wendy, as well as many other published books, halted in production for the first few years of World War Two. Since America and Britain had full-focus on the war effort, it was inevitable that book publishers would not sell as they had once before. Instead, many publishers were using their resources to publish war-related materials. In 1940, there arose an initiative to send books to soldiers in camps and on the war front. “The government supplied more than 120 million free books to ensure that America’s fighting men were equipped with the spirit and resolve to carry them through their battles,” says Molly Guptill Manning in her novel *When Books Went to War* (xv).

These books were raised from libraries, schools, and homes all across the nation in an effort to support the troops. While it is unknown as to how many copies of *Peter Pan and Wendy* were donated, it is nearly guaranteed that at least a few copies were included.

However, when publishers began to print paperback, magazine-like books for the troops, Barrie's story was not included. More than 1300 titles were printed in these Armed Services Edition, but *Peter Pan and Wendy* was never one of them (Manning 202-232). Because of its classification as "Children's Literature," publishers probably chose to keep it at home, alongside the other classic *Alice in Wonderland*. Even though *Peter Pan and Wendy* found a wide range of readers, it was not seen as appropriate for soldiers, even though it provided an adventurous escape from reality. Because of this, *Peter* did not see another edition until after the war ended.

In 1946, Hodder and Stoughton published an edition of *Peter Pan and Wendy* with the original illustrations by Mable Lucie Attwell. The story was also released this year by an Italian publishing company called Valentino Bompiani. The global reception of *Peter* had begun in the previous decade it was published in various languages such as Chinese, Celtic, and Spanish. *Peter Pan*'s tale spread slowly, but vastly across the world, finding audiences who related to his themes and characters, even if they were not specifically identifiable for each respectable country.

1950 EDITION

There was a drastic change in the story's publication during the year 1950. Although the removal of one name from the title may not seem extreme to some, when Wendy no longer appeared as a co-protagonist it spoke to the ever-increasing popularity

of one specific character. Scribner's and Sons published *Peter Pan*, while all other publishers across the globe still published the story under the title of *Peter Pan and Wendy*.

The question that arises, then, relates to why the American publishers omitted Wendy from the title^x. There is no actual documentation to be found with the company as to why this change occurred, but I argue that it is due to the popularity of the theatre productions of *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, and how the character of Peter is solely responsible for the success of the production. With the American public, readers and audiences both attribute the story to be about Peter Pan, not Wendy. Therefore, in discussion, the story was usually called "Peter Pan" to begin with and, thus, the name stuck.

Looking at the cover of the 1950 edition, one can see the shift in character focus as well. Nora S. Unwin illustrates a centralized Peter Pan, surrounded by the Darling children. Unlike its predecessors in which Peter and Wendy stood side-by-side, this format truly identifies Peter as the main role.

By this time, Peter Pan had become an icon in American culture. Yet, he was not merely a historical figure, but a figure made fresh in each generation. In calculating the literary history of a text, Jauss' aim was to emphasize the historicity of the text while maintaining the artistic character of the literary text (Thompson 248). Peter's character was well liked and understood by the public, and his story was moldable to fit any changing culture. Even though its roots are tied to Edwardian culture, Peter Pan is not significantly addressed to the Edwardians alone. Readers appreciate the cultural value of

the Edwardian setting, which includes centering on family and the innocence of childhood, but recognize that it is not famous based off of this culture. While its initial audience built a foundation for the future reception of *Peter Pan*, pieces of the story came alive through the various editions of the story.

The 1950 edition created a new realm for Peter Pan in America. Focusing on Peter as the sole protagonist, American readers saw this character as an idol. Peter Pan was the perfect idol for Americans during the 20th century because of his wit, cleverness, and ability to stay eternally youthful. His story also mirrors the generation's "fetish with youth" that failed to provide children with more than a few guides for the second half of life, which "should be a progress towards wisdom and self-integration" (Hounhan 76). Peter's success can be attributed to the parents of baby boomers instilling within their children hopeful values of childhood since they themselves were forced to grow up quickly with both the Depression and World War Two. Peter's story was the perfect remedy to cherishing childhood and youth; through making Peter Pan the primary protagonist, they enabled children to look towards the optimistic elements of never growing up.

THE VARIOUS TEXTUAL ADAPTATIONS

There is an insatiable spirit amongst many authors to try and understand or represent the life, history, and future of Peter Pan. Since the official copyrights to the text expired in 1987, The Great Ormond Street Hospital faced a difficult loss when Peter went public. In this year, Gilbert Adair took advantage of the public domain of Peter's story and produced an unauthorized sequel titled *Peter Pan and the Only Children*. This

describes Peter's new life under water, where he and his new gang of Lost Boys accept children, who are the only child in their family, who jump ship into the ocean. A young girl named Miranda Porter is accepted by the gang and helps duel Captain Hook, once again, under the ocean waters. While this tale received some critical acclaim, it went nearly unnoticed due to the Ormond Street Hospital's reinstatement of rights to the text in 1988.

Unfortunately, these rights only have legal grounds in the United Kingdom. Various authors have attempted to reclaim Peter, but not in a way that does justice, or even a nod, to Barrie's original work. One example is the novel *After the Rain: A New Adventure for Peter Pan*, by J.E. Somma. Attempting to modernize Peter Pan, Somma completely recreates the past of the character. No longer is he an infant who flies away from home in order to escape age, but he is a child who leaves the park with Tinker Bell in order to live in Neverland. Here, he does age, but only at a slow pace. Therefore, upon his return to modern society, Peter is the ripe age of thirteen and feels rejected by the world and calls upon the villain The Keeper, who wishes to occupy Peter's body for survival. Published in 1999, this story found little fan base. There was a legal dispute between Somma and Great Ormond Street Hospital in 2002 for rights to Peter, eventually ending in a court settlement.

Another example of an inappropriate interpretation of the story is the graphic comic book *Lost Girls* in which Wendy Darling befriends literary heroines Alice, from *Alice in Wonderland*, and Dorothy, from *The Wizard of Oz*. Together, these characters experience horrific ordeals, including rape and drugs. While interpretation is an important

component to the success of a story's historical reception, a text cannot be so wholly removed from the original in order to appease new generations because it fails to fall within the horizon of expectations for that given text. By now, readers see *Peter Pan* as a children's novel, not a novel that inappropriately abuses its female character. In creating stories using the name of Peter Pan, some authors have failed to present the fairy tale aspects of the original work. They also fail to reveal a new element of the story in order to keep it relevant, only relying on modernity to make the text seem appropriate for the given culture.

In transforming the theme of innocence of childhood, the adaptations change the language of the story. These authors no longer comprehend the dialogue or language of Peter Pan. Therefore, they interrupt the traditional conversation of both fairy tale and Neverland. It is through language that two—in this case, author and reader—can understand one another (Gadamer 386). When this language, paired with the reader's horizon of expectation, is unclear, it leaves the reader unable to accurately assess the conversation. If a reader fails to read *Peter Pan*, then these books will hardly seem a threat to their understanding of the story's conversation. Yet for those who are familiar with the original story, even in the slightest, then the language of Barrie's work is left unfulfilled because their understanding of the story is limited to an obscure source.

There are, however, more adaptations in novel form that do align better with Barrie's original text. For instance, David Barry and Ridley Pearson created a series of books titled *Peter and the Starcatchers*, all of which are considered unofficial prequels to *Peter and Wendy*. Through these tales, the reader—clearly a child or young adult—

engages in adventures in which a young Peter and his friends embark. In one of the stories, Peter travels only with Tinker Bell, while in another he is with a group of boys. The stories focus on villains who are evil pirates, evil kings, or other evil adult figures. It attempts to explain all of the misunderstood questions left lingering from reading the original Peter and Wendy. Where does Peter come from? How did he find Neverland? Who is he truly?

Peter and the Starcatchers received good reviews as a children's series. One review in *The Guardian* points out that during the time of publication, Peter Pan was nearly all over the world in new adaptations. Barry and Pearson joined suit, seeing success with their own rendition. The review from *The Guardian* states, "What Barry and Pearson set out to create is an exciting and absorbing story, sailing across choppy waters at breakneck speed. And they achieve it." While there are mostly positive reviews, there is some skepticism as to how compelling and believable the tale is for children^{xi}. Michael Gorra from *The New York Times* writes, "It's full of magic, but never once did it make me feel as though I were entering another world. J. M. Barrie does that." He commends the story for appealing to his daughter, a *Peter Pan* purist. Yet, even she recognized the story was full of fake adventures, while the original story is filled with the real adventures.

In 2004, the Great Ormond Street Hospital sanctioned a competition to find an author who could write an official sequel of Peter's adventures in Neverland. Authors all over the world entered the competition by submitting a chapter and projected book outline. Geraldine McCaughrean won the contest, and David Wyatt became the illustrator. Her story centers around the grown-up Darling children and some original

Lost Boys post World War I. The trio of Wendy, John, and Nibs all experience vivid dreams of the Neverland they once experienced; Peter, too, has dreams of the once-children. The adults eventually find a way to be children again and return to their precious dream-like world, in which Peter greets them unenthusiastically but with joy. They find an old map that once belonged to Captain Hook and embark on a journey to find the hidden treasure. In doing so, Peter, adorned in one of Hook's old coats, turns impatient and ruthless like his old rival.

The book was first published with 30,000 copies in England, and another 1,500 copies were published in a limited edition with a specially printed bookcase. Five copies of a special leather-bound were printed, signed by the author, and gifted to McCaughreen, the hospital, Oxford University Press, HM The Queen, and the last was auctioned. Quickly after the story's release, it was transformed into a radio broadcast, reaching the homes of millions of UK citizens.

The Guardian reviewed the book with praise for its creativity and willingness to take on the giant task of providing the classic tale with a sequel. Interestingly enough, the review did not find this official sequel overly appealing for obvious reasons:

Perhaps the most satisfactory side effect of this brilliant failure of a book is that it sends one curiously back to the original (the one safe way of returning to Neverland) and it is then that one sees exactly what is awry and why any sequel is a doomed enterprise. It is JM Barrie's strangeness that makes Peter Pan the book it is. The writing is often offhand, irritable, unpredictable. It is a voice no one could parody (and it would be a mistake to try). Yet without it, you are lost. Hardest of

all to reproduce is JM Barrie's ambivalent attitude to his characters, his mixed messages about them. He had a way of making us insecure about who - and how - to love (Kellaway).

Once again, we are drawn back to the originality of *Peter and Wendy*. Adapt as it may, Peter Pan's tragic, yet adventurous tale cannot escape from its eternal place in the cannon of literature. Simply put in this review, Barrie's words cannot be replaced or outdone. His language speaks so eloquently and imprecisely that it beckons the reader to love the characters and places.

The original stands as triumphantly and as cockily as the boy himself. Readers are constantly drawn back to the first tale of Peter because it is familiar and because it is always unknown. Donna White writes,

Even as children, we know it is not just that 'all children, except one, grow up' but that all children, except one, want to grow up; and as adults we feel like the grown-up Wendy...feeling his loneliness, his bravado, his loveless life. Peter Pan does not love us and does not remember us, and that is exactly why we love and remember him, because we know what he is missing (xxi).

Peter's is a story that adapts when needed, but on page it is always the same. The story—the plot—itself does not change.

Barrie's written words, in the novel form, create a heavy weight that has proved its worth over a century's time. Even if children are not reading the story as vigorously as before, the fairy tale is still transcending both orally and textually. Peter Pan is both known and unknown; "its persons and ideas have currency among many who have

neither read nor seen what Barrie wrote” (Lewis 87). Regardless of whether or not one has read the actual book, it is impossible to live in the modern world without knowing the basic life of the character.

For children who feel their world is unadventurous and mundane, a dive into *Peter Pan* brightens and lightens up their lives. Not only does *Peter* encourage imagination, but its focus on self-worth expands its purpose even more. A similar fantastical adventure story, *Lord of the Rings*, provides insight to the success of Peter Pan, too. Author Charles Elkins expresses that “the trilogy suggests that there are many Bilbo Bagginses and Frodos among us, that even the most ordinary and insignificant can be called to high adventures and win the prize” (28). Likewise, there are many Wendys and Johns and Michaels among modern readers. Children who want—who need—to find that they, too, can have significant adventures fall in love with *Peter Pan*. It is not a story for the faint at heart; rather, one must be brave and courageous to fly past the second star on the right and straight on til morning.

Similarly, parents, grandparents, guardians, or any other who dares share this tale verbally with a child must be a special kind of person. While it may be more unusual to see in modern times, the oral story—the telling or reading of a book—is still as imperative today as ever. The necessity of a child hearing the spoken words of someone they love and trust enables them to ask questions about themes in Peter Pan. They question about life, death, wrinkles, and fairies, all of which speak volumes to little ears. Perhaps Bruce Hanson describes it best saying, “In these extraordinary times as tools for communication become more and more sophisticated, thereby making contact between

humans more convenient, more casual, and less tactile, nothing can replace the immediacy and love conveyed in reading a story...that is precious” (326).

CHAPTER V

PETER IN FILMS

The historical exploration of Peter Pan's reception, thus far in my writing, has focused on the mediums of theatre and literature. However, in modern society, arguably the most well-known form of Peter Pan is film. The common form of entertainment for the generations ranging from the 1950s through the modern age is the cinema. Amy Villarejo notes that "film shapes history as much as it records or reflects it" (58). Not only do the cinematic interpretations of *Peter* represent the culture for which each was made, but they also represent a fresh retelling of the story. Peter's relevance over the past century, specifically since the 1950s, has continued to progress and excels due to the fact that Peter recreates itself, fitting each new generation with ease and complexity.

The first invention of film was in the late nineteenth century, when numerous inventors built off each other's work to make one working creation. Thomas Edison and Eadweard Muybridge were the center of the experiment, incorporating both the phonograph and the zoopraxiscope to create the illusion of moving pictures. After the success of this invention, storytellers began to look towards this form of entertainment as a viable option for sharing their tales. It was a way for action to be shown in the same form over and over, without the errors associated with theatre. Since this new technology has surfaced, it has become the predominant form of art in nearly all of the cultures of the world (Neumeyer 2). Knowing that Barrie's original story could be successfully adapted

into various forms, it was natural for *Peter Pan* to be produced as one of the first major films of the 1920s.

This new realm of entertainment, paired with *Peter's* previous successes, encouraged film producers to transform the story onto screen. "Movie producers, mindful of its vast popularity and of film's ability to depict its aerial action more spectacularly than stage, hounded Barrie with offers for two decades to no avail," reveals Barry Paris in an article on the making of *Peter Pan* (Paris 1). The silent era of film did not seem to hinder the production from making it into a movie; rather, it demonstrated just how talented the actors were in their performances and how a story can come to life without spoken word. The biggest complication was in getting Barrie to agree to allow a group of producers' access to the rights of his story. Eventually, Barrie granted Paramount Pictures the rights and the production process began shortly after.

1924: THE SILENT FILM

In 1921, Barrie wrote a proposed film screenplay for the silent movie being created. Because this was his third endeavor to tell Peter's story, he composed the script with specificity and acute detail. The first scene shows a very descriptive picture of what Barrie imagined for the movie:

The first picture is of Peter riding gaily on a goat through a wood, playing on his pipes (a reproduction of the painting in my possession). He suddenly flies on to a tree in the inconsequential way of birds. From this he flies over a romantic river circling with the careless loveliness of a sea-full. He suddenly re-aliases on his goat and rides away playing his pipes, his legs sticking out cockily. Vast practice

will be needed to get the flying beautiful and really like birds. The flying must be far better and more elaborate than in the acted play (Barrie “Film Proposal”).

With Barrie’s precise, almost humorous, perfection of an idea, it is no wonder why an alternate screenplay was chosen. After recounting a few of the later scenes, Bruce Hanson describes the clarity with which Barrie’s love “poured into this adaptation” (126). But, it had too many vivid details that disallowed the film to fulfil the imagination in its entirety simply due to cost and technological constraints.

Instead, the director, Herbert Brenon, enlisted Willis Goldbeck, a well-known screenplay writer, to act as the title writer for the film. The probability of employing an actual screenwriter, not a playwright or a novelist, encouraged the filmmakers that the script would be screen-worthy. As shown in Barrie’s lengthy description of Peter’s entrance and the requirements for flight, the filmmakers were clearly correct in their assertions. With Goldbeck on board, the film began production in 1924.

Barrie was not cast aside when the film began to rapidly move forward, but remained an indiscernible role in the film’s creation. Part of the reason he stayed was because of the public’s excitement in knowing that Barrie would be staying in Hollywood throughout the course of the filming (Hanson 125). Another reason he stayed on was to act as a mentor and confidant to Brenon, influencing him with his imaginative stories and recommendations (Hanson 125).

When it came to choosing the cast, Barrie insisted on casting the actress who would play Peter. With many viable options, the storyteller had a specific vision for how he wanted Peter to look and act. By this time, a handful of women had successfully

impersonated the boy-bird character, and Barrie knew that his choice must be precise. What he envisioned in his own screenplay was a light, sprite of a woman who could gracefully adorn the sky in flight, while later piping cockily on a goat. Yet, when Barrie saw the audition of Betty Bronson, he immediately pictured her as the actress perfectly suited for the role. Producer Jesse Lasky confessed that they had previously “decided on a pert kid named Mary Brian, when along came another unknown, even better suited to the part” (Hanson note 10). Bronson, although only seventeen, accentuated the film with her youth and freshness.

The character of Hook was decidedly one of the most difficult to cast, simply because there were varying opinions as to how the character should be portrayed. For Barrie, “Hook should be played absolutely seriously, and the actor must avoid all temptation to play the part as if he was conscious of its humors” (Barrie Proposal). Others believed that Hook was not a menacing pirate of the deadly seas, but rather a funny Victorian gentleman who had seemingly lost his way. Ernest Torrence took the role of Captain Hook. He was the popular “film villain” of the time, who was someone in film wanted their hands in the making of Peter Pan (Hanson 132). Over the years, Hook would become one of the most dynamic characters in the story. His countenance, personality, and background would be reinvented and reshaped with each new production. Understanding the history of Peter’s success in theatre a novel made receiving an offer for employment a welcoming job for the whole cast and crew. Actors and actresses, as well as directors and film makers, understood that any Peter rendition would become successful without much effort simply because people loved the story.

Considering the mixture of the rest and experienced actors and actresses, the film was set to be a hit. In September of 1924, production began with “excellent cast and a handsome budget” (Hanson 135). The movie premiered December 29, closely adhering to the traditional Christmas-time releases of the past. Immediately upon releasing, *Peter Pan* received wonderful reviews, some of which were the best that any *Peter Pan* had seen before. The movie was praised for not only its sets, but its actors, too. It made it on the top 10 list for *The New York Times* best films of 1924, further bringing attention to the popularity of Barrie’s story (Hanson 136). To the critic’s surprise, the true master behind the film’s success was the magnificent performance of Betty Bronson.

Mordaunt Hall, reviewer for *The New York Times* in 1924, expressed his praise, stating, “It is not a movie, but a pictorial masterpiece which we venture to say will meet the approval of the author.” One of the primary attraction for viewers was the portrayal of Tinkerbell as a real woman, not just a flittering light. It was the first time that it was possible for Tinkerbell to be played by a human, seeing as the medium of film grants the liberty for special effects to enhance the visual aesthetics of the story. In the text, Barrie tells us that Tinkerbell was “a thousand times brighter than the night-lights” and was a girl fairy “exquisitely gowned in a skeleton leaf, cut low and square, through which her figure could be seen to the best advantage” (19). During this time, the theatrical effects were not equipped to present Tinkerbell in girl form and, thus, were limited to using the flickering light. However, now that film undertook the story, Tinkerbell would finally be given a face which viewers could associate the name and jingling sounds. Virginia Brown

Faire was cast in the role of Tinkerbell and brought the character alive, specifically capturing the cheeky, emotional elements of Tinkerbell's character.

The film's score was made to accompany the telling of the story, rather than standing as a masterpiece itself. During the silent film era, the role of music was to "underscore the underlying narrative structure of the film" through a musical structure that established certain highs and lows of the film (Buhler 20). This enabled the action and emotion of the film to touch the viewers in a deeper way that only music can accomplish. Its purpose enabled audiences to not only see the fights, flights, and adventures, but to sense them fully through the addition of musical sound.

In terms of reception, the discussion of aesthetical acceptance and distance is brought into question with the new addition of film. Jauss' "aesthetic distance" reveals that either the audience must alter its horizon of expectation to accept the given work, or the rejection of the work will force it to remain stagnant or unforgotten until a further generation can set aside their expectations and accept the piece (Godzich 41). This is prevalent for the 1924 film version of *Peter Pan*. Although it was excellently received by its original audience, the film went dormant until the 1950s when it was rediscovered by film studies students.

Between 1924 and 1950, *Peter Pan* was transformed numerous times on stage, but there was never another film produced. Perhaps directors and producers felt inadequate to reinterpret the Brenon's film, but more than likely it was because the film industry turned from "silent" to "talkies," making musical adaptations more popular. With this transformation to sound-filled films, many production companies threw out the

majority of the silent films, including *Peter Pan* (DeVries 1). Also, during the 30s, musicals had generally “fallen out of favor,” and dramatic features became the prevalent genre of film (Buhler 26). *Peter Pan*, clearly, is not a dramatic piece, further proving why it was not a popular choice for this generation to complete on film.

In the 1950s, film preservationist James Card found a well-preserved copy of the film in the vaults at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. By 1995, the film had been fully restored and released. A senior manager of film restoration at Disney, Scott MacQueen, carried out this restoration work, and the film historian David Pierce helped with the final product, as well (“David Pierce”). Since 1995, this film has continued to find audiences with faithful silent film movie lovers. It has appeared in various film festivals across America, and continues to receive great applause.

1953: THE DISNEY EFFECT

In discussing *Peter Pan* with modern generations, there is one name that always pairs itself with the story: Walt Disney. When the Disney Company produced *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*, the first feature-length cartoon, in 1937, the company instantly built a foundation for storytelling success through the medium of animation. Since this time, animation—namely Disney animation—has become one of the primary narratives that children will learn from in the world. Disney animation focuses on taking older fairy tales or legends and crafting them into multimillion dollar films. Because film is the modern form of communication and entertainment, as well as the passage of cultural values and traditions, it seems necessary that certain films are directed at pleasing children. These films also “communicate myths and fairy tales, entertain, and educate the

audience for better or for worse” (Ward 1). This door towards the educational realm enabled the Disney Company to reinvent and retell classical stories in fresh, new ways. Any type of story that lent its hand to animation was immediately attractive to Disney, especially any story that’s history shone with financial success.

Thus, enters *Peter Pan*.

Since the 1924 film and the early theatrical production in the 40’s, Barrie’s story halted in being shared through new storytellers, at least in the public view. While the story remained a classic, it was not until the death of Barrie in 1937 that it became legendary. In 1939, Roy Disney settled a deal with the Great Ormond Street Hospital for the rights of *Peter Pan*. Unable to sell Disney the film rights, seeing as Paramount Pictures already held them, the Hospital granted Disney with the cartoon rights to the story (Gabler 283). With rights in hand, Disney flew back to America where production for the film began almost immediately and with a hefty budget at that.

It was an excruciatingly long process for Disney to create and produce *Peter Pan*, if not only because there were so many other animated films being made at the same time. During this time, the Disney animators were working on *Cinderella*, *The Wind and the Willows*, *Pinocchio*, and various other features. Peter was always closest to Walt Disney’s heart, though. When World War II hit, *Peter Pan* was one of two films that was permitted to continue production by the Bank of America (Gabler 490). Knowing this, it is evident that even the business realm was looking forward to and understood the impact of Peter’s story. The trust granted to the Disney Company was immense because only one

earlier film adaptation was in the public arena. Audiences waited for over a decade to see the final product, being strung along with rumors that a great animation was underway.

Disney did not begin casting until the 1950's, shortly after the phenomenal success of Mary Martin's stage performance as Peter Pan. When deciding on who should play the role of Peter, the Disney staff spoke with numerous actresses, including Mary Martin. In the end, they chose to cast a teenage boy named Bobby Driscoll. Driscoll had made a name for himself during the 40's, and he later became one of Disney's first child actors who would play in numerous films. He played Peter beside Kathryn Beaumont's Wendy Darling. Beaumont previously debuted with Disney as Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* and would later voice a variety of roles for Disney animation. Hans Conried, a well-known radio voice, was asked to play Captain Hook, also doubling as Mr. Darling as is the tradition. This group of actors created even more of a hype as viewers waited for the release of the cartoon.

Peter Pan was received with as good of reviews as were awaited for by audiences. The film was greeted by a special section on the show *Toast of the Town*, on which Ed Sullivan hosted as a columnist (Gabler 491). Walt Disney went to the American release and enjoyed it so much that he also attended the premiere in London. Later in the year, he also attended the premiere in Mexico as well (Gabler 491). *Peter Pan*, to Disney and his fans, represented the innocence of childhood, paired with the inevitability of the increasingly materialistic world. When watching *Peter*, viewers were able to imagine they were no longer in the real world, but rather in the fairy tale world of Barrie and Disney.

The success of the film seemed, in part, due to the fame of the growing Disney Company. In addition, it was praised for its technicalities as well as its whimsy by Bosley Crowther, a reviewer for *The New York Times*, who declared the movie to be made in the typical “Disney style,” which was not necessarily meant as a compliment, but also very technically sound and clever as ever. He also points out the lack of seriousness taken when presenting Neverland as a real place. Rather, he claims Disney portrays Neverland as a dreamland where Barrie clearly establishes it as a real-life place. “Perhaps,” he says, “eliminations were prompted by a belief that present-day adults and children are more literal than they were in Barrie’s day.” With this realization, it is clear that the audience perception had changed once again.

No longer were viewers wanting to see a film simply for its humor, joy, and truth. Instead, they were seeking a new form of entertainment that centered on the ever-changing horizons of the culture. The animated *Peter Pan* seeks to identify changes in various elements of culture, including “shifting ideologies of gender, childhood, and sexuality” (Ohmer 153). Interestingly, Disney’s cartoon address serious social issues, too. The original story includes an Indian tribe, in which Tiger Lily is a warrior princess. Barrie’s words, though seeming slightly racially inappropriate, pale in comparison to the racial slurs of Disney’s adaption^{xii}.

The first time the audience sees the Indian tribe, Disney animators make it clear that these are a stereotypical group, donned in war paint and braids, and, of course, with red-tinted skin. The Lost Boys are allowed to ask any questions they may have in regards to the Indians. The following quotations flow from the young children’s voices as they

sing along with the tribe, tapping their mouths with their hands: “Why does he ask you ‘How’?” and “What makes the Red Man red?” While many Americans had a limited knowledge of Native Americans during this era, they knew enough to know racial slurs and degrading stereotypes^{xiii}. Because of this inclusion, there were a few movie-goers who were offended by the simpleton, disrespectful representation of a large portion of the American population.

Despite this transgression, the film was highly received by audiences and critics alike. Ever since Mickey Mouse awakened American animation, Disney had remained a constant source of story-telling. *Peter Pan*’s production prevailed as a modern telling of an old classic, one that revived the imagination and delight of fantasy in children. Through its ability to encompass the culture surrounding the film’s release date and its accuracy in exemplifying historical relevance, *Peter Pan* stood as a representative for past and present. Understanding the social, cultural, and historical contexts allows the interpreter, in this case Disney, to analyze the film in the modern realm, while still conceding to the original. Within this Gadamerian concept lies the innate description of the interpretation of a work. Disney’s *Peter Pan*, therefore, encompasses a specific ability to reveal an Edwardian tale, while twisting the story to appeal to social norms of the 50’s.

In 2002, Disney created a sequel for the 1953 film. *Return to Neverland* was produced by Disney Toon Studios in Sydney, Australia. The plot revolves around Wendy Darling’s daughter, Jane, and her new relationship with Peter Pan during World War Two. Adapting to fit the modern, twentieth-century girl, Jane is quite a self-sufficient, realistic tomboy. Her character fits more in the expression of one living in the 2000’s

rather than the 1940's, though. However, the story presents her in a light that reveals just how far women and girls had evolved since the original Disney production.

Young girls were no longer expected to remain housewives who raised children and mended the clothes. Instead, girls had choices and voices; they were encouraged to be whatever they imagined and dreamed. This new film projects more focus on Wendy and Jane, the heroines of the film, than it does on Peter Pan. Barrie's original story gives equal importance to male and female characters, but over the years the adaptations have granted sole domination to Peter. By switching up character focus, Disney's *Return to Neverland* reveals new cultural and social perceptions of the story. Once again, *Peter Pan* found its way to remain relevant, even if it changed up a bit of the storyline.

1991: HOOK

Until this point in time, Peter Pan remained the eternal child. His existence was mutually exclusive to his role as a childhood reality turned fantasy. In the late 1980s, Steven Spielberg began processing what it would be like if Peter Pan did not remain in Neverland, but rather decided to take on a new adventure that is life. Although relating to the boy Peter himself, Spielberg was not concealed by the eternal youth of Neverland. Instead, he could only imagine a world in which his youth remained his glory. Through the medium of film, Spielberg captures the slight possibility of remaining young forever; yet, he celebrates the power of age in the movie *Hook*.

The concept of *Hook* fascinates audiences because of its ability to reach a wide group of people: children, adults, and grandparents. Mirroring the themes of Barrie's original story, *Hook* captures the idea that aging is an adventure and quality experiences

come with time. In this film, Peter Pan decides to stay in London when he falls in love with Wendy's granddaughter, Moira. His name is changed to Peter Banning and, as an adult, he becomes a pirate of the late twentieth century: a lawyer. The Bannings have two children, Jack and Maggie, who are kidnapped by Hook and his crew of pirates. Unable to remember his true past, Banning struggles to understand the capturing of his children by a gentleman-like Captain Jas. Hook. However, when Tinkerbell returns to the nursery, she is able to bring Banning back to his childhood home of Neverland. Here, Banning learns about his past and remembers what it is like to be carefree and child-like. In the end, he realizes that his happy thought revolves around the fact that he loves his wife and his children more than anything in the world. It is this reason that allows him to defeat Captain Hook in a final battle.

When beginning the journey to make Peter Pan a real man, Spielberg knew that he needed an actor who was capable of bringing a child-like essence to the screen. Robin Williams was well-known for his comedic acting skills from Saturday Night Live, as well as his ability to take on more diverse, serious roles. He had the special ability to make audiences smile, laugh, and cry all within a few scenes. Naturally, Williams was the best option for the role of a boy-man who represents both childhood and adulthood.

Alongside Williams, the cast grew in its talent, eventually boasting a Hollywood "A list" of actors. Dustin Hoffman played the role of Hook, in which he represents a Victorian style pirate rather than the swashbuckling kind that Barrie imagined. A newer actress to the screen, Julia Roberts, was cast in the role of a tomboy Tinkerbell. Maggie Smith played the role of "Grandma" Wendy.

Steven Spielberg previously proved his understanding of the importance of music in film with his films *Indiana Jones* and *Jaws*. Early in his career, Spielberg befriended one of the best film composers of all time, John Williams, and included his scores in nearly all of his films. Williams wrote the score for *Hook*, capturing the significance of the film through music. Amy Caplan explains that while our feelings when watching a film are partly explained by cognitive processing, “much of our overall response results from our direct sensory engagement with the images and sounds of the film and thus not determined by high level cognitive processing” (123). When we visually see the world that Spielberg and his team created, we picture the fantastic world of Neverland. However, when paired with William’s score, the audience is taken to a new level of beauty—a place in which all of our senses are invoked to breathe in the nature of Neverland’s life.

Hook did fine in the box office standings, but it did not fare well with critical reviews. Less magical than expected, many critics praised the score and creative liberties, but felt as though Spielberg missed an opportunity to do something *great* with the story. Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* declared the film to be “too much,” but still contained the “charm of the Barrie original.” Further, Marjorie Baumgarten of *The Austin Chronicle* declared “*Hook* has you marveling at the nuts-and-bolts work of producers and assistant directors, but never at the intrinsic imaginativeness of the story.” Although the film continues to be a hit, or at least a loving remembrance of childhood, it seems fairly stuck in its time.

The film, in itself, screams that it was produced in the Nineties. The Lost Boys bounce on trampolines, have basketball hoops and skateboard ramps, and have funky hair that denotes product of 1990-something. The film's center on family values, especially over the busy working life, reiterates the decade's focus on family matters. Also, when Peter realizes his happy thought—his children—it is speaking to the culture, too. In a society that seemed “overly mothered,” Banning addresses a type of sentimentality towards the need for fathers in an “unhappily fathered generation” (Pace 162). With the conclusion of the film, Banning swears off choosing his brick-like cell phone over his own children for good.

Hook represents much more than ideals of the late Twentieth century, but is also quite lovely in terms of filmmaking, as shown in its praise for special effects. Spielberg is known for his flying sequences, which continue as a major element, naturally, in *Hook*. Flight represents much more than quickly moving from place to place. In Spielberg's films, flight “is the means by which one can escape from growing up, from losing the joy and lightheartedness of childhood, from getting old, and from dying” (Audissino 110). From this, it is clear that the complexity of child versus adult divide becomes muddled when Banning finds himself with the ability to fly once again.

One of the most brilliant themes in both Spielberg's rendition and Barrie's original is the encouragement of becoming an adult. While childhood fantasy has its appeal, adult reality is just as fantastic. Lester Friedman states,

By foregrounding the relentless passage of time, *Hook* forces viewers to consider and take responsibility for how they allot their particular, and quite limited,

portion of time in their own daily lives. In this case, it is the children who are ticking clocks, reminding viewers of the limits of mortal life, and it is Peter—the immortal child—not Hook who loathes them (197).

When Peter Banning decides to choose his children, even if only benefiting from their youth for a few more years, he forfeits his ability to remain immortal in exchange for the ability to be vulnerable and grow.

Friedman further gives an excellent comparison of Hook to Wordsworth's "Imitations of Immortality." By sharing that the film remains an "elegy for, rather than a celebration of, impulsive childhood and youthful innocence, as well as an embrace of adult responsibilities" (Friedman 198). In this, we see both Gadamer and Jaus's theories on communication and reception. When a viewer is able to watch a film and to connect that film to previous knowledge, he is broadening his perception of the original piece. While expanding his horizon, the viewer both acknowledges his prior understanding of the message and themes, while exploring new representations of the message and themes. Not only does the film make the story relevant once again, but it brings a new dialogue to the conversation.

2003: PETER PAN

Peter Hollindale, author of *A Hundred Years of Peter Pan*, writes that one of the best renditions of *Peter Pan* is the 2003 film, directed by P.J. Hogan. He says that the film's achievements have yet to be fully recognized, also noting that Barrie would have liked this film best if he could have seen the variety of films produced on his imagined

character (Hollindale 212). Further, the film was warmly praised and received by both critics and viewers alike.

Hogan's version, which is directed and written by himself, remains as close to Barrie's original as possible. The storyline remains the same: Peter enters the nursery and is victorious in bringing the Darling children to Neverland, he fights Hook, Tinkerbell flies, Indians dance, and all return to London at the end—except Peter, of course. However closely aligned to the original text, Hogan's film adapts a step forward, especially since it was created in the digital age where fantasy becomes much easier to present. The first significant change came when Hogan cast a twelve year old boy in the role of Peter. It was the first time that Peter would actually be played by a child, and Hogan's reasoning that was a good age since it was the age when Barrie's brother, David, died (Otto 1). Jeremy Sumpter played Peter, and Rachel Hurd-Wood played the role of Wendy. Both children were highly praised for their chemistry and acting abilities.

Not only were these two young actors given credit, but the film's relativity to the original made critics name this film as one of the greatest versions of *Peter Pan*. One critic called the film "a dazzling retelling of the J. M. Barrie tale," which showed good acting, visuals, and "an actual boy" as Peter Pan (Meyer 1). Another critic applauded Hogan for his deep understanding of the original's themes, and his use of said themes in the movie:

Imagination is dangerous, but the loss of Imagination is deadly. Being a child is frightening—there are certainly scenes here that will jolt the sensitivities of young

children—but growing up is painful. Like Barrie, Mr. Hogan grasps these difficult truths, and knows how to spin them into utter, uncomplicated delight (Scott 1). This film highlights the inevitable truths that both child and adult must face. Yet, Hogan and his crew are able to address these issues in a positive and a negative way, which is exactly how life addresses these issues, too.

For the first time in the numerous adaptations of the story, Peter and Wendy's attraction plays a noticeable role in the plot. This, in part, is due to Peter being played by a real boy, but also because it seems evident in the original text. "The sensuality is there," says Robert Ebert, "and other versions have pretended that it was not." It is not to say that the film is turned into a teenage love story; instead of hiding the fact that part of growing up entails romance, this film includes it as a vital piece of maturation. Two of the major themes Hogan hones in on are Wendy's desire to have Peter be freed from his eternal childhood and Hook's envy of the affection that Peter and Wendy have for one another (Ebert 1). These two themes clearly represent the underlying truths of the story, not just the film.

The question "Why bring Peter to the Twenty-first century?" was often brought to Hogan when creating this film. One of the reasons is because Hogan believes that the play "has something for everybody and it's moving in ways that you don't expect it to be moving" (Otto). He also shares that he wanted to make a version that nodded appreciation for the original. Other versions, especially Disney, do not ring true to the play. Hogan addresses that he went back to the play because "the play is thematically rich and psychologically profound," which shows how he respected the intellect and truth of

modern audiences. Hogan did not aim to produce a film that pointed to the joyous elements of life, but rather wanted to show life in its entirety, which does not always include pleasantries.

2004: FINDING NEVERLAND

Over the course of time when *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* was first released through 2004, J.M. Barrie's biography had been written in various textual forms, but never on screen. His story was compelling to many, but nobody wanted to recreate his personal story over his famous imagined story. *Peter Pan* seemed much more profitable and interesting to filmmakers. However, 2004 saw the release of the first biographical film on Barrie's life—at least a view of his life with the Davies—called *Finding Neverland*, a cinematic rendition of Allan Knee's play *The Man Who Was Peter Pan*.

Marc Forster directs a cast of stars, including Johnny Depp as Barrie, Kate Winslet as Sylvia, and Dustin Hoffman as Frohman. Hoffman previously played the role of Captain James Hook in Spielberg's *Hook*, and therefore appeared closest to the story. In this film, Barrie is struggling to commandeer an idea for a new play; he is reveling in a sort of writer's block. As he walks his dog, Porthos, through Kensington Park, he comes across a lively bunch of boys who are engaged in imaginative play. From this first encounter with the Davies, Barrie begins a growing friendship with the boys and their mother. Over the course of the film, Barrie writes *Peter Pan, Or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, basing the plot upon his adventures with his new, young friends. The audience watches as Sylvia slowly fights sickness and, eventually, death.

The film is a romanticized representation of Barrie's life, presenting to the ideals of Hollywood rather than the factual events that transpired. However, for those unaware of Barrie's life, or his story, this film breaks the surface and allows viewers to access a small realistic portion of the author's life. *Finding Neverland* discusses the idea of Peter Pan's creation with accuracy, and the actors do their best to present the author and his companions in a respectful light.

It is clear, though, that this film is less for children than it is for the adult movie watcher, even though its PG rating does not have anything unacceptable for even the smallest child. Marc Forster describes that he "did not make this movie as a film for children," yet children seem to enjoy it regardless of the "themes of death" (Grantiz 1). Of course there are child actors in the film, but, in fact, the film does not center on these children. It does centralize on the idea that Barrie and Sylvia had a deeper romantic relationship and Barrie's relationship with his wife was disturbed by this outside woman.

Critics were not impressed by the film, even without its disregard to biographical reality. Monohla Dargis of *The New York Times* wrote, "The problem isn't the liberties the filmmakers take with reality, but that this isn't an engaging bowdlerization." Stating this, Dargis points out the fact that audiences and reviewers were rooting for the success of this *Peter Pan* spin-off. Yet, it seems as though the expectations of many movie-goers were limited to the success of other author-based biographical films. Even if an audience did not understand the complexity of Barrie's life, many felt as though the film did not do the author justice.

There were some, though, who praised the film for its ability to cast light on Barrie and his eternal story. Peter Hollindale praises Depp as a “delightful Barrie,” while noting the little resemblance the actor has towards the actual man (209). He also notes that the film is “a commercialized feature for family audiences” that “does not pretend to factual accuracy” (209). In the end, Hollindale describes the film as a “dramatization of Barrie’s personal story [that is] kind to a fault to Barrie, and correctly avoids suggesting anything sexually amiss in Barrie’s dealings with the boys” (209). While many Twenty-first Century critics tend to focus on the negative aspects that could have alluded to Barrie having a love affair for the Davies boys, this film kindly points out that the Victorian affection is much different than our modern perceptions^{xiv}.

2015: PAN

When the announcement was made that a new, 3D adaptation of *Peter Pan* was being produced, children and adults both found themselves thrilled with a new cinematic version. The last of Peter’s story was presented in 2003, so many children had yet to have a Peter to call their own—at least on screen. Parents, it seemed, were thrilled to compare a new version to the one they had from their youth. And thus, the excitement was formed.

The premise of the film *Pan* is to describe the background story of the eternal boy. Interestingly enough, to avid Peter lovers, no background is needed because Barrie includes this in his novel. However, for those who are unfamiliar with the original text, it is delightful to have some sort of back story. Peter is an orphan of twelve, painstakingly similar to *Oliver Twist*, living in London during World War Two. His mother, Mary, left him with a letter that he had to find on his own accord. The nuns at his orphanage sell the

orphan boys to pirates, who then take the children off to Neverland as slave miners. The man in charge is the infamous pirate, Blackbeard, who is trying to harvest all of the fairy dust on the island. The miners, both children and adults, work all day to mine this special element. Pan, with the help of his new friend James Hook—who is more like a cowboy than a Victorian—escape from the mines and fly over the beautiful island of Neverland. They meet Tiger Lilly and her tribe, all of mixed races and painted in bright colors. Eventually, Pan realizes he is the “chosen one,” meant to save the good residents of Neverland from the despicable Blackbeard. After the encouragement from his deceased mother, Pan finds the strength and ability to fight the evil pirate.

Clearly, this film does not try to outdo any version that aims to stick closely to the original. Instead, the director, Joe Wright, took creative liberties in presenting audiences with a new, never-before-told, story of the famous Peter Pan. Although admirable, critics and audiences did not believe this new story. There were many confusing elements throughout the film, aside from the extreme stretch from the original storyline. One of which, a steampunk-style anthem, is the miners singing a Nirvana song to please Blackbeard. Critic Stephanie Merry states, “Inserting a grunge anthem into a tale that’s been transplanted from the turn of the 20th century to WWII is already a strange choice. But it’s hardly the strangest one.” Another is the interesting combustion of the natives when they are killed, appearing like a smoke-bomb that evokes the image of a popular “color run” where bursts of paint are thrown into the air when people pass by.

Apart from the weird inclusions in song and color, the film fell short on the overall story line. The film was meant to be a new anthem of Peter Pan for the modern

generation, but it fails to inspire millennial children or their predecessors. It was created to enhance viewer understanding of Pan's life, before he became the Peter Pan we have always known. Unfortunately, viewers are left with quizzical looks and ten dollars less in their pockets. A. O. Scott reviewed the film and adequately noted, "The dominant emotion in 'Pan' is the desperation of the filmmakers, who frantically try to pander to a young audience they don't seem to respect, understand or trust." For those who are familiar with Barrie's story, or even just the Disney version, there remains a lack of respect towards the creators of this film. While generally accepting of new adaptations, fans of *Peter Pan* were left wondering how this film was able to hold the beloved name of "Pan."

There are a few people, though, who praised the film for its cinematography and clever plot. In fact, many of the public reviews on IMBD, the main review for modern movies, shout praise for the film's originality and success. While it was a good family film, seeing as it was clean and the only violence came with colorful, dead natives, the critical perceptions must win their case. In an era where many people enjoy tasteful renditions of old classics, there are others who will praise a film simply because the characters and objects fly out for you to "touch" them. Peter Pan is not a child of the mid-twentieth century; he is not a child who grows up in an urban city. In the end, we must go back to the beginning, back to *The Little White Bird*, to see that Peter is, in fact, the bird-boy who escapes from his parents as a young boy and, himself, pirates other children to join him in fantasy.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

For a story to be passed down over the course of a century's time, with new interpretations, explanations, and depictions nearly every decade, it proves that it belongs in the sacred space of "classic" and "fairy tale". Lori Campbell describes that *Peter Pan* has "[evolved] since its earliest conception" and "speaks to us as eloquently today as it did when audiences of all ages first clapped their hands to show their belief in fairies" (xviii). Evolution is the key to *Peter's* success: it has willingly evolved. It has evolved since the first stage production when Barrie refused to write down the play in full. It has evolved since the pages of the 1911 publication first encouraged artists to imagine a visual world for the story. It has evolved since the change of entertainment moved from theatre to cinema. And it still continues to evolve.

While the evolution of the story progressed with the evolution of technological advances, that is not the real reason for its success. The culmination of themes within the story hold inherent truths for each generation. Humans, though evolving, remain similar in few aspects. Fear of time is present in all ages; desperation to find love holds true for all people, too. Childhood, with his curiosities and beauty is both magical and frightful. It grows the imagination, but is incredibly too short-lived. Adults are forever looking back on their childhood and youth, questioning the passion and magic of life before it became complicated and filled with real-life pirates. The idea of *Peter Pan* is that we all must grow up—each and every child must, at some point, exchange the nursery for his own

house. Yet, Peter is the only one who remains a child forever. He is both praised for his bravery and pitied for his incompetence. But we refuse to let him go.

Adults enjoy the thought of remembering what has passed, while children love the idea of the imagination. Peter becomes whatever we want him to become. Much like the difference in each person's "Neverland," Peter changes, too, in each mind. Believing in fairies becomes a "protection of children's rights to believe in something other than what oppressive reason allows" (Howe 184). Further, believing in magic becomes a protection for the good elements in life, regardless of one's age.

The reception of this story reveals just how magical it is in our past, present, and future. Peter is not going to fly away. The story of *Peter Pan* has changed in every aspect of social, intellectual, and literary realms. He has met the changing expectations, while broadening the idea of the story to create a more intricate horizon. Jauss states that in literary communication, there is a dialogue that is opened up, in which the truth of a text depends on whether or not that text is "capable of further developing the inexhaustible meaning of the work" (27). With *Peter Pan*, it is difficult to create a new rendition because so many have fallen in love with earlier versions. Yet, he continues to find an audience with each new adaptation. His story is one that "remains a source of beauty and enchantment as well as terror and fright, taking hold in ways that are beyond our control" (Tatar lxiii). Because of this, generations continue to pass on his tale, eagerly asking the next to take care of the boy.

It is said that Barrie is a true literary genius; his work exceeds one medium of entertainment and crosses the boundaries of three separate forms of storytelling.

Inevitably, this places him as a giant in the realm of imagination. A writer for the *Times Literary Supplement* described Barrie, and his character of Peter, best when they wrote:

Barrie had the power which is much greater than that of storytelling of compelling successive generations to incept his story afresh, to tell it to themselves and in their own terms—that is to say, he was not merely to instruct or entertain but to impregnate the collective mind of his audience. And if he did, indeed, possess this power, which is precisely the power of the great fairy-tales, criticism may as well throw its pen away, for then he is immortal by election and there is no more to be said about it (Anonymous 1).

Clearly, Barrie’s story is everlasting; it compels readers and viewers of all ages to take a look at the tale from multiple angles, to address how it is relevant to their life and to life around them.

Gadamer believes that it is through writing that “language gains its true ideality,” stating that in “encountering a written tradition understanding consciousness acquires its full sovereignty” (392). However, with *Peter* it is when it is both written and performed that the language takes full form. Through writing, individuals are able to communicate with Barrie and envision their own Neverland, combining their imagination with that of the Edwardian author. When acted, beauty unfolds before the viewer, even if it is at the mercy of the director’s creative presentation. We are both over-joyed and disappointed for though it is beautiful, it may not match the beauty of the Neverland in our minds.

Therefore, we keep trying. We try to outdo our predecessors in capturing the true depiction of Peter: we create and imagine and digitalize our thoughts as best as we can,

but it never seems quite perfect. And thus the cycle continues. Peter has become our worldly tradition. Like everything else, we want to get it right and present the best version of Peter we can create. He is an old friend, a new friend, and he deserves our remembrance. For this, his story will continue on, past the second star on the right and straight on 'til morning.

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END NOTES

ⁱ For more information on Barrie's earlier career, see Andrew Birkin's early chapters in *J.M. Barrie and the Lost Boys: The Real Story Behind Peter Pan*.

ⁱⁱ See Tomasevskij

ⁱⁱⁱ Pantomimes were really the first type of play that could be directed at children specifically. The Victoria and Albert Museum has a wonderful compilation of information on the pantomime. www.vam.ac.uk

^{iv} The British Library has a fascinating collection of works that address Child Labor Laws during the Victorian Era.

^v For reviews on Miller's performance, see Hanson's *Peter Pan on Stage and Screen: 1904-2004*.

^{vi} Musicals remained popular for the rest of the century, eventually turning to film production, as we see with Disney's *Peter Pan*. To learn more about the history of the musical, see *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* by John Bush Jones or *Musical Theatre: A History* by John Kenrick.

^{vii} Many books have been written over the fairy tale; some that I used in my research are Kornei Chukovsky's *The Battle for the Fairy Tale: Three Stages* and Jack Zipes' *The irresistible fairy tale the cultural and social history of a genre*.

^{viii} Freud's dream theories are compiled in his book *Dream Psychology* and have been widely studied since its publication.

^{ix} Dan Kiley wrote about the Peter Pan Syndrome in his book *The Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Have Never Grown Up*.

^x One theory as to why Wendy was removed from the title may be because women were being "reinstated" back into the homes post WWII. Because of this, it seems as if men—in this case Peter—were once again rising to dominant roles in culture.

^{xi} For a variety of reader and critic reviews, see http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/34262.Peter_and_the_Starcatchers#other_reviews

^{xii} During the mid-1900s, Americans were not vastly knowledgeable about natives, and, thus, held prejudices about their lives. Surprisingly, when the play is

^{xiii} Many Americans, unless they lived near the Indian reservations, had little knowledge of natives. When Barrie wrote this story, he had no personal experiences with the American natives, and therefore must have relied wholly on what he heard from his friend's adventures. As a result, natives are treated very stereotypically.

^{xiv} No proven facts have pointed any truth to these accusations that Barrie had a romantic affection towards the boys.