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## **John Cabot University**

Department of English Literature

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature  
Minors in Creative Writing and Communications

### Journey Through the Otherworld: How the Female Characters of Children's Literature Grow Up

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to establish a connection between the coming of age of the female characters of traditional children's literature and their journey through the Otherworld—a landscape which stands separately from the world of adults. The Otherworld will be understood as the Freudian representation of the child's id, a place which will have to be left behind in order for the child to grow towards maturity. The first part of the thesis analyzes the necessity of the coming of age process and what it entails for the protagonists of *Peter Pan*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Secret Garden* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Then, there will be a gender-based analysis of their journeys through the theme of motherhood and the relationship of the protagonists with the guide figures found in the Otherworld. Finally, the last chapter investigates the three functions that the adult characters have in these stories in relation to the coming of age process.

## **Dedication**

To Grandpa  
My anchor and role model

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## Introduction

The conversation that surrounds the role of children's stories and fairy tales within the maturation of the child into an adult has always been emphasized by scholars of children's literature. On the structuralist approach of Propp, and on the psychoanalytical one of Bettelheim and Jung, scholars like Jack Zipes and Jacqueline Rose have based their analysis of folktales and children stories. In her analysis of children's literature, Maria Nikolajeva claims that the modern idea of childhood is based upon the Romantic view of childhood as an idyllic state.

Before the Romantic period children were believed to be hardly different from adults [...] in the Romantic tradition childhood was equal to idyll, while growing up was equal to the loss of Paradise, and the idea of the child as innocent has continued to influence children's fiction long after Romanticism. (Nikolajeva 113)

This separation between adult and child is echoed in traditional children's narratives by the presence of a separate world which reflects pastoral conventions and in which nature assumes a primary role—it is the landscape of Neverland, Wonderland, Oz and the secret garden that holds the key to the child protagonist's growth.

The purpose of my thesis is to understand the function of the Otherworld in children's literature, explore the ways in which it comes to life, the ways in which it is narrated as well as the ways in which it influences the psychological development of the child protagonist. The aim is therefore that of establishing a connection between the journey through the Otherworld and the growth of the child character into an adult in the texts of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by

Lewis Carroll (1865), *The Wonderful Wizard of OZ* by L. Frank Baum (1900), *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie (1911), and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (1911). I will also examine the differences in the coming of age process between female and male characters within the same novel and the ways in which little girls are made to mature into patterns of responsibility whereas boys are made to mature into patterns of adventurousness.

## Chapter 1: The Psychological Function of the Otherworld

One of the predominant themes of children's tales is the conflict between childhood and adulthood. That all children have to accept the growth towards maturity is especially true in those fantasy narratives written for children which feature an Otherworld—a metaphorical landscape that at once satisfies the child's desire for a haven of fantasy, but which also teaches them important life lessons meant to further their psychological maturity. In the stories I will be analyzing, the Otherworld can be understood as a landscape that is unfamiliar to the child protagonist and that stands separately from the logical world of adults. This world can be one like Neverland, Wonderland, or Oz, which do not exist in our concrete reality; or it can be a more realistic world like that of *The Secret Garden*, a place that is physical and that can exist, but is still set apart from the rest of the world; a place that has been forgotten by adults and rediscovered by children.

In children's narratives, the novelistic fictional world often figures as a frame story, such as the world Alice lives in with her family *before* she falls down the rabbit hole. Greer Watson refers to Wonderland, or Neverland, or Oz as a “tertiary reality,” as if a novel had suddenly opened up a door into a deeper level of fictive existence. It is from her argument and her studies of the Otherworld that I have drawn my own definition of the term as described above. In the chapter titled “Tertiary Reality in Children's Fiction,” Watson distinguishes within each fantasy novel two distinct worlds: the “primary” and the “secondary.” The former is the reality in which the protagonist of the novel is living, whilst the latter is the world to which the protagonist travels during the course of the narrative and in which the main adventure takes place (Watson).

In the case of *Peter Pan*, the primary world would be the 20<sup>th</sup> century London that Wendy leaves behind to fly to the secondary world of Neverland. More specifically, the secondary world “includes things that could not exist in the primary world, such as wizards, dragons, talking horses, wishing rings, travel to the past, and races of people who are only inches tall” (Watson 350). In *Peter Pan* this would include mermaids, fairies who die if a child stops believing in them, and stars that talk as if they were humans. These worlds can be realistic or “otherworldly” which means that they are “radically unlike the primary world. Such worlds usually have their own geography and history and may have inhabitants of a magical nature” (Watson 351). With the exception of the secret garden, which functions as a realistic Otherworld, Neverland, Oz and Wonderland all fall under the category of otherworldly Otherworld.

However, as Watson proceeds with her discussion of the Otherworld, she points out that a world such as Neverland should be defined as a tertiary rather than a secondary world, for one must also take into consideration that the novelistic frame world is a fantasy in itself. What we have up until now called a primary world is instead a “quasi-primary secondary world,” for although it resembles the real world, it is not the real world (Watson 359). A world in which it is possible for a tornado to sweep up someone’s house and transport them to Oz, is a world in which the fantastical has already taken root over the realistic. These quasi-primary secondary worlds are defined by “the existence of magical travel into one or more tertiary worlds. Unlike real people, the heroes of such fantasy fiction are able to travel physically into the worlds of pictures, the worlds of stories they read, or even worlds of their imagination” (Watson 359). Watson’s definition of the Otherworld as a tertiary instead of a secondary world is fundamental as it allows a distinction between the child reader, who lives in a primary world, and the child protagonist, who lives in a quasi-primary secondary world. The primary world becomes the one

in which the child reader is reading the novel and in which the Otherworld can be reached only through the power of imagination. The secondary world becomes instead the frame world of the narrative. Throughout my thesis, I will focus on the child protagonist's relationship with the tertiary world rather than on a reader-response approach, because the child protagonist is the character with which the child reader is asked to identify with.

One of the most prominent scholars on the psychological function of children's literature is Bruno Bettelheim. In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim argues that:

for a story truly to hold the child's attention, it must entertain him and arouse his curiosity. But to enrich his life, it must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions; be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations; give full recognition to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems which perturb him. In short, it must at one and the same time relate to all aspects of his personality. (Bettelheim 5)

Fairy tales are for Bettelheim those stories that are able to capture the child's attention and lead them towards maturity. As the child reader identifies with one or another protagonist of the tales, the main character should mirror the same struggles that the child goes through during the coming of age process: the Otherworld of children's fantasy becomes a place of learning experiences as well as a space of childhood play. Furthermore, "fairy tales carry important messages to the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious mind, on whatever level each is functioning at the time" (Bettelheim 6). These messages are unconsciously understood by the child who will use them to overcome the psychological dilemmas that they are experiencing and to uncover what Bettelheim identifies as the "struggle for meaning" in children's lives.

David Whitley develops this approach by arguing that "good fantasy writing is not really a retreat from the difficulties of the world into an imaginative safe haven [...] the inventiveness

of fantasy becomes empty if it is merely self-serving, but rich and interesting if it allows identifiable human dilemmas to be explored from new angles” (Whitley 175). It is fundamental for children’s literature to present the Otherworld as an imaginative landscape that mirrors the real world with its obstacles and complications as books like *The Wizard of Oz*, *Peter Pan*, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and *The Secret Garden* do.

Fairy tales and children’s stories assume an important role in the growth of the child as they are particularly connected with their psychological maturity. Kidd argues that “Freud approached the fairy tale much as he approached dreams: as symptomatic expressions of wish fulfillment” (Kidd 4). Therefore, fairy tales can be considered as linked to and defining the unconscious part of the psyche, the one in which the desires and the primitive impulses are stored: the id. The psychological function of the Otherworld in children’s literature is to represent the unconscious part of the child protagonist’s psyche.

The Otherworld interacts with the unconscious mind of both the child protagonist and the child reader by acting as a place of unconscious desires. Each fantasy story is:

about the opposite aspects of one and the same person: that which pushes him to escape into a faraway world of adventures and fantasy, and the other part which keeps him bound to common practicality—his id and his ego, the manifestation of the reality principle and the pleasure principle. (Bettelheim 84)

The id and the superego of the child protagonist are transported onto other characters that will function as the two opposing forces that create the conflict between childhood and adulthood. Furthermore, “in the story the two sides of our ambivalence are isolated and projected each onto a different figure,” (Bettelheim 85). These opposing forces can be identified, as I will discuss in

more detail in chapter 5, in figures such as Peter Pan compared to Mrs. Darling, respectively a representation of the id and the superego of Wendy.

There is a passage in Peter Pan that discloses the Neverland to be exactly the unconscious mind of the child:

I don't know whether you have ever seen a map of a person's mind. Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, and your own map can become intensely interesting, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child's mind, which is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time. There are zig zag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and there are probably roads in the island for the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of color here and there, and coral reefs and rakish looking craft in the offing, and savages at lonely layers, and gnomes who are mostly tailors, and caves through which a river runs, and princes with six elder brothers, and hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose. It would be an easy map if that were all; But there is also first day of school, or religion, fathers, the round pond, needlework [...] and so on, and either these are part of the island or they are another map showing through and it is all rather confusing, especially as nothing will stand still. (Barrie 7-8)

If one tries to draw the map of a child's mind, a nearly impossible task, they will obtain the map of the Neverland. In this case it would make sense for the Neverland to be understood as a dream since Freud saw dreams as the manifestation of repressed memories and desires—the id—which would, of course, be stored in the inmost depths of a person's mind.

Freudian psychology and the psychology of dreams can help the reader understand the difference between the Otherworld and its novelistic frame world. When Dorothy finds herself in

Oz, or Alice in Wonderland, or Wendy in Neverland, she is moving through a dream landscape described by Freud as a place where the id shapes reality. Of *Peter Pan* specifically, but applicable to all children's literature, the Freudian critic Michael Egan writes, "in his story Barrie unconsciously created a vast metaphor—the Neverland—of the child's id," (Egan 37). The island becomes the place in which the child can live out their own deepest dreams and desires, "it is a place where the inhabitants can die and yet survive death; where aging and growth can be transcended; where children may marry, and kill bloodthirsty pirates; where there are wild beasts of prey, and savages dangerous and worshipful by turns," (Egan 47). The Neverland of *Peter Pan* is as much a representation of repressed desires as dreams are for Freud but distinguished as a collective representation rather than an individual one.

The journey through the Otherworld of children's fiction is often interpreted as a dream narrative. This is especially true for the *Wizard of Oz*, which has been reinterpreted in cinematic history as a dream landscape despite there not being any reference of such scenario in the book. "In the 1939 MGM movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is hit on the head during a cyclone and dreams up the magical land. Nothing like this happens in L. Frank Baum book," but since then "scholars have, in general, viewed Oz as a utopian dream" of the American society (Griswold 462). The narrative of the book does leave space for interpreting Oz as a dream, for, although not clearly stated, the Otherworld becomes the place in which Dorothy can solve her own internal conflicts and in which she projects a reality that resembles in many ways that of the world in which she lives in.

Principally, "the map of Oz is a map of the United States," but "what can't be ignored is how much the land of Oz is a reflection of actual circumstances at the turn of the century. At that time, America must have appeared a kind of fairyland to foreigners and natives alike" (Griswold

463). The American dream of easily achieved fame and fortune is represented by both the characters of Dorothy and the Wizard who instantly assume a position of power the moment they arrive in this magical land. The Wizard gains power by becoming the seemingly all-powerful ruler of the Emerald City, and Dorothy gains the respect of the citizens of Oz by killing the Wicked Witch of the East. “That Oz is most believable as a dream suggests how thoroughly the dreamwork became not merely a theme but a mode of narration,” which helped understand these stories from a psychological perspective (Kidd 97).

In *The Secret Garden*, the dream becomes the mystery of the garden itself, which is soon perceived as a sacred place where only children are allowed. Despite being a tangible location, which does not allow for a dream narrative to take place, the garden is in this sense a dream of its own in which the strict rules and the regulations that govern the outside world of adults do not exist. The garden becomes a place in which a sick child can learn how to walk through the help of magic: “the sun is shining—the sun is shining. That is the Magic. The flowers are growing—the roots are stirring. That is the Magic. Being alive is the Magic—being strong is the Magic. The Magic is in me” (Burnett 198)—as well as a place in which a little girl can discover the joys of childhood that had for so long been denied to her.

*Peter Pan* can also be understood as a dream narrative. The story starts with Wendy and her brothers in the nursery of their quasi-primary secondary world. They fly out of their window to reach the Neverland in which they reside for an unspecified amount of time—it could be months or even years—but when they return to the nursery, it does seem like during their absence the world has temporarily stopped. Nothing has changed and the only proof that the three children ever disappeared is their parents’ warm welcome. During her time in the Neverland, Wendy was able to overcome her unconscious dilemma about wanting to grow up. The island

served as a place for her to realize that growing up is necessary for one easily gets tired of childhood play. Therefore, “By the time we and the Darling children returned safely to the nursery, all the conflicting psychic tensions presented on the island have been pleasantly resolved—at least for now,” (Egan 41). Although Wendy is the protagonist of the novel and the reader follows her adventures on the island, “Barrie emphasizes that each new generation of children must undertake the pilgrimage afresh, an essential condition for maturity,” (Egan 41). The novel does not end with the return home of Wendy and her brothers, but rather with Wendy as an adult that grants her daughter, Jane, permission to fly to the Neverland with Peter:

As you look at Wendy you may see her hair becoming white, and her figure little again, for all this happened long ago. Jane is now a common grown-up, with a daughter called Margaret; and every spring-cleaning time, except when he forgets, Peter comes for Margaret and takes her to the Neverland, where she tells him stories about himself, to which he listens eagerly. When Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mothers in turn; and thus it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless. (Barrie 180-181)

The author is here highlighting that the coming of age process is necessary for every child—particularly female protagonists—and as much as their parents would love for them to remain children forever, it is inevitable that they eventually have to let them fly to the Neverland and begin their journey towards adulthood. Therefore, the initial fear of growing up that the protagonists of children stories have can be traced back to the parents’ desire for them to remain children.

Alice’s journey through Wonderland is similarly not described as a dream, but it can be imagined as one. Alice’s absurd journey through this nonsensical world is interpreted as a

projection of her desires that take shape in such an irrational and senseless manner that it cannot possibly be a true experience for the young protagonist. Her fall down the rabbit hole leads her to a dreamscape which disappears the moment she becomes tired of the nonsensical nature of the Otherworld. Almost as if the dream suddenly had turned into a nightmare that inevitably shocks her to the point of bringing her back to reality. The word “dream” is used by Alice at the end of the novel to describe her adventures in Wonderland to her sister: “Oh, I’ve had such a curious dream!” (Carroll 110). The only way in which Alice can make sense in the logical world of adults of her journey in Wonderland is by recollecting it as a dream.

The moment we see the Otherworld as the child’s id, we are understanding it to be the unconscious part of the child’s psyche, a fragment of the child’s mind. But whether the Otherworld is a dream or the mind of the child itself does not make the journey any less real or impactful because the importance of the journey through the Otherworld stands in its function as a tool for the psychological growth of the child protagonist.

According to Bettelheim, it is necessary for a child to create such realities for “the ability to spin fantasies beyond the present is the new achievement which makes all others possible—because it makes bearable the frustrations experienced in reality,” (Bettelheim 125). Therefore, the island that Wendy creates in her mind, and to which she eventually flies to, is fundamental to her growth towards maturity as it allows her to project positive outcomes to the problems that she is facing in her reality such as the dilemma of losing childhood for an adult life. It is only thanks to “exaggerated hopes and fantasies of future achievements [that] can balance the scale, that the child can go on living and striving,” (Bettelheim 125). Thanks to these alternate realities, children can live out all of their desires, and enter into maturity with no remorse about their childhood.

There is, however, a gap between Freudian analysis of a particular patient and Freudian analysis of a cultural phenomenon. In treating a patient, the analyst engages the particular and individual nature of that person's id. In treating literature, on the other hand, Freudian analysis deals with shared characteristics, such as the Oedipal Complex and the conflicted relationship between adults and children. Children's literature sometimes attempts to address or bridge this difference by acknowledging both common traits of children's id in general, and the particularity of individual id. For example, in *Peter Pan* the narrator specifies that not every child's Neverland, and therefore their ids, is the same once mapped out.

Of course the Neverlands vary a good deal. John's, for instance, had a lagoon with flamingos flying over it at which John was shooting, while Michael, who was very small, had a Flamingo with lagoons flying over it. John lived in a boat turned upside down on the sands, Michael in a wigwam, Wendy in a house of leaves deftly sewn together. John had no friends, Michael had friends at night, Wendy had a pet wolf forsaken by its parents, but on the whole the Neverlands have a family resemblance, and if they stood still in a row you could say of them but they have each other's nose, and so forth. (Barrie 8)

Therefore, although the Neverland has the same function and structure for every child, each child's specific desires shape the island to be quite different from that of another. Since *Peter Pan* focuses on the character of Wendy, it can be inferred that the Neverland the reader visits and on which the adventures take place is the one of Wendy's mind. This would turn John and Michael into visitors or characters from the real world that Wendy uses to populate her imaginary space.

Whitley claims that “the link between the ‘other world’ of make-believe and childhood is extremely strong [...] the inference would be that children grow out of their need for make-believe as they mature and that their ability to recreate the world afresh, once lost, is in some profound sense irrecoverable,” (Whitley 172). Wendy’s inability to return to her Neverland once she is a grown-up symbolizes the loss of the desires that characterized her childhood. But being unable to fly to the island of her childhood dreams does not entail a loss of imagination, simply a nostalgia for days past and a shift of predominance between her id and her superego. By journeying through their Otherworlds all of these female protagonists accept that growing up is not only inevitable but also necessary.

## Chapter 2: The Need to Grow Up

Once the journey through the Otherworld begins, the child protagonists are fated in undertaking their own coming of age process. As J.M. Barrie puts it, “all children, except one, grow up” (Barrie 3). With the exception of Peter Pan, the eternal child, all of the child characters that venture into the Otherworld, male and female, will inevitably progress toward adulthood by the end of the novel. This growth includes also those characters who are most reluctant in accepting change such as Colin from *The Secret Garden*. In the Otherworld the children must take responsibility for the process of growing up since taking responsibility is an inherent part of becoming more mature. It is precisely *how* they grow.

In my analysis of female protagonists, Alice starts out as a child whose thoughts are full of nonsense but, by the end, she argues herself out of nonsense and approaches a more logical way of thinking typical of adulthood. Wendy begins as a child in the nursery, but in Neverland she becomes a make-believe mother, and returns home with a newly gained independence. Thanks to the magic of the secret garden, Mary learns how to be less “contrary” and becomes more accepting of adults (Burnett 7). When Dorothy starts her voyage through Oz, she does not know where she belongs, but after her adventures, she realizes that there is no place like home.

### **Alice: From Nonsense to Sense**

Carroll’s Wonderland is rife with absurd and ridiculously mad scenarios. But it is not only the world that does not make sense, it is also the protagonist herself, Alice. When Alice first

comes to Wonderland, and through the first stages of her journey, she is as silly and childlike as the landscape itself. However, as she progresses on her journey, a gap opens. Wonderland continues to be mad and illogical, but Alice herself starts to think more logically, and to take issue with the craziness of the Otherworld.

At the beginning of the novel, her thought process is characterized by the folly and silliness typical of a child. Her ideas are confused and move from one concept to the next in a stream of consciousness manner, with no apparent connection between what comes first and what comes after:

‘I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it will seem to come out among the people the walk with their heads downwards! The antipathies, I think—’ (She was rather glad there was no one listening, this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) ‘—But I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please Ma’am, is this New Zealand? Or Australia?’ (And she tried to curtsy as she spoke—fancy, curtsying as you're falling through the air! Do you think you could manage it?) ‘And what an ignorant little girl she’ll think me for asking! No, it will never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere. (Carroll 16)

Such are the thoughts of Alice as she falls down the rabbit hole—thoughts that become increasingly nonsensical the farther down she travels and the closer she gets to Wonderland. While falling she thinks, “Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope!” (Carroll 17). This, of course, would not be possible in reality but it becomes real once the fall ends and Alice drinks from the little “drink me” bottle. “What a curious feeling! [...] I must be shutting up like a telescope!” (Carroll 18). Because “In this fantasy world language is a site of contest [...] not even the physical body is a stable entity. Not surprisingly, Alice becomes a dislocated and

confused subject when she enters Carroll's domain" (Thacker and Webb 63). In Wonderland, the perception of reality becomes so loose that everything, even an extreme physical change of size, is possible.

At various points Carroll uses metaphors of size (Alice shrinking and growing) to suggest that Alice can both regress toward childishness and progress toward adulthood. At the beginning of the story, shrinking and growing happen by drinking from a bottle labelled "drink me" and a cake labelled "eat me." At this point, shrinking and growing are magical transformations that happen to Alice without her willing them, and they are out of control—she becomes too small and too big. Alice "can no longer confidently project what her physical form will be, and finds herself in ...a state of self-conflict" (Thacker and Webb 65). Furthermore, her thinking about her exaggerated size is whimsically childish:

'Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure *I* shan't be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you: you must manage the best way you can;—but I must be kind to them,' thought Alice, 'or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I'll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas [...] and how funny it'll seem, sending presents to one's own feet! And how odd the directions will look!' (Carroll 21)

Alice does understand that her thoughts are taking a funny direction, but she does not argue against the nonsense, she accepts it as "the 'curiousness' of the world in which she finds herself [...] mimics the disorganization of her inner world" (Neill 391).

The physical sizing up and down in Wonderland represents the psychological growth towards maturity. Generally, "it is a truism that children are always growing, and are therefore always in the process of changing size," but, for Alice, the changing of size is exaggerated,

which emphasizes the nonsense of Wonderland (Morgentaler 83). Her constant changing of size becomes a factor in her inability to understand the Otherworld, and “her efforts to negotiate the nonsense world are rapidly thwarted as her own shape and size relative to other objects refuses to remain steady, making even the infant capacity to recognize the physical boundaries and identity of objects and certain” (Neill 386).

Throughout the narrative, Alice progressively grows tired of the world of nonsense and, unable to understand it, she just wants to escape. Her distress culminates in the final episode of the book with the Knave of Hearts’ trial. Here, “Alice states that there is no meaning in the rhyme given as the most important piece of evidence. Alice’s quest for understanding in this alternative world culminates in the recognition that there is ‘no meaning’” (Thacker and Webb 69). She is able to recognize the nonsense, but this time she does not accept it passively.

“Stuff and nonsense!” said Alice loudly. “The idea of having the sentence first!”

“Hold your tongue!” said the Queen, turning purple.

“I won’t!” said Alice.

“Off with her head!” the Queen Shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.

“Who cares for you?” said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time).

“You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” (Carroll 110)

Here Alice is refusing to believe in the nonsense of Wonderland; she has finally grown out of the childish illogical way of thinking and has accepted logic.

Furthermore, these are the last words that Alice speaks in the Otherworld before waking up and returning to the real world. After she says them, she has grown back to her full size, a detail which indicates that Alice is now ready to enter the logical world of adults and leave

behind the nonsensical one of childhood. Growing in size equates to maturing psychologically because:

Being a grown up literally and being a grown up chronologically are two different things—and yet they are the same thing, because the term ‘grown up’ equates adulthood with size. This puts Alice in a strange position, because how can she be grown up and still cling to her status as a child? [...] her abrupt changes in size seemed to undermine the definition of childhood as a state of littleness, at the same time as they blurred the demarcation line between childhood and adulthood as two distinct times of life.

(Morgentaler 92)

If Alice started out as a child who had only ever experienced the world from one fixed point of view, throughout the narrative she grows towards maturity while experiencing the challenges of Wonderland through the different perspectives that are brought on by her changing of size.

Alice’s growth seems to have become something willed and controlled by her own determination to think logically.

### **Wendy: From the Nursery to Independence**

If the journey of Alice through Wonderland takes her from whimsicality to reason, for Wendy the journey in Neverland takes her from dependence on parents to taking responsibility for herself. Where Carroll explores the landscape of logic, Barrie’s story, in contrast, is one of family relations and emotional maturity.

The book opens with a scene in which Wendy is a toddler picking flowers in the garden. While watching her, Mrs. Darling, her mother, “put her hand to her heart and cried, ‘Oh, why can’t you remain like this forever?’” (Barrie 3). Mrs. Darling appears protective towards her

daughter, wishing for her to remain a sweet innocent child forever. This protectiveness is echoed throughout the rest of the novel in the mother's worry for her missing children. But despite her parents' shielding affection and Mrs. Darling's wish for Wendy not to grow up, the growth of Wendy into an adult is inevitable.

One of the most important themes of Peter Pan is that of the passing of time, which is particularly symbolized in the character of the crocodile which follows Captain Hook.

"Smee," he said huskily, "that crocodile would have had me before this, but by a lucky chance it swallowed a clock which goes tick tick inside it, and so before we get reach me I hear the tick and bolt." He laughed, but in a hollow way.

"Some day," said Smee, "the clock will run down, and then he'll get you."

Hook wetted his dry lips. "Ay," he said, "that's the fear that haunts me." (Barrie

61)

It is the adults of the story, the pirates, and not the children who are afraid of time running out. Captain Hook is obsessed with the crocodile and the idea of time catching up. He is an adult living in the world of childhood, which means that his time on the island is bound to expire soon. On the contrary, Wendy, does not fear time for she is not afraid of growing up. She understands how important it is to take on responsibilities and to outgrow the Neverland.

Much like Alice grows tired of nonsense, Wendy grows tired of playing make-believe. During her stay on the island, Wendy, Peter and the Lost Boys have been playing at a make-believe family; Wendy being the mother and Peter being the father. Towards the end of the novel the Lost Boys start to argue about their roles in the game: "'I don't suppose,' Tootles said differently, 'that I could be father.' 'No, Tootles'" (Barrie 105). Wendy's response to Tootles' request to take on Peter's role suggests that Wendy has grown irritated of the unpredictability

and the constant changes implied in their make-believe. She is starting to look for the stability that only an adult life can bring.

It is this passage before the final battle between Peter Pan and Captain Hook that suggests that it is time for the kids to grow up:

Odd things happen to all of us on our way through life without our noticing for a time that they had happened. Thus, to take an instance, we suddenly discovered that we have been deaf in one ear for we don't know how long, but say, half an hour. Now such an experience had come that night to Peter [...] He had the seen the crocodile pass by without noticing anything peculiar about it, but by and by he remembered that it had not been ticking. At first he thought this eerie, but soon he concluded rightly that the clock had run down. (Barrie 146)

The moment the clock which the crocodile has eaten goes silent is the moment which signals that Captain Hook's time on the island is about to expire, but also that is Wendy's last adventure in the world of childhood desires.

Wendy is the one to first suggests that it is time for her and her brothers to return home. She has the validation that her decision was the right one once she notices that her brothers are confusing her for their real mother, "oh dear! [...] it was quite time we came back!" (Barrie 166). Wendy has gained independence from her parents precisely because she has learned to make sensible choices and to let go of the pleasures of childhood in order to favor the most proper decision.

The novel ends with Wendy as an adult. Her growth is connected with a feeling of nostalgia for her childhood days, but the narrator reassures the reader that one "did not be sorry for her. She was one of the kind that likes to grow up. In the end she grew up of her own free

will a day quicker than other girls” (Barrie 173). Once she has returned from the island, Wendy has come to the complete realization that growing up is inevitable, and although she will never stop believing in Peter and the Neverland, she is happy to be able to experience the next chapter of her life.

### **Mary: From Contrariety to Compliance**

For Mary, the transformative nature of the adventure is from contrariness to conformity, from wilfulness to obedience and accommodation. At the beginning of the novel, she is a disagreeable child, so much so that the other kids call her “mistress Mary quite contrary,” but throughout the narrative she learns that her bad temper will prevent her from appreciating some of the best experiences that life has to offer (Burnett 7).

Mary is initially a selfish kid. As Keyser states in her analysis of Mary’s contrariness in *The Secret Garden*, the girl “disagrees’ with the adult characters in her story not only because her looks and manners fail to please them but also because she refuses to accept their authority” (Keyser 1). In India, she was allowed to indulge in pleasures and order servants around. Therefore, in the moment she finds herself immersed in the new reality of Misselthwaite Manor, in which there is no servant to exert authority upon, the only way in which she can assert herself is through an active defiance of orders. Burnett says that, “of course, [Mary] did not know she was disagreeable. She often thought that other people were but she did not know that she was so herself” (Burnett 10). Because of her selfishness, she is unable to admit to her misbehaviors, but she is able to recognize the disagreeableness of others when they act inappropriately toward her. Mary’s disagreeableness is so important a theme that “the book was originally to be called *Mistress Mary*. And, though its opening sentence describes Mary as [a disagreeable child,] it

soon becomes evident that this asocial creature [...] engages our sympathies” (Knoepflmacher 22).

Because of her upbringing in India, Mary does not know how to properly behave toward adults, “it was not the custom to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you,’ and Mary had always slapped her Ayah in the face when she was angry” (Burnett 21). If she could be violent toward adults in India, the same is not an acceptable behavior at Misselthwaite Manor, but Mary “was not a child who had been a trained to ask permission or consult her elders about things” so she does face some challenges in accepting the rules and the suggestions of Martha, the housemaid, which will be analyzed in Chapter 5 as the representation of the superego (Burnett 56).

However, Mary’s contrariness is not to be perceived as completely negative, for it does have a purpose. “Mary is an independent, self-contained, yet self-assertive child. Unlike Colin, she discovers and enters the secret garden all by herself, and she defies adult authority in order to find, befriend, and liberate Colin” (Keyser 9). It is thanks to her contrariness that she manages to find the key that will let her into the secret garden, and consequently it is thanks to the garden that she is able to help her cousin, Colin, out of his sickness. It is by “knowing Mary’s own aggressive powers [...] that] adults enlist her to subdue the hysterical boy. Her hostility now serves a purpose” (Knoepflmacher 23). The problem with Mary’s disagreeableness does not stand in the contrariness itself, but rather in its excess. Rebellion against the adult rule is acceptable as long as the behavior toward the adult is respectful and considerate.

It is throughout her stay at Misselthwaite Manor that Mary learns to find a balance between her impulse of rebellion and being compliant, “in this place she was beginning to care and to want to do new things. Already she felt less ‘contrary,’ though she did not know why” (Burnett 57). Mary grows out of her contrariness because of her adventures in the gardens and

the moor that surrounds her new home. Though still maintaining a spark of healthy rebellion against the adult rulership, Mary begins to be wanting more adventures, and she seems to start engaging with the suggestions of certain adults that she trusts rather than none—like Martha Sowerby and Ben Weatherstaff, whom she will grow to consider as friends.

Despite her growth towards agreeableness, the other characters of the novel still recognize her as selfish. It is towards the end of the novel that Colin calls Mary out on her selfishness: “‘You are a selfish thing!’ cried Colin. ‘What are you?’ said Mary. ‘Selfish people always say that. Anyone is selfish who doesn't do what they want. You’re more selfish than I am. You're the most selfish boy I ever saw’” (Burnett 139). By this point in the narrative, Mary has already discovered and journeyed through the Otherworld of the secret garden; she has gained a maturity which is visible in her response to Colin’s accusation. Not only is Mary able to point out the hypocrisy of Colin’s claim, but she now recognizes and is able to admit to her selfishness and disagreeableness. Unlike the beginning of the novel, in which she was unaware of her contrariness, she now perceives her own character flaws – an important step to be able to gain maturity.

### **Dorothy: From Doubt to Certainty**

Dorothy begins her journey with wanderlust, but ends with a desire to come home. She begins by taking the familiar for granted, but ends by realizing that it is the place most to be appreciated—once lost, it is passionately sought. She is not ungrateful, and her wish to know what lies beyond the farm, beyond Kansas, is the natural curiosity of youth. The only way to fully appreciate home is to leave it. The journey from home to the Otherworld and the loss of a clear path back, is necessary for one to fully appreciate home.

Upon arriving in the Otherworld, Dorothy is fascinated by the world of Oz, a perception which is reflected in the idyllic description of the world itself: “the sun shone bright and the birds sang sweetly, and Dorothy did not feel nearly so bad as you might think a little girl would who had been suddenly whisked away from her own country and set down in the midst of a strange land” (Baum 19). Dorothy does not feel distressed because she does have a desire to explore this new, unknown land she happened upon. But as much as she is enchanted by Oz, her desire to return home soon appears, and she explains it by saying that “no matter how dreary and grey our homes are, we people of flesh and blood would rather live there than in any other country, be it ever so beautiful. There is no place like home” (Baum 27).

Once she reaches the Wizard in the Emerald City, Dorothy’s desire is not—like that of her companions—to improve her situation by gaining something she never had (a brain, courage, or a heart), but rather to return to her initial situation. She tells the Wizard, ““send me back to Kansas, where my aunt Em and uncle Henry are [...] I don't like your country, although it is so beautiful” (Baum 89). The protagonist does here realize that the world of Oz is beautiful—she does appreciate the unknown and is not scared of the place—but she simply wants to return home because she misses her life there. The loss of the home and of what is familiar pushes her to undertake a mad search through the magical lands of Oz for what she has lost.

As the Wizard tells the Scarecrow, it is experience that brings knowledge. Therefore, it is Dorothy’s experience of and in Oz that brings her to the realization that her home is perfect, and it is the place where she truly belongs; “you are learning something every day. A baby has brains, but it doesn't know much. Experience is the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are on earth the more experience you are sure to get” (Baum 139). By the time the Wizard manages to leave the land of Oz in his hot air balloon, Dorothy has not yet been able to

experience all that Oz has to offer, and she feels almost relieved at having missed the opportunity to return home so soon, “when she thought it all over she was glad she had not gone up in a balloon. And she also felt sorry at losing Oz” (Baum 153).

At first Dorothy just wanted to return home, but as the narrative proceeds, she starts to realize that Oz is not as unlikeable as she first thought it to be. She will miss her time in this magical land and this realization is fundamental to her growth towards maturity because Dorothy begins to consider the world of childhood and its pleasures with a note of nostalgia. At the same time, she is aware that growing up is necessary, thence she continues her research for a way home until she finds it in the magical silver shoes of the Wicked Witch of the East which she has been wearing all this time.

### Chapter 3: Daughters as Mothers

The coming of age journey is common to both male and female characters in children's fiction. However, it still has to be seen as a gendered mechanism. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Secret Garden* were all written at a time in which there was a strict gender divide. Three of these texts—the exception being *The Secret Garden* – were written by male authors. Although it is impossible not to be influenced by gender norms, there is definitely a difference in the perception of female protagonists written from the perspective of a female compared to a male author. Whilst Barrie in *Peter Pan* clearly separates Wendy's character and ambitions from those of the Lost Boys, Burnett in *The Secret Garden* presents Mary as a nurturing figure as well as a companion to Colin, placing them on a more equal field. Texts written by male authors are more conventional in their representation of gender, but it is still inevitable for all of these books to follow gendered patterns.

Children's books that follow a boy protagonist allow him to indulge into the adventurousness and mindlessness of childhood, examples of this would be *The Jungle Book* or *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, in which the reader follows a young boy through a series of risky and potentially dangerous adventures. These protagonists are allowed to bask in the freedom and carelessness of boyhood for longer than the corresponding female protagonists of children's literature. It is acceptable for them not to have reached some sort of maturity by the end of the novel, but this is yet another gendered construction created to encourage boys to accept that their role in society is to face the dangers of life. Boy protagonists of children stories

are allowed to bask into the pleasures of childhood for longer compared to girls because society does not require them to grow up as fast,

the hero of a boys' [...] story leaves behind the nursery and his mother to undergo the toughening up that is necessary to transform him from a babyish and feminized child to a schoolboy. The heroine of the girl's [...] story, however, is often. Much. Older as the story begins, and seems even older than her years. (Ferrall and Jackson 88)

Boys are narrated to have different kinds of experiences than girls. Where boys' narratives present danger as exciting and fun, girls' narratives suggest that they must enjoy nurturing and caring for other children. The main difference between narratives written for boys and narratives written for girls is that "accounts of boyhood advance the values of pleasure and carelessness, [whilst] writings about girlhood activities advocate the value of usefulness" (Parille 2). On the Neverland, Wendy does have an adventure, but her behavior on this adventure is exceedingly different from that of Peter or any of the Lost Boys. While the others play with the mermaids and risk their lives in battles with pirates, Wendy becomes a passive bystander, letting the boys have fun while she takes care of their needs. She is not actively encouraged to keep away from the adventure, but "the adventure is never an escape from domestic ideology, [...] rather a journey into it" (Parille 4).

Where children's stories written for boys are tales of adventure and delight, stories written for little girls are tales of learning and paths of education. Children stories are gendered for "the most popular fairy tales in anglophone cultures, reinforced by Walt Disney animations, equate beauty, submissiveness, and passivity [...] with femininity. [...] Those traits, however, must be supplemented by the acquisition of domestic skills" (Goscilo 350-351). This becomes truer in stories that feature an Otherworld since it is the place in which little girls turn into little

women. The Otherworld becomes a real training ground for them to grow into proper young women. It is a place in which to learn gender norms and roles that are fundamental to better fit into the real world. "Girls' texts endorse a limited set of postchildhood opportunities available for girls," one of which is becoming a mother (Parille 3). But despite these stories following gendered patterns little girls still gain many life skills, such as respect and sympathy, from their experience in the Otherworld that will turn them into mature young women.

Girl characters by the end of the novel always see a development that brings them closer to become what society would consider proper adults. This entails the acceptance of their future roles as mothers. According to Carl Jung, "the archetype [of the mother] is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness," but also "the qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful instinct or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility" (Jung 15-16). All of these characteristics can be found in the characters of Wendy and Mary, although with slight distinctions.

The story of *Peter Pan* has, at its core, the theme of motherhood. Not only is one of the most important relationships in the book that of Wendy with Mrs. Darling, but also Wendy's own perception of herself as a mother. For Wendy, the function of the island is to provide a place in which to become a mother, a practice run for the real world, and take care of little boys. Since her first encounter with Peter, Wendy is transported into the role of a mother and even if she feels an unreciprocated sexual attraction for Peter, her motherly instincts momentarily overpower any other feeling.

The first words that Wendy says to Peter are “boy, why are you crying?” (Barrie 25). After being unable to stick his shadow back to his body, Peter sits on the floor and starts crying. This is a behavior typical of children and an infantile reaction to a problem. Wendy’s response is full of affection and preoccupation for the child that is sitting on the floor of her room and crying. It is the response of a mother, and just like one she is called to action by the sighs of a child and immediately starts to find a solution to his problem. While Peter is allowed to cry, Wendy is here made to think and fix a dilemma she never created. There is therefore a clear distinction in the roles of the two characters: the careless young boy and the apprehensive mother.

The process of Wendy becoming a mother starts in the real world and is furthered as the story proceeds towards the Neverland, where she mothers not only Peter but also the Lost Boys. Wendy wants to be a mother to Peter because she assumes that not having a mother must be dreadful. In fact, Peter “not only ... had no mother, but he had not the slightest desire to have one” (Barrie 26). In *Peter Pan’s* prequel, titled *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, Peter’s backstory is told and his hatred towards mothers explained. After his adventures in Kensington Gardens, Peter decides to fly back to his mother, but it has been too long and once he reaches the window, he finds it closed. His mother did not wait for him to return and Peter has been replaced by a new baby. Because of this episode, he does not want a mother, but not wanting does not necessarily mean that he does not need one. He needs a nurturing female presence in his life, someone that can recite stories to him and the Lost Boys before they fall asleep at night, he needs Wendy as a mother. It is Peter himself that asks Wendy to recite stories to the Lost Boys, which is a symbol of an unconscious desire and want for a mother that he refuses to admit out loud.

Wendy deems that a mother figure is a necessity for the Lost Boys and Peter. Wendy embraces her role as a mother willingly and immediately, so much so that during their flight to the Neverland she starts to speak like a true mother by politely reminding Michael and John – her brothers – that they must be nice to Peter as if she is attempting to soothe a petty sibling rivalry between Michael, John and Peter. She welcomes the role because that is how she is asked to join the group, being a mother is the only way for her to experience the island and its magic. As a mother, Wendy feels accepted by the boys, but she is also beginning the approved journey towards motherhood that society casts upon little girls. While Wendy takes on the role of a mother and learns about responsibility, her brothers are allowed to indulge in the adventures offered by the island. During the adventures that she is allowed to join on the island, Wendy covers the role of caretaker for the other children.

Many of the sentences Peter says imply a gendered perspective that see Wendy as a responsible figure and her brothers as intrepid children. Before landing on the island, Peter asks the three, “would you like an adventure now, or would you like to have your tea first?” (Barrie 46). The reactions of the children to this question reveal the roles that they will cover as the story proceeds. Wendy, as a proper mother quickly replies that she wants to have tea first, putting an activity that is deemed proper of a girl before any of the danger-filled ideas Peter might have. Michael’s reaction is of gratitude towards Wendy, he is initially scared of any adventure that Peter proposes, and this casts him as the baby of the group, the one Wendy must take care of and that needs more attentions than any of the other Lost Boys. Once Wendy and the others settle in the home under the ground–Peter’s living space and his hiding spot from the evil Captain Hook–it is said that “Wendy would have a baby, and [Michael] was the littlest, and you know what women are, and the short and the long of it is that he was hung up in a basket” (Barrie 77). This

represents Wendy's following of the conventions of motherhood, such as that of having a baby as well as older children. For how could she learn to become a proper mother if she did not have a make-believe baby?

At Peter's question, John hesitates and shows interest in the mentioned adventures by asking a series of questions that cast a doubt on the real character of Peter and whether he really is the courageous person he wants to appear. Peter's morals and bravery are examined especially during the episode of the mermaid lagoon – which occupies chapter VIII of *Peter Pan*. Here, Peter breaks the magic of make-believe by sacrificing himself to save his pretend family and pronounces one of the most famous lines of the novel, “to die will be an awfully big adventure” (Barrie 97). Peter's morals are here in doubt as he is facing death and danger as a duty, an obligation that society has assigned him because of his gender. He is willing to die because that is what he is supposed to do, not because he feels any moral obligation towards Wendy or the Lost Boys but because of his own selfish desire to do good and be admired. Barrie says it repeatedly throughout the novel: children are “heartless” (Barrie 181).

His sacrifice comes from a mistake that Wendy commits in her journey through motherhood. The episode begins with the Lost Boys asleep on Marooners' Rock, the place on the island where pirates leave their prisoners to drown as the tide rises at night and submerges the Rock. Wendy, “of course should have roused the children at once [...] but she was a young mother and she did not know this” (Barrie 86). These are the words of the third person omniscient narrator who at times intrudes into the story to comment on what is happening or why he chose to recount one episode rather than another. Peter's sacrifice arises from Wendy's mistake; a legitimate one as she is a young mother, but one that still has consequences. Contrary to the real world where Peter represented Wendy's child, on the island he becomes the make-

believe father to Wendy's make-believe mother. This scene perpetrates the stereotype of the male father figure as the savior of the family and portrays Wendy as an innocent and naïve individual who is prone to committing mistakes.

Peter and Wendy's views of their role as parent to the Lost Boys are not quite similar. Although Wendy initially takes up her role as a mother willingly, towards the end of her stay on the island, she starts to grow tired of being just a pretend mother. She grows out of childhood play and wishes for something more, something real. Her wish for adult stability is contrasted by Peter's weak perception of reality. Peter is unable to grasp the difference between make believe and the real world, and this counts also for his feelings and his relationship with Wendy. While Wendy is looking to build a romantic relationship with Peter, he is looking for a reassurance that his role as a father is not reality, "I was just thinking, it is only make-believe isn't it, that I am their father?" (Barrie 108). For Peter growing up is not an option, so when he is faced with the reality of Wendy wanting to be more than just a make-believe mother, he seeks clarity and comfort in the childhood plays he is accustomed to.

Therefore, whilst Peter still refuses to grow up, by the time she leaves the Neverland Wendy has gone from pretending to be a mother to desiring to be a real one. She has grown very fond of the Lost Boys, not necessarily because of who they are as individuals, but because of what they represent for her: the children she will have in the future. This is true since their first encounter. When in a deathlike state, because one of the Lost Boys has hit her with an arrow, Wendy is still worried about their wellbeing and stops Peter from punishing the boy who struck her.

"I cannot strike," he said with awe, "there is something stays my hand" All looked at him in wonder, save Nibs, who fortunately looked at Wendy.

“It is she,” he cried, “the Wendy lady; see, her arm.” Wonderful to relate, Wendy had raised her arm. Nibs bent over her and listened reverently. “I think she said ‘Poor Tootles,’” he whispered. (Barrie 67)

Wendy saves Tootles from being hurt by Peter. Not only does she behave like a mother but also has the emotions and the pity towards the innocent that would make of her a perfect mother in the future. She represents the qualities of “solicitude and sympathy” of the mother archetype presented by Jung (Jung 16).

At one point, when she had to fix the holes in the Lost Boys’ stockings and clothes, Wendy exclaims “oh dear, I am sure I sometimes think spinsters are to be envied;” it seems as if she is complaining, but “her faced beamed when she exclaimed this” (Barrie 79). Despite her laments, Wendy is happy about her role as a mother on the island and would not exchange it for anything else, except for the possibility of being more than a make-believe mother and escape the endless state of pretend motherhood stuck between the fiction and reality of the island.

Chapter XI presents a crucial point in the novel. Here, Wendy recounts to the Lost Boys her own story of how she and her brothers came to the Neverland and how they left their real parents behind to live out the last adventures of their childhood. This is one of the last moments Wendy and her brothers will get to spend on the island. It is from Wendy’s story that the decision that it is time for her, Michael, and John to head back home arises. Wendy’s sensibility has developed during her stay and here she says to the Lost Boys, “now I want you to consider the feelings of the unhappy parents with all their children flown away” (Barrie 113). While playing at being a mother, Wendy starts to think like one and imagines the feelings of her own mother and how heartbroken she must be at not having her children with her. This is one of the reasons that moves Wendy towards a return home. She wants to be reunited with her mother and

soothe her pains. Traditional mother/daughter narratives see a separation of the daughter from the mother so as to allow for the gain of independence, but here “the daughter mature[s] without necessarily breaking from her mother” (Trites 103). Wendy is able to accept her own growth especially because of her connection to Mrs. Darling.

Children are “gay and innocent and heartless,” so it is only reasonable that Wendy wants to return home as she is no longer any of those things (Barrie 181). The island has given her the chance to develop her character towards maturity. From being an innocent and inexperienced mother, Wendy now dearly cares about other people, her childish selfishness has disappeared, and the Neverland has fulfilled its function as a training ground, it is no longer a place for her. She must travel from the world of childhood adventures to the real world inhabited by adults that will allow her to live through new experiences that will turn her into a real woman and mother.

The theme of motherhood is present also in *The Secret Garden*, although, perhaps because the author is a woman, it is not as explicitly displayed as in *Peter Pan*. Mary throughout the novel becomes a motherly figure for Colin who, similarly to Peter, refuses to grow up and out of his sickness and despises mothers. Colin’s mother died ten years before the time the novel begins, shortly after giving birth to Colin. Colin never got to know his own mother and, because of this, has ambiguous feelings towards her. “I don’t see why she died. Sometimes I hate her for doing it,” he confides to Mary (Burnett 111). He despises her so much that he had his servants cover up with a curtain her portrait that hangs on a wall in his room so that he does not have to “see her looking at [him]. She smiles too much when [he] is ill and miserable” (Burnett 111). These words insinuate a conflicted relationship with female and motherly figures that will have to be mended by Mary.

Mary is the only one at Misselthwaite Manor that is able to mitigate Colin's temper tantrums. Once he meets Mary, Colin refuses to be attended by anyone else to the point that every servant calls on her when they are unable to appease Colin. "It was not until afterwards that Mary realized that the thing had been funny as well as dreadful—that it was funny that all the grown-up people were so frightened that they came to a little girl just because they guessed she was almost as bad as Colin himself" (Burnett 144). As adults fail to deal with Colin, Mary steps in. She is Colin's playmate, an equal that has a stronger personality, but because she is allowed to spend time with a sickly child, she unconsciously learns and internalizes the character traits of the mother archetype. More specifically, she embodies "the magic authority of the female" and the "helpful instinct or impulse [...] that fosters growth and fertility" (Jung 16). This presents a difference with the character of Wendy who was consciously seeking the mother experience. Mary is not aware of her motherly role and only considers Colin as her equal. This initial equality between the two characters reminds that there is a female author which portrays the female, Mary, as the authoritative figure instead of the male author which portrayed the male character, Peter, as the ruler of the island.

Mary is able to hold Colin accountable for his behavior by comparing him to a boy she once encountered during her time living in India, "once in India I saw a boy who was a rajah. He had rubies and emeralds and diamonds stuck all over him. He spoke to his people just as you spoke to Martha. Everybody had to do everything he told them—in a minute. I think they would have been killed if they hadn't" (Burnett 119). By comparing Colin's behavior to that of a rajah, Mary is implying that the way Colin treats others, especially adults, is wrong. Thanks to Mary's guidance, Colin will slowly come to realize that tantrums are wrong and that his sickness does

not justify his impolite behavior. Mary starts to impose the female authority of the mother archetype by educating Colin as to what is the better behavior to have towards others.

Peter Pan and Colin are similar in many ways as also Peter's character could be compared to that of a rajah. Both of them are self-centered and attention-seeking characters that like to boast about their deeds even on the occasions in which there is nothing to boast about. This is proven true by one of Peter's recurring phrases, "oh, the cleverness of me!" which he pronounces also when he has done nothing to accomplish the deed (Barrie 27). Colin talks in a similar way about his sickness and the possibility of his dying. Mary "didn't like the way he had of talking about dying. She did not feel very sympathetic. She felt rather as if he almost boasted about it" (Burnett 120). Mary takes it upon herself to make Colin change his attitude towards his sickness, from which she believes he can fully recover. Blackford compares Peter to a Byronic Hero, one that "is chivalrous and devoted to women, but he can never be fully tamed" and that "is, in fact, born to rule, and he is a regular tyrant in Neverland. The rest are at the mercy of his whimsical instructions, cruelty, and poor sense of responsibility. Peter has made a world his, and he seduces others into it, variously dismissing those who do not serve his interests" (Blackford 123-124). Similarly, Colin is also a Byronic Hero as he created his own world at Misselthwaite Manor and rules over the adults of the story by giving them orders and dismissing them once they do not suffice his interests anymore.

Mary is the first to believe that Colin's sickness is all in his head, a psychological illness that has been transported onto his body by lack of faith in a healing process. In this sense she becomes the mother that Colin never had, the one that believes in him and would do anything to help him out of his sickness. This healer role Mary has, fits another characteristic of the mother archetype, the one for which she promotes "all that cherishes and sustains [and] that fosters

growth,” which in her case is both a growth out of sickness and a mental growth towards maturity (Jung 16). Just like Peter and the Lost Boys did for Wendy, Colin learns to recognize Mary as a caretaker figure and even tells his servants, “my cousin knows how to take care of me. I am always better when she is with me. She made me better last night” (Burnett 158-159). He dismisses the adults in order to let Mary take care of him both in a physical and an emotional sense.

Mary is the one that manages to bring Colin outside of the house for the first time with the promise of showing him the secret garden. But even before she gets to show him the wonders of the world, Mary starts talking to him as if she were a mother explaining the workings of the universe to her newborn son.

“Listen!” she said. “Did you hear a caw?” Colin listened and heard it the oddest sound in the world to hear inside a house, a hoarse “caw-caw.”

“Yes,” he answered.

“That’s Soot,” said Mary. “Listen again! Do you hear a bleat – a tiny one?”

“Oh, yes!” cried Colin, quite flushing.

“That’s the new-born lamb,” said Mary. “He’s coming.” (Burnett 164)

She speaks to him with the gentleness and patience of a mother. She calmly points out to Colin the sounds that he hears and what type of animal they correspond to. Colin’s responses are those of a kid in awe as they discover parts of the world they have never paid attention to before. Colin is a child that has never seen anything of the world. As he spent most of his life lying in a bed and has barely ever seen what hides beyond the walls of his room, he is inexperienced and needs a mother figure to teach him about the unknown.

Mary and Wendy both fit into the mother archetype, although their roles in their stories are different. Where Wendy's motherhood is consciously accepted, Mary's is not specified and can only be recognized from her interactions with Colin. The common element between their stories is that the Otherworld in which these heroines are inserted functions as a training place for the role that society asks them to assume once they grow up, which is, of course, that of mothers.

## Chapter 4: Guides and Companions

The type of narrative brought forward by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* is a new kind of gendered story. While, as I have argued in the previous chapter, in *Peter Pan* and *The Secret Garden* Wendy and Mary are trained to become mothers, Alice and Dorothy are not directed to any specific female stereotypical role. Their stories are, of course, still gendered, but the female figure gains a power that was not present in the other narratives. The ruler of Wonderland is a woman, the Queen of Hearts, and the rulers of Oz are powerful witches contrasted by the figure of the seemingly powerful male Wizard that is in reality only a weak imposter. In her analysis of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Catherine Siemann comments that “there are additional reasons why Queens should dominate the fantasy worlds. From the perspective of a child who still inhabits the nursery, the most familiar authority figures would be female—nurses, governesses, and of course, the mother” (Siemann 437). For Alice and Dorothy, maturity is not achieved because they must become mothers, as this power figure is already a part of the narrative, but because they must become adults.

Many fairy tales and children's stories feature a character whose function is that of guiding the hero or heroine in their coming of age journey. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* both present a female protagonist that follows the suggestions of a guiding character. This guidance happens for Alice through a physical pursuit of the White Rabbit through Wonderland and for Dorothy through the journey along the yellow brick road suggested by the Good Witch of the North—whilst Alice has to find her own way, Wendy's route is mapped out and she must not leave it until she reaches her final destination. Vladimir Propp classified these guide figures as belonging to two types, “donors” and “helpers” (Propp). The donor is a

character who aids the protagonist by providing a magical gift, while the helper is a character (or more than one character) who accompanies the protagonist and aids them in difficult situations.

The difference between donor and helper is a loose designation rather than a rigid category. One can find many instances in which a donor also acts as a helper or guide. In her account of Propp's character functions, Jorgensen says that a donor can also intervene more directly in the protagonist's journey. Jorgensen sums up Propp's idea that:

donors and helpers traditionally appear in fairy tales to aid the hero and the heroine at various points in the plot [...] in his *Morphology of the Folktale*, [Propp] assigns donors and helpers separate spheres of action, but also acknowledges that it is possible that 'one character is involved in several spheres of action.' (Jorgensen 216)

Therefore, a donor character like the Good Witch of the North that provides Dorothy with the magical silver shoes, also covers the function of helper as she is the one who guides Dorothy towards the yellow brick road and the Wizard.

The guide figure, be it a donor or a helper, is often absent for long stretches of the story. The appearance of the White Rabbit, the Cheshire Cat or the Good Witch of the North in their respective stories is minimal. They are mostly presented as flat characters and they are "similarly depthless and [...] lack [a] personal background" (Jorgensen 220). With just a few spoken lines and two to three appearances throughout the novel, the guide characters become a tool whose absence is as important to the moral development of the protagonist as is their presence. Donors, operating from a higher sphere of action, are generally absent from the narrative, but one finds in works such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that helpers like the White Rabbit and the Cheshire Cat also rarely make an appearance. The most notable talent of the Cheshire Cat is the

power to disappear, and the White Rabbit is always fleeting and evasive—an unwilling helper rather than an active one.

It is necessary for the guide to disappear in order for the protagonist to develop the virtue of independence so that they can grow from the carelessness of childhood towards maturity. The brevity of the presence of the guide character is the starting point for the growth of the protagonist who is given the tools and the first push into their journey and is then left to face adventure and danger on their own. Propp himself “[formulated] the helper as an expression of the hero's strength and ability in folktales,” meaning that the presence—or absence—of the helper sets up and enhances the protagonist’s character development (Jorgensen 217).

The guide characters of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Wizard of Oz* offer help voluntarily, as in the case of the Good Witch of the North, or involuntarily, as in the case of the White Rabbit, but it is always the protagonists’ decision to follow them. The main characters assume an active role and learn to take responsibility for their decisions. It is Alice who decides to follow the White Rabbit down the rabbit hole and later also through the nonsensical world of Wonderland. Similarly, it is Dorothy’s own desire to return home that prompts her in following the Good Witch of the North’s suggestion to go to the Emerald City and seek the help of the Wizard.

Dorothy is, at first ,scared of embarking alone on such a long journey in a land that she is unfamiliar with, but eventually gains courage through the help of the Witch of the North who gives her a protective kiss.

“Won’t you go with me?” pleaded the girl, who had begun to look upon the little old woman as her only friend.

“No, I cannot do that,” she replied, “but I will give you my kiss, and no one will dare injure a person who has been kissed by the Witch of the North.” She came close to Dorothy and kissed gently her forehead. Where her lips touched the girl they left a round, shining mark, as Dorothy found out soon after. (Baum 15)

The Good Witch comes to be a mother figure, consequently her kiss becomes a symbol of maternal affection. The scene in which Dorothy arrives in Oz is the only time in which the reader sees the Good Witch of the North physically present. Every other time she is mentioned, it is through the power of her kiss which represents the guidance and the protection of the adult in a child’s life. Despite the guide being distant, their wisdom and suggestions are left with the child. These aspects serve to guide the child protagonist through the adventures that they will face in their journey and still leave room for the independence and liberty that will allow them to experience the Otherworld on their own and grow up.

The initial guide figure of the Good Witch of the North at the beginning of the story is paralleled by the presence of a second guide figure, Glinda the Good Witch, who appears at the end of Dorothy’s journey through Oz. She is the character who truly guides Dorothy home, for she is the one that reveals her that the Silver Shoes of the Wicked Witch of the East, who Dorothy has killed upon her arrival in Oz, have the power to bring her back to Kansas.

“The Silver Shoes,” said the Good Witch, “have wonderful powers. And one of the most curious things about them is that they can carry you to any place in the world in three steps, and each step will be made in the wink of an eye. All you have to do is to knock the heels together three times and command the shoes to carry you wherever you wish to go.”

“If that is so,” said the child joyfully, “I will ask them to carry me back to Kansas at once.” (Baum 185-187)

Since the beginning of her journey in Oz, Dorothy had possessed the one item that would have taken her back home to her aunt and uncle. If Glinda had been with her since the beginning and revealed to her the magical powers of the silver shoes, Dorothy’s journey towards maturity would not have begun. Glinda’s absence throughout the story is therefore fundamental to allow the protagonist’s growth.

It is also interesting to notice how the item around which the story revolves is a pair of shoes. Shoes are considered to be a typical female concern, and this is no different in *The Wizard of Oz*. The silver shoes belonged to a woman, the Wicked Witch of the East, they are gifted by a woman, the Good Witch of the North, to a female protagonist, and their power is revealed by yet another woman, the Good Witch Glinda. The iconography of the shoes in media also assumes an important significance in terms of gendered narratives. In the *Wizard of Oz* 1939 movie the shoes change color from silver to red. Of course, the decision to change the color is partially dictated by the on-screen visibility of the shoes, but red is a color usually adopted to symbolize passion, sexuality, and seduction. Dorothy’s journey is therefore mined with stereotypical gendered ideas, although these are not as noticeable as in *Peter Pan* or *The Secret Garden*, for Baum’s novel is very conservative in its nature.

In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the guide characters are also absent from the page for most of the narrative. These would be the White Rabbit, who leads Alice to Wonderland, and the Cheshire Cat, who leads Alice to the castle of the Queen of Hearts. It is the curiosity that Alice develops towards the White Rabbit that initiates her adventures through Wonderland:

Suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her. There was nothing so remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself. “Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I shall be too late!” [...] but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. (Carroll 14)

The White Rabbit represents the beginning of the nonsense, but he is also the character that Alice is chasing throughout the whole novel. He is the spark that opens the story and the fuel that keeps Alice going through a world of nonsense.

The White Rabbit appears more often in Wonderland than the Good Witches did in Oz. Every time Alice is led astray by other characters and every time she starts doubting the logical sense of the world by losing interest in it, the White Rabbit reappears and sparks her curiosity again. The second time he appears is in chapter IV, right after Alice’s encounter with the Mouse and the Dodo, who confuse Alice with a “long and sad tale” that the girl understands to be a “long tail” (Carroll 31). Once these two characters leave her, the White Rabbit reappears, reigniting Alice’s curiosity and guiding her towards the next experience of growth. In fact, both the room with the glass table, in which Alice arrives after her fall through the rabbit hole, and the White Rabbit house are places in which Alice changes size and physically grows bigger. And both are places in which she is led by the White Rabbit. The Rabbit is absent during the actual physical change of size, symbolizing the absence of the guide during the growth, which in this case is both physical and mental.

The Cheshire Cat is the second guide figure of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, although rather than being a figure Alice actively seeks and follows like the White Rabbit, he acts more like the Good Witch of the North by giving suggestions and indications as to which direction Alice should go in next.

“Cheshire Puss, ...would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don't much care where—” said Alice.

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

“—so long as I get *somewhere*,” Alice added as an explanation.

“Oh, you're sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

Alice felt that this could not be denied, so she tried another question. “What sort of people live about here?”

“In *that* direction,” the Cat said, waving its right paw round, “lives a Hatter: and in *that* direction,” waving the other paw, “lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad.” (Carroll 59)

His instructions are, like everything in Wonderland, nonsensical and yet make sense. It is hard for Alice to grasp the meaning of what the Cheshire Cat is saying, and she perceives him to be mad as he is not giving her clear answers as to what she is supposed to do next. Her perception of his madness comes from the dismissal of his words as nonsense, which is an adultlike behavioral pattern compared to the childlike thoughts Alice used to have at the beginning of her time in Wonderland. However, the guide cannot give Alice a comprehensible answer because there is no set path for Alice; she must make her own choices as much in Wonderland as in the real world. And being the Otherworld a reflection of the adult life Alice will have to face in the

future, then it must mirror the difficulties and the possibilities of the real world. The Cheshire Cat is showing Alice her options, but it must be her choice whether she wants to meet the Hatter or the March Hare.

The two guide characters of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* come together in one of the last scenes of the book: the Queen of Hearts' croquet game. This is the Cheshire Cat's last appearance in the story. Alice is having a conversation with him about the game and her ill opinion of the Queen when they are interrupted by the King and the Queen, who requests for the Cat's head to be cut off. The King and the Executioner are having an argument about whether it is possible to cut off the head from someone that does not have a body—another riddle of logic and nonsense in the story—but then the Cheshire Cat starts to disappear. “The Cat's head began fading away the moment he was gone, and, by the time he had come back [...] it had entirely disappeared; so the King and the Executioner ran wildly up and down looking for it, while the rest of the party went back to the game” (Carroll 79). The disappearance of the cat symbolizes once again the absence of the guide. It is the moment in which Alice is left alone with no further instructions on where to go and what to do.

The White Rabbit's presence at the croquet ground functions as a confirmation that Alice is in the right place. She has been chasing and following the Rabbit around since the beginning and she has now finally caught up with him at the destination he had been in a hurry to reach since the first page of the novel. There is no specific reason for which Alice would want to chase the White Rabbit. She has a childish curious obsession with him, but there is nothing she actually needs to say to him, or him to her.

Alice will see the White Rabbit again at the trial that the Queen of Hearts leads against the Knave for stealing her tarts. The Rabbit here calls Alice on as a witness, “Alice watched the

White Rabbit as he fumbled over the list, feeling very curious to see what the next witness would be like, [...] imagine her surprise, when the White Rabbit read out, at the top of his shrill little voice, the name ‘Alice!’” (Carroll 104). The trial is for Alice the moment to voice her ideas about the nonsense of the world and therefore grow out of childhood and into maturity. The White Rabbit here acts as a helper that pushes Alice and gives her the opportunity to grow up; an opportunity that she has the ability to accept or refuse.

The chessboard world of *Through the Looking Glass* also offers no guide figures to Alice. Each character she encounters in each of the squares becomes a guide who has the duty of escorting or directing Alice to the next square. In Chapter VIII, Alice meets the Red and the White Knights who engage in a battle eventually won by the White Knight, who becomes the one in charge of escorting her to the next square of the chessboard. He explains to Alice that “‘when you’ve crossed the next brook,’ said the White Knight. ‘I’ll see you safe to the end of the wood—and then I must go back, you know. That’s the end of my move’” (Carroll). The many guide characters of *Through the Looking Glass* definitely have more page time than the ones of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, but because there are so many, and each appears only once throughout the narrative, it is still their absence which has value in Alice’s character growth. There is no White Rabbit to chase in this world, and the multiplicity of guide figures only has the effect of confusing Alice rather than accompanying her towards maturity. She is, once again, left on her own to understand the working of the Otherworld, a process which will allow her to gain independence.

However, the idea of female independence is concealed by some of the gendered patterns of the story. The two Knights are fighting for Alice, who is here seen as the damsel in distress in need of rescue:

“She’s *my* prisoner, you know!” the Red Knight said at last.

“Yes, but then *I* came and rescued her!” the White Knight replied.

“Well, we must fight for her, then,” said the Red Knight, as he took up his helmet.

(Carroll)

Alice becomes an object of male attention, and, although she does not need the White Knight’s help as she is not in a situation of danger, he still battles in a fight for possession, the winner deciding what will be of her fate.

Dorothy is presented as a resourceful and intelligent female, as she is the one to realize that the lion, the scarecrow and the tin woodman already possess the courage, the brain and the heart that they are asking the Wizard for. In the absence of adult guides, these three characters step in as companions and peers that allow the main character to grow and learn. Thanks to their blindness in perceiving their needs, Dorothy learns how to be attentive towards others and how to distinguish individual personality traits, which can be recognized as typically maternal attributes.

The Scarecrow, whose wish is that of getting a brain from the Wizard, is the smartest out of the three companions. Every time the group finds itself in a difficult situation, the Scarecrow is the one to come up with a solution to their problems, proving so that he already has a functioning brain. For example, at one point during their journey towards the Emerald City, the four encounter a river and it is the Scarecrow that comes up with a solution to cross it, ““here is a great tree, standing close to the ditch. If the Tin Woodman can chop it down, so that it will fall to the other side, we can walk across it easily”” (Baum 54).

Similarly, the Tin Woodman, whose wish is that of getting a heart from the Wizard, is the most compassionate and kind out of the three companions. On their way to the castle of the

Wicked Witch of the West, the group happens upon a mouse who has been captured by a Wildcat who is trying to eat it. It is the Tin Woodman who kills the Wildcat because, “although he had no heart he knew it was wrong for the Wildcat to try to kill such a pretty, harmless creature” (Baum 66). The Tin Woodman proves that he is capable of compassion and therefore, does not truly need a heart from the Wizard.

The Lion goes through an analogous development. His wish is that of getting courage from the Wizard and yet, he proves his bravery many times throughout the journey through Oz. In the scene in which the Wizard keeps asking for more time to grant the wishes of his visitors, it is the lion who “thought it might be as well to frighten the Wizard, so he gave a large, loud roar, which was so fierce and dreadful that Toto jumped away from him in alarm,” (Baum 132). This scene proves, once again, that the lion already possesses the courage he is so desperately seeking from the Wizard.

The entire story of the *Wizard of Oz* is a metaphor for seeking what one already possesses. The Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Lion have already mastered the human qualities they believe to be lacking by the time they reach the Wizard, and Dorothy already owns the shoes that will be able to fulfill her desire to return home. This is proof that the journey through the Otherworld is more important than the final destination of the characters, it is the experiences that they go through and the knowledge that they gain that pushes them towards maturity rather than the presence of an object or goal.

## Chapter 5: The Functions of Adults

Although we have defined the Otherworld as a world of childhood desires, it is populated not only by children, but also by adults. Adult characters appear in these female coming of age stories not only in the real world, but also in the Otherworld. These adults have specific functions *as adults*, roles that cannot be filled by other child characters. This chapter looks at three roles that adult characters fill in these stories: 1) Children characters often act out either the part of the ego or that of Freudian id, the childish desiring self. The ego is embodied by the female protagonist, whilst the id is embodied by the rebellious and provocative child onto which the fears and anxieties of the ego are projected. In tandem with the id, an adult plays the part of the superego that helps the child learn how to curb and control desire. 2) The child protagonist who is the star and hero of a coming of age story will often shine by outstaging stupid, dull, or incompetent adult foils. This pitting of the brilliant child against the dull adult gratifies the child's fantasy of being more powerful than adults, which is frustratingly rare for the child in real life. 3) Particularly in these female coming of age stories, there is sometimes an adult male who acts as a catalyst for the girl's sexual awakening. The adult male sexual catalyst can have the function of making the girl aware of her own sexuality as male children do not.

### The Adult Superego

In Chapter I, the Otherworld could be read as a world in which the child finds herself in a landscape which is a projection of the desiring id. Within this world of fantasy and desired adventure, an adult will sometimes appear to check the child's freedom, an adult who functions in the fantasy-scape as the superego. The female protagonist is usually not a representation of the

childish id, but rather she has the function of the ego. She is the sphere of influence that the two forces of the adult superego—the reality principle—and the child id—the pleasure principle—are battling to impact. For example, in *Peter Pan*, Wendy is situated in terms of the Freudian Psyche schema between the wild id of Peter and the parental superego of Mrs. Darling. In *The Secret Garden*, Mary is situated between the id of Dickon and the superego of Martha Sowerby, the housemaid of Misselthwaite Manor. As Michael Egan puts it, in drawing the character of Wendy's mother, Mrs. Darling, "Barrie both clarifies and dramatizes his notion of the fully developed superego" (Egan 41). A prime example of her superego function occurs when she puts her children to bed and tries to tidy up their minds while they sleep:

Mrs. Darling first heard of Peter when she was tidying up her children's minds. It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day [...] When you wake up in the morning, the naughtinesses and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind, and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on. (Barrie 7)

These are the actions of the superego that brings the proper thoughts and desires to the surface and represses the unconscious desires of the id—in this case represented by thoughts about the Neverland. Egan writes that "this is an analogy perfectly consistent with Freud's theory of repression. What the mother does as her children sleep is 'repack into their proper places' those thoughts that have 'wandered' or, even more disturbingly, have inexplicably found their way in from the outside" (Egan 42). Mrs. Darling is therefore fixing her children's minds so that they

can grow into what society would define as proper adults, and she is repressing the desires of childhood that will come alive once the children reach the island.

However, “occasionally in her travels through her children’s minds Mrs. Darling found things she could not understand, and of these quite the most perplexing of all was the word *Peter*” (Barrie 8). Mrs. Darling has been under the spell of the adult superego for so long that Peter has become a vague memory for her. But in sympathy with her children, she is able to glimpse again the fantastic figure of Peter Pan whom she too knew when she was a child: “at first Mrs. Darling did not know, but after thinking back into her childhood she just remembered a Peter Pan who was said to live with the fairies ... She had believed in him at the time, but now that she was married and full of sense she quite doubted whether there was any such person” (Barrie 9). Mrs. Darling illustrates either the work of the superego that only partially represses the id, or the id that manages to survive having been suppressed for a long time by the superego.

The character of Peter, being himself deeply connected with the island, is instead the representation of all the desires and the adventures that Wendy craves. He is passionate in everything he does, and he is fleeting and unreachable just like the innermost desires of any child and person. So much so that at the end of the novel he is the one to take Mrs. Darling’s unreachable kiss: “He took Mrs. Darling’s kiss with him. The kiss that had been for no one else, Peter took quite easily. Funny. But she seemed satisfied” (Barrie 171). In a way Peter is very similar to the character of Dickon from *The Secret Garden*, as both of them are the human representation of the id and therefore the character that pushes the female protagonist to give in to their desires.

These two characters have a similar presence on the page for they are both presented as an integral part of nature. If the Neverland comes alive only when Peter is present, Dickon is

described as made out of nature itself. During Mary's first encounter with Dickon, "she came closer to him [and] she noticed that there was a clean fresh scent of heather and grass and leaves about him, almost as if he were made of them" (Burnett 81). Where Peter is the island, Dickon is the Moor that surrounds Misselthwaite Manor. Dickon is also often associated with wildness. During one of Mary's chats with Ben Weatherstaff, the old man says, "Tha' said it almost like Dickon talks to his wild things on th' moor" (Burnett 34). This line symbolizes the close relationship that Dickon has with wild things; he loves to spend time around animals as well as tend to the plants that grow around the moor. He is represented as the God of nature—Pan— as is Peter, whose name Peter Pan evokes.

Both Peter and Dickon are associated with the panpipes, the musical instrument of the God Pan. When the reader first encounters Dickon, he is sitting under a tree playing his wooden pipe: "a boy was sitting under a tree, with his back against it, playing on a rough wooden pipe. He was a funny looking boy about twelve" (Burnett 79). Similarly, the character of Peter is found multiple times throughout the narrative playing pipes: "Peter sometimes came to the nursery in the night and sat on the foot of her bed and played on his pipes to her" (Barrie 10). Therefore, the connection that these two characters have with pipes and consequently the God of nature Pan, puts them on an even closer relation with the natural landscapes of their stories. It is only logical for nature to be identified as the id for it is in the desires of the id that the natural instincts of a person are reunited.

Perhaps it is because Dickon embodies the id that he captures Mary's curiosity, he is as interesting to her as the secret garden itself. In comparison with her brother Dickon, Martha can be tiresome because she sounds like the superego that repeatedly tells Mary to be a better, less sickly girl. When Mary asks how she ought to spend her time at the Manor, Martha's advice to

go and play is tinged with admonition: “‘You’ll go by yourself,’” she answered. ‘You’ll have to learn to play like other children do when they haven’t got sisters and brothers’” (Burnett 27). Martha plays the part of a superego, grounding Mary to the rules at Misselthwaite Manor. Martha is typical of the kind of adult in children’s stories who does not enter the Otherworld, who likes to correct and reprimand children, who acts the part of the superego. This kind of character almost never enters the Otherworld because the Otherworld is an id world and defined precisely by its exclusion of and opposition to the superego. And, the Otherworld appeals to the female protagonist precisely because it is a safe haven from badgering superego types like Martha. The rules of the superego appear too harsh, almost impossible to follow. The ego character must find a halfway measure that balances the pleasure principle and the reality principle.

### **Foolishness Against Brilliance**

The second function of the adult in relation to the growth of the child character is that of acting as the foolish opposite to the child’s brilliance. According to Bettelheim, “there are quite a few similar modern stories in which the child is more able and more intelligent than the parent [...] the child enjoys such a story because it is in line with what he would like to believe” (Bettelheim 134). The ridiculous and silly adult is necessary in order for the child reader to fantasize about the freedom and the prerogatives that are not granted them in real life. The dopey adult exemplifies “the problem of the competition between generations” by satisfying “the child’s wish to surpass his parent” (Bettelheim 135). This opposition between intelligent child and unintelligent adult happens in pairs: Alice as opposed to the Queen of Hearts; Wendy as

opposed to her father; Mary as opposed to Colin's doctor; and Dorothy as opposed to the Wizard.

As a coming of age ritual and a road to maturation, the trip to Otherworld works because it offers a landscape so whimsical that the child has to put things in order by acting reasonably. So one sometimes finds that the child in the Otherworld is the only one who shows signs of acting responsibly or with much practical intelligence. To quote the Cheshire Cat of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 60). That is to say that all the characters, especially the adults, that populate Wonderland are mad and what they say makes little sense to Alice.

Presumably, all of the characters in Wonderland are versions of adults. But the Queen of Hearts is the arch-adult of Wonderland (and the most unpleasant) because she is the only one whose salient features are the exercise of authority and the prerogative to punish. So, it is principally against the Queen that Alice must prove her own intelligence. The Queen is the one to initiate the trial at the end of the novel which, as I argued in Chapter 2, will allow Alice to battle her own logic against the nonsense of the Queen of Hearts: "'Stuff and nonsense!' said Alice loudly [...] 'Who cares for you?' said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'" (Carroll 110). Her physical growth becomes symbolical of her surpassing and literally growing out of the adult nonsensical perspective of the Queen of Hearts.

The logic that sets Alice against a female figure of authority does not apply to Wendy in *Peter Pan* in which the mother is a sympathetic character, and the adversaries are both male, Captain Hook and Wendy's father, Mr Darling. The curious twist in *Peter Pan* is that the murderous pirate is in some ways less hateful to Wendy than the domestic despotism of her

father. Wendy's intelligence is not paired with the villain of the story, but with the character of her father, arguably identifiable also as the comic relief character. Mr. Darling is an adult that behaves in a childlike manner. When unable to properly tie his tie he shouts, "this tie, it will not tie [...] not round my neck! Round the bed-post! Oh yes, twenty times have I made it up round the bed-post, but round my neck, no! Oh dear no! begs to be excused!" (Barrie 17). Here he is misplacing the fault of the inconvenient situation not on his abilities, but on the tie itself. Another example of Mr. Darling's childlike nature stands in his refusal to take his medicine. A typical behavior of children is that of refusing to take their medicine because they argue that it does not taste good. Mr. Darling's medicine is "ever so much nastier" than that of Michael, his youngest son, but he still brings up a petty argument by saying: "'The point is, that there is more in my glass than in Michael's spoon.' His proud heart was nearly bursting. 'And it isn't fair: I would say it though it were with my last breath; it isn't fair'" (Barrie 20).

The instance for which Wendy's intelligence is compared to Mr. Darling's foolishness is that she is the one who challenges him by discovering his mischief of having hidden the medicine: "'I know where it is, father,' Wendy cried, always glad to be of service. 'I'll bring it,' and she was off before he could stop her. Immediately his spirits sank in the strangest way" (Barrie 19). She demonstrates that she has an agency upon her father for she knows where the medicine is, and that she is more astute than her father for she is able to sabotage, although unconsciously, her father's schemes for not taking the medicine.

Mary's brilliance is particularly set against the inability of the doctor to cure Colin's illness. Although not a completely irrational character, like Mr. Darling is, the Doctor still appears shortsighted when compared to Mary. By showing Colin to the outside world and introducing him to the secret garden, she is able to heal him in a way that the doctor could not,

demonstrating her usefulness against the impotence of the doctor. Colin acknowledges Mary's wisdom by dismissing the doctor and asking that she is the one to take care of him, "my cousin knows how to take care of me. I am always better when she is with me. She made me better last night" (Burnett 158-159). Even Dickon recognizes that fresh air and Mary's friendship are what is making Colin better, "Two lads an' a little lass just lookin' on at th' springtime. I warrant it'd be better than doctor's stuff" (Burnett 134).

Similarly, Dorothy outsmarts the wizard by exposing that he is just a weak minded human and an imposter that manipulates the inhabitants of Oz with cheap tricks. The weakness of the Wizard is therefore opposed to the intelligence of Dorothy, who is able to uncover his secret.

"I am oz the great and terrible," said the little man, in a trembling voice, "but don't strike me—please don't—and I'll do anything you want me to" [...]

"No; you are all wrong," said the little man meekly. "I have been making believe."

"Making believe!" Cried Dorothy. "Are you not a great wizard?" [...]

"Not a bit of it, my dear; I'm just a common man." (Baum 133)

The fragility of the Wizard's lie is fundamental to Dorothy's growth as it allows her to prove her intelligence by uncovering Oz's biggest secret and surpass the adult's intelligence and rule, much like Alice did with the Queen of Hearts.

## **Sexual Awakening**

The last function of the adult analyzed in this chapter is that of the catalyst for the sexual awakening of the female protagonist. Female children's stories usually present an adult male

who is connected with or living in the Otherworld, and who starts the main character's unconscious process of sexual awakening. Ferrall and Jackson argue that in coming of age stories the marriage—with its implication of sex—becomes a symbol that “at once it puts an end to girlhood, not because of the adult duties involved in taking up what, for a woman, was the equivalent of a career for men, but because it puts an end to innocence” (Ferrall and Jackson 69). In the novels analyzed, since the child is so young when entering the Otherworld, there cannot be a marriage—although Peter and Wendy's relationship as mother and father can be considered as a make-believe marriage. Therefore, the sexuality of the child protagonist is awakened by the adult character who assumes the same symbology as the marriage. The stories form a contrast between the initial “simple, innocent adolescent with a more sexually aware, worldly type” by the end of the novel (Ferrall and Jackson 76).

For Wendy, the character that starts her sexual awakening is Captain Hook. This is due to her unreciprocated infatuation with Peter; “the novel emphasizes Wendy's imagination and continual attempts to map romantic desires onto Peter,” (Blackford 114). Peter becomes in a way the first object of Wendy's desires, but especially because he is so fleeting, he is unable to satisfy her developing sexual desires. Despite becoming “a curious object of female sexuality consumed with his own cleverness and the ego, which attracts Wendy as a woman,” Peter is also the emblem of childhood, unable to mature and give Wendy the attention she needs and that she can instead find in Captain Hook (Blackford 124).

While Peter remains stuck in his state of eternal childhood, Wendy “learns, develops, suffers crises, and comes to an awareness of the futility of her projections onto Peter and Neverland” (Blackford 113). Her return home sees her matured psychologically as well as sexually due to her relationship with Captain Hook, a character who she is at the same time

scared and fascinated by. During the final battle aboard the pirate ship in which the Lost Boys finally defeat the evil Captain, Barrie subtly hints at the fascination that Wendy has with Hook:

With ironical politeness Hook raised his hat to her, and, offering her his arm, escorted her to the spot where the others were being gagged. He did it with such an air, he was so frightfully *distingué*, that she was too fascinated to cry out. She was only a little girl.

Perhaps it is tell-tale to divulge that for a moment Hook entranced her, and we tell on her only because her slip led to strange results. (Barrie 127)

Hook is so unlike Peter that Wendy is fascinated by him and the way he behaves. The attraction that she feels for him is that of a “little girl” that is being introduced to the adult world of sexual desires.

For Mary Lennox, the unconscious awakening of the sexual desires comes from her relationship with Ben Weatherstaff, who is not the villain of the story, but the keeper of the gardens that surround Misselthwaite Manor. Her very first encounter with the old man is related with the discovery of her sexuality because “Mary meets Ben when she is *thinking* about the locked-up garden mentioned by Martha, which suggests he expresses her paradoxical desire to find yet resist the garden” (Blackford 151). This dual desire to resist and discover the garden symbolizes in a way her internal conflict between childhood and adulthood, between innocence and sexuality.

It is after she speaks to Ben that Mary becomes concerned with her physical appearance and her unattractiveness.

“Tha’ an’ me are a good bit alike,” he said. “We was wove out of th’ same cloth. We’re neither of us good lookin’ an’ we’re both of us as sour as we look. We’ve got the same nasty tempers, both of us, I’ll warrant” [...] she had never thought much about her looks,

but she wondered if she was as unattractive as Ben Weatherstaff and she also wondered if she looked as sour as he had looked before the robin came. She actually began to wonder also if she was 'nasty tempered.' She felt uncomfortable. (Burnett 33)

From this moment on, Mary feels uncomfortable in her own appearance and her own body, so much so that she continues to explore the gardens and venture outside of the house because it makes her look less sickly and more attractive. Being aware of one's own appearance is proof of an increase of interest in sexuality, which for Mary has started from the words of the garden keeper.

What all of these functions of the adult character—the superego, the foolish adult and the sexual catalyst—have in common is that they reinforce the idea of the child character's need to grow up. They represent an indication of the world that the child will have to face in their future. The journey through the Otherworld is temporary and the child characters' visits are bound to come to an end for growing up is inevitable. What these stories do not fail to remind its readers is that the childish dream of being a Peter Pan, of forgetting about adult responsibilities, is merely a dream. Adulthood cannot be escaped.

## Conclusion

It is through the Otherworld that the female protagonists of *Peter Pan*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *The Secret Garden*, manage to abandon the ignorance of childhood and approach the logical maturity of adulthood. The gendered journeys of male and female characters in the Otherworld come to symbolize a passage from freedom to duty. It is as if the tertiary reality of Neverland, Wonderland, Oz, or the garden, is a hallway that the child protagonist must cross in order to emerge as an adult.

It is not only the landscape of the Otherworld itself to aid the child protagonists' journey to maturity, but it is also the characters that inhabit it. Adults and children become the representation of the superego and id, creating the struggle that the protagonist, the ego, must overcome. The battle between childhood desires and adult rules is fundamental for the growth of the child protagonist. Of course, the child does not outgrow the desires of the world of id presented by the Otherworld once they reach the end of their journey. Rather, the longing for the pleasures of the id is still eminently present in the maturity that the child reaches by the end of the novel. What has changed is the ability to control and repress those desires to give more space to the rules and restrictions of the adult superego. It is only thanks to these rules that the child protagonist will be able to live in harmony with the rest of society. Selfishness and heartlessness disappear to leave space for a sense of community.

The inevitable growth towards adulthood does not mean that childhood fantasy and innocence must be forgotten. Venturing into the logical world of adults by maintaining the enthusiasm for childhood adventures is the perfectly balanced recipe to understand the real world without disregarding the Otherworlds that exist within ourselves.

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