ABSTRACT

IMAGINING CHILDHOOD:
CONSTRUCTIONS OF YOUTH, GENDER, AND IDENTITY AS PARTICIPANTS IN THE
CULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF J.M. BARRIE’S PETER PAN

by Laura Jeanne Ferdinand

This thesis takes a Performance Studies approach to explore the relationship between collective memory and imagination through the lens of J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan (1904) and Laura Ferdinand’s adaptation of the play produced at Miami University (2014). Both the thesis and adaptation emphasize performance and play as critical modes of transmission of collective memory. Considering both the archival (text-based) and non-archival (performance-based) transmission of the Peter Pan myth throughout its century-long history, this thesis examines the evolving role of Peter Pan’s performance of childhood and gender in simultaneously shaping and subverting ideologies of masculinity. Rooted in Peter Pan’s relationship to the paradigmatic shifts in the construction of boyhood during the early twentieth century – especially World War One, this thesis uncovers the tensions between “real” and “imagined” bodies and the reciprocal relationship between memory and imagination that shaped Peter Pan.
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CULTURAL TRANSMISSION OF J.M. BARRIE’S PETER PAN

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INTRODUCTION

In 1897, while walking his dog Porthos in London’s Kensington Gardens, famous novelist and playwright James Barrie spotted the red hat of five-year-old George Llewelyn Davies and began a game with him and his brothers Jack and baby Peter. Barrie and the boys met often in the Gardens where they would act out stories from their favorite Adventure novels, playing pirates from Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and Indians from John Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*. Over time Barrie developed a close (though sometimes strained) relationship with the Llewelyn Davies family, parents Arthur and Sylvia, and two new brothers, Michael and Nico.

It was during one of their many games in Kensington Gardens that the character Peter Pan first appeared. Barrie and the brothers, whom he referred to as “The Five,” played with Peter for many years, taking turns playing Peter, making up characters, adding events, changing endings: *Peter Pan* was a game. In 1903, after the boys had been playing Peter for over five years, Barrie began to write the manuscript for a fairy play that would eventually be titled *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*. The play, based on the games Barrie shared with the Llewelyn Davies brothers, premiered at London’s Duke of York’s Theatre on December 27, 1904 to near instant success.

Over one hundred years later, *Peter Pan* is still performed in London and around the world. The story has been retold and revised in many forms – as books, movies, and video games, and in less tangible forms such as make-believe games and bedtime stories. The popularity and pervasiveness of *Peter Pan* – particularly in Western culture – has established it as a cultural myth. Its iconic status in the Western cultural imagination demonstrates that the *myth* of *Peter Pan* is just as powerful as its text. For instance, although many Westerners – especially Americans – have never read the original play or novel, they can often identify Peter as the boy who doesn’t grow up and have a familiarity with Pan iconography including Tinkerbell’s pixie dust, Hook’s hook, and the ticking crocodile. Because of the Western (and increasingly global) familiarity with the story of *Peter Pan* that does not rely on a specific version of the story (such as the play script), the way in which the story is transmitted over time is especially interesting. While the stage productions, movies, novels, etc. are part of that
transmission; there is a larger cultural transmission that relies upon collective memory to perpetuate the story.

Complicating this transmission is the affect of a phenomenon that Richard Schechner calls “the restoration of behavior” or “twice-behaved behavior.” Joseph Roach elaborates on this, explaining “The paradox of the restoration of behaviour resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself: no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance. In this improvisatory behavioural space, memory reveals itself as imagination” (29). Therefore, a story told and retold, changes with each retelling, and the act of remembering that story captures the individual and cultural imaginations of the storyteller. In this way, even if a storyteller (or in the case of Peter Pan, a producer, a director, an actor, etc.) means to tell the “original” story (the 1904 script, for instance), the way in which the storyteller remembers the story speaks to his or her current cultural and historical moment. Diana Taylor explains this;

The bodies participating in the transmission of knowledge and memory are themselves a product of certain taxonomic, disciplinary, and mnemonic systems. Gender impacts how these bodies participate, as does ethnicity. The techniques of transmission vary from group to group. The mental frameworks – which include images, stories, and behaviors – constitute a specific archive and repertoire” (Taylor 106).

The transmission, then, transmits not only the story but some of the mental frameworks of the storyteller whose “body functions as the site of convergence binding the individual with the collective, the private with the social, the diachronic with the synchronic, memory with knowledge. She embodies the locus and means of communication” (101).

Because of its longevity, Peter Pan – and its history of transmission through time and across cultures – can serve as an interesting heuristic device for comparing the differing mental frameworks that have influenced its transmission. Each specific iteration of Peter Pan converges collective memory and imagination. If a sequence of action cannot be performed the same way twice, then seemingly unchanged stories – such as Peter Pan – contain variances that reflect the cultural and historical moment in which they were created. If we choose a specific mental framework, such as gender, and chart its treatment throughout specific iterations over time, we may begin to cull out some of those variances, allowing insight into the transmission and
permutations of mental frameworks through the transmission of Peter Pan. In this way, collective memory and mental frameworks are inextricably linked, and Taylor suggests the impossibility of separating cultural memory, race, and gender (106).

Building off of Schechner’s concept of “restoration of behavior,” I will employ the scholarly works of Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor (in addition to Robin Bernstein and Jacqueline Rose, whom I will discuss later), to take a Performance Studies approach to the analysis of Peter Pan’s transmission, and its relationship with collective memory, race, and gender – specifically in regard to constructing individual and national identity. Performance Studies offers a particularly apt lens for this scholarly inquest as it theorizes the continuum between ritual, life, and culture – considering the role of performance in the transmission of history and memory. While not all of the scholars I will engage are from the field of Performance Studies, they each use the concept of performativity in their own works.

Diana Taylor’s discussion of the archive and the repertoire from her Performance Studies book The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas is crucial to the discussion of cultural transmission as it provides a framework for understanding embodied practice as transmission of knowledge, memory, and history. Although her book focuses on performance in the Americas (particularly Mexico, Central, and South America), her theoretical framework provides a groundwork for a Performance Studies analysis of Peter Pan that will consider its performativity to advance the scholarship that has too long privileged its text. Privileging of text is especially odd in regards to Peter Pan because there is no definitive text; the 1911 novelization of the play Peter and Wendy and the 1928 published play script Peter Pan that most scholars consider “stable” texts cannot begin to contain the omitted scores of acts, characters, and endings that make up Peter Pan in the cultural imagination. Taylor provides a discussion of the dichotomy of text and embodiment, using the term repertoire to describe “a nonarchival system of transfer” (17). The repertoire emphasizes the lived experience; it “requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by “being there,” being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same” (41). Using Taylor’s idea of repertoire, we can move beyond textual analysis to view the reciprocal relationship between Peter Pan and changing cultural trends.
English professor and theatre scholar Joseph Roach’s *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* explores the cultural exchange of theatre, music, and ritual along the Atlantic rim that was instigated by shipping and the slave trade of the eighteenth century onward. Through the discussion of cities that became vortexes of cultural transmission, he explores culture and collective memory, introducing key concepts that will structure my own discussion of such transmission concerning *Peter Pan*. Roach discusses the relationship of memory, performance, and substitution – processes that simultaneously work to remember and forget. He argues that “memory is a process that depends crucially on forgetting” – a statement that parallels Schechner’s restoration of behavior (Roach 2). A memory cannot be recreated or repeated exactly; therefore the very act of remembering is dependent upon forgetting the discontinuities between the “original” and remembered. He uses the term *surrogation* to describe the process by which a culture reproduces and re-creates itself. In particular, he uses the term *effigy* for the thing (human, object, intangible idea) that comes to substitute for something lost or departed in relation to reproduction and re-creation. Applying this term to the exploration of *Peter Pan*, an example of a tangible effigy could be an actor recreating the performance of another, and an intangible effigy could be the idea of eternal youth as a substitute for a lost youth. Roach’s discussion of surrogation not only allows us to understand the process of surrogation and effigy in transmission, it raises the questions of what is being surrogated, what is standing in as an effigy, and what is this process telling us about our own desires to remember?

African and African American Studies and Studies of Women Scholar Robin Bernstein in her book *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* adds to the discussion of cultural transmission by considering the role of the performance of childhood. The discussion of childhood is particularly important to *Peter Pan* as it is both a story about children and a story for children. By acknowledging childhood as performance, Bernstein less overtly acknowledges childhood as a construction. English scholar Jacqueline Rose furthers this discussion in *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, arguing that there can be no literature for children because adult desire seeks to shape the child – a desire that shapes not only children’s literature but the conception of childhood itself. Both scholars pay heed to the tension between the construction of childhood (the imagined idea of childhood) and the lived experience, a tension I will explore further in subsequent chapters.
Together, the work of these scholars supports a scholarly inquest into *Peter Pan* that will focus on the transmission of the frameworks of race, gender, and – I will argue – age through the transmission of *Peter Pan*. This thesis will focus specifically on the transition from boyhood to manhood and the changing cultural constructions of masculinity during the last century of *Peter Pan*, exploring three particular historical moments that were coterminous with paradigmatic shifts in masculinity: the Industrial Revolution, World War One, and the emergence of Queer scholarship in the 1980s that influenced my contemporary adaptation and subsequent production. Tantamount to the discussion of *Peter Pan*’s transmission is the story’s embodiment as play – part of its repertoire as a lived experience, as performance. Play becomes an important part of transmission, as I will discuss throughout, as social performance. In the same way that memory reveals itself as imagination, the imaginative world of Neverland reveals itself as memory – creating a history of the mental frameworks that participated in the transmission of *Peter Pan* over the last century.
CHAPTER ONE

Methodology

In the dedication to the 1928 published script, Barrie reflects on turning the game of Peter Pan into a play, questioning “What was it that made us eventually give to the public in the thin form of a play that which had been woven for ourselves alone?” (Hollindale 75). He writes,

The play is streaky with you still, though none may see this save ourselves. A score of Acts had to be left out, and you were in them all... As for myself, I suppose I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you (75).

Unlike his other works, which he wrote and published in a more traditional time frame, Barrie, despite public outcry for a script, withheld the script for nearly twenty-four years, revising it constantly, writing thousands of notations, which he called “Fairy Notes.” For each production of Peter Pan, which was produced in America and annually in London, Barrie wrote new acts, new characters, and new endings. Nearly each performance was different from the one that had preceded it. Perhaps the “thin form of a play” could not capture the spirit of the original game. Perhaps the tradition of play resisted a finite ending. Whatever the reason for Barrie’s unusual (in comparison to his other works) relationship of revision with Peter Pan, his treatment of the script points to the importance of Peter Pan as play.

Diana Taylor has a term for this kind of open form that Barrie creates in presenting multiple versions of the Peter Pan story: a scenario,

‘a sketch or outline of the plot of a play, giving particulars of the scenes, situations, etc.,’ like performance, means never for the first time. Like Barthes’ mythical speech, it consists of ‘material which has already been worked on’ (Mythologies, 110). Its portable framework bears the weight of accumulative repeats. The scenario makes visible, yet again, what is already there: the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes (Taylor 50).

While a scenario is different than a game, they share some similarities that may help us understand Taylor’s terminology more fully. Both a scenario and a game are rooted in some
kind of framework; as a game has rules, a scenario may have certain traditions that shape it. Yet, within this framework, games and scenarios create improvisatory spaces in which room for exploration is made possible. Moreover, both game and scenario demand an attention to the live/lived experience. Taylor explains, “The *scenario* includes features well theorized in literary analysis, such as narrative and plot, but demands that we also pay attention to milieux and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language” (Taylor 50-51). Viewing *Peter Pan* as a scenario recognizes the importance of the lived experience, the embodiment through play, in the creation of *Peter Pan*. Moreover, this kind of Performance Studies analysis will allow us to consider the performativity of *Peter Pan* apart from its origins, a discussion that is currently missing from *Peter Pan* scholarship that is conducted almost exclusively by English and Children’s Literature scholars.

The importance of the lived experience in creating the story of *Peter Pan* is irrefutable. Barrie writes of one the specific ways in which the public’s imagination added to the myth in his 1928 dedication:

> I have seen [a large number of children] playing Peter in their homes with careless mastership, constantly putting in better words... It was for such as they that after the first production I had to add something to the play at the request of parents (who thus showed they thought me the responsible person) about no one being able to fly until the fairy dust had been blown on him; so many children having gone home and tried it from their beds and needed surgical attention (Hollindale 77).

The importance of the lived experience is not contained to Barrie’s time and the creation of a script; it continues to affect the story through the phenomenon of Schechner’s “the restoration of behavior.” Told and retold, reinvented and re-imagined, *Peter Pan* is a scenario, a site of play that captures individual and cultural imaginations because those imaginations deepen the narrative and perpetuate the play. In the same way Barrie developed stories with George Llewellyn Davies, “...and so we go on until no one could say whether it is more his story or mine” (Tatar xlv), our retellings of this fairytale enter it into the popular imagination, giving all access to and authority over the narrative. So, Peter Pan, as a scenario and character in the popular imagination, becomes eternal – embodying liminality in the transition between childhood and adulthood – finding new life and perpetuating play with each new generation.
In embodying this liminal space between boyhood and manhood, Peter Pan is also an embodiment of masculinity. Moreover, in inhabiting this betwixt and between space, Peter poses the questions: what distinguishes a man from a boy? What must one give up in order to become a man? Peter Pan, then, is an iteration of a scenario of masculinity and the transition from boyhood to manhood. It is important to note that Barrie did not create the scenario presented in Peter Pan; rather, Peter Pan is a specific iteration of a pre-existing scenario. However, because scenarios allow room for exploration (new endings, etc.), Peter Pan is at once part of a larger cultural narrative attached to the scenario and part of a more specific scenario in situ – indicative of a particular moment in history.

Taylor explains that scenarios are passed on and remain remarkably coherent paradigms of seemingly unchanging attitudes and values. Yet, they adapt constantly to reigning conditions. Unlike habitus, which can refer to broad social structures such as class, scenarios refer to more specific repertoires of cultural imaginings (Taylor 54).

Because of Peter Pan’s longevity (having been produced almost every year in London and around the world for the last 110 years) and its iconic status within the western (and now more global) cultural imagination, it serves as a heuristic device for considering the scenario of masculinity over time. The specific permutations of Peter Pan over time reflect the attitudes toward masculinity within the culture and time they are produced. The Peter Pan scenario functions as a through line in which cultures and time periods can enter into a discussion with one another, allowing us to see the changing attitudes toward masculinity through the changing performances of Peter Pan. My thesis will consider the reflexive relationship between Peter Pan and cultural constructs of masculinity by looking at the scenario, first, in situ (in relationship to its own time and author,) in performance (its permutations throughout time,) and in my own adaptation (and the special problems of combining the archive and repertoire).

Chapter Two will employ a Theatre Historiography and Cultural Studies framework to analyze the ways in which lived experience shaped and altered Peter Pan during Barrie’s lifetime, when he still had the ability to alter the script. However, this chapter will pay special attention to the ways in which Peter Pan – even during Barrie’s lifetime – had a life separate from its author as part of the cultural imagination. This chapter will consider the scenario of
masculinity in situ (on-site, in-place) in relationship to Britain’s Industrial Revolution and Barrie’s iteration of the scenario (Peter Pan) as a response to the technologically anxious British society at the turn of the century.

Furthermore, I will chart the permutations of the script leading up to and during World War One in which Peter Pan was consciously used by Barrie and others (including the British government) to shape male bodies for war by constructing rugged notions of masculinity, elucidating the importance and efficacy of embodiment and play spurred by the Pan narrative. Lastly, as is illustrated by Barrie’s inability to take back control over his own story, which had become a powerful tool for pro-war propaganda, when he began to speak out against the war, this chapter will explore the power of Peter Pan as a cultural myth and the ways in which Peter Pan took on a life of its own.

Chapter Three will analyze how the paradigm of masculinity has shifted over time, employing changing portrayals and retellings of Peter Pan as a result of changing cultural notions of masculinity. Schechner’s notion of “twice-behaved behavior” allows us to see how repetitions (or in Pan’s case, revivals) can never truly be repetitions as they change – perceptively or imperceptively – with each repetition. Taylor states that

All scenarios have localized meaning, though many attempt to pass as universally valid. Actions and behaviors arising from the setup might be predictable, a seemingly natural consequence of the assumptions, values, goals, power relations, presumed audience, and epistemic grids established by the setup itself. But they are, ultimately, flexible and open to change... Each repeat adds to its affective and explanatory power until the outcome seems a foregone conclusion... In time and with changing circumstance, however, the paradigm may become obsolete and replaced by another (Taylor 51, 53).

By analyzing the changes to the Peter Pan scenario over time, we can begin to break down the normative and normalized assumptions of masculinity to critically understand our own cultural attitudes. Queer Theory serves as a particularly apt tool for deconstructing cultural constructions of masculinity over time as it constantly questions the logics of heteronormativity and challenges its own theoretical framework.

In addition to this, Jacqueline Rose’s notion of the impossibility of children’s fiction directly questions our constructions of childhood (a shaping of boyhood that is crucial to our
construction of masculinity) in relation to our adult desires. Her term “enunciation,” which she borrows from Linguistics, is especially useful in analyzing the scenario of masculinity; “the term ‘enunciation’... does not refer to what is being said, but asks who speaks and to whom, and why, by implication, they are speaking” (Rose 21). By queering the scenario of masculinity and enunciating its role in society (who created it, for whom was it created, and why), we can begin to understand the role of *Peter Pan* as a nation-building tool in Britain and America.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I will talk about my own adaptation. Because my adaptation reinserts Barrie into *Peter Pan*, and derives its text entirely from the Barrie archive (writings, journals, personal letters, speeches, etc.), the adaptation *performs* the relationship between the archive and the repertoire (which are not mutually exclusive.) As Barrie is partially representative of his text, and an embodiment of the archive through his text-derived dialogue, I will employ Roland Barthes’ discussion of the death of the author in regards to the adaptation’s special problem of performing the author along with his text. While my adaptation was derived from the archive, the structure of the play was meant to create the improvisatory space that is afforded by play, continuing the lived experience tradition of *Peter Pan*. Moreover, the adaptation was meant to make the audience aware of the relationship between the archive and the repertoire, employing meta-theatrical techniques to deconstruct notions of memory and imagination.

Lastly, as my adaptation is yet another iteration of the scenario of *Peter Pan*, I will queer my own representations of masculinity – specifically in regards to casting. I will also attempt to enunciate the scenario presented (or continued) in my adaptation: to whom am I speaking, and why? My adaptation and scholarship is partly in response to the scholarly discussion of *Peter Pan* that has largely been ignored by Theatre scholars. To provide some critical context for my work, I would like to engage the scholarly canon and production history of *Peter Pan* that has set the stage for an inquest into the performativity of *Peter Pan*. 
Review of Literature

The scholarly works on James Barrie and *Peter Pan* are rather limited and can be broken into three general categories: biographies, production histories, and scholarly essays (or collections of essays) from an almost exclusively Children’s Literature perspective.¹ Because of this small amount of scholarship, the writers have a heightened awareness of one another, and their works often reference or speak to one another directly. I would like to begin with the discussion of Andrew Birkin’s 1979 *JM Barrie and the Lost Boys: The Real Story Behind Peter Pan*. One of the first major publications on Barrie and *Peter Pan*, Birkin’s book serves as a touchstone for almost all subsequent scholarly works, a common thread and point of reference. And yet, Birkin’s work is not necessarily a “scholarly” work.

Andrew Birkin is an English writer and director well known for his 1980 BAFTA award and Oscar nomination for *Sredni Vashtar* as well as his 1979 television trilogy *The Lost Boys* based on the life of James Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies boys. Birkin’s book is a publication of the vast amount of archival research he conducted and acquired while preparing to write *The Lost Boys*. While the book lacks a scholarly analysis of his research, reading more like a biography, it is a treasure trove of archival research including journal entries, letters, pictures, and personal accounts by Nico Llewelyn Davies – an enormous amount of materials that had never been seen publicly or published before.² Birkin’s relationship with Nico Llewelyn Davies also adds a sense of authenticity to the work that other biographers attempt to emulate by citing Birkin’s book, calling it “monumental” and “authorative.”

There is only one other work that creates the same feeling of intimacy with Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies brothers: Roger Lancelyn Green’s *Fifty Years of Peter Pan*, published in 1954 by Peter Llewelyn Davies himself. Green’s work begins the long and still-standing tradition

¹ Adaptations, especially recent biopic iterations of *Peter Pan*, could be considered as another category of this “scholarly” work, although they do not enter into the internal scholarly discussion in the same way as the other materials. I will return to the discussions of adaptation in regard to *Peter Pan’s* production history.
² Birkin’s book extends to its website (www.jmbarrie.co.uk) which houses a large database of archival materials that extend well beyond the content of the book. The website is broken into three categories: “JMBarrie, Davies Family, and Peter Pan,” and includes ever multiplying public forum pages as well as a donations page that funds the running costs of the website – any extra donations going to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children.
among Barrie biographers and Peter Pan scholars of attempting to draw concrete parallels between Barrie’s life and his construction of Peter Pan. While the obsession with the correlation between Barrie’s life and Peter Pan has, in many ways, stunted the scholarly inquest into Peter Pan beyond its author, one must admit that the parallels are enticing, and the seeming corroboration of the stories implied by Peter Davies publishing Green’s book, giving him access to all Barrie’s extant belongings, serves to uphold the obsession. Finally, Green’s work takes a special place in the scholarly cannon because he was one of the few authors to have access to a no longer extant archive:

On April 5, 1960, tragedy struck the Llewelyn Davies family once again when Peter Davies, now a 63-year-old publisher, committed suicide by throwing himself in front of a train. Always moody, he had been even more troubled for some time, no doubt by the death of [his brother] Jack the year before, and perhaps even more so by the depressing self-appointed task of compiling letters of correspondence between his brothers and J.M. Barrie. The disheartening project he called “the Morgue” finally became too much for Davies, who stopped and burned many of the documents (Hanson 270).

Birkin’s and Green’s books are cited again and again throughout Peter Pan’s scholarly cannon not only because they are some of the first and most plentiful archival inquests, but because of their relationships with the Llewelyn Davies brothers and a perceived intimacy with Barrie himself. Although Post-Modern thought teaches us to trouble “authenticity” and “origin” – the overwhelming, unquestioned use of Birkin and Green throughout the Peter Pan scholarly cannon points to our desire to find authenticity and origins, troubled or not.
Barrie Biographies

Despite a warning penned in one of Barrie’s notebooks (“May God blast anyone who writes a biography of me,”) there are many biographies about Sir James M. Barrie, and most share a single characteristic as the biographers pass Barrie’s life through the filter of Peter Pan. Despite being a prolific journalist, author, and playwright of considerable fame long before penning Peter Pan, biography titles such as Lost Boy: The Story of the Man Who Created Peter Pan, J.M. Barrie: The Magic Behind Peter Pan, and The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up conflate Barrie’s life with his work, a conflation that colors most Barrie biographies, not just their titles. In fact, there is a specific kind of Barrie “biography” that demands particular consideration: the annotated Peter Pan. There have been several annotated versions of both the play and novel, and I will discuss one of each – the popular (and well-respected) Oxford Drama Library’s 1995 J.M. Barrie Peter Pan and Other Plays, edited by Peter Hollindale, and Maria Tatar’s 2011 The Annotated Peter Pan: The Centennial Edition from W.W. Norton & Company.

Just as more traditional biographies filter Barrie’s life through Peter Pan, selecting and framing events and people to draw strong parallels between “fact” and “fiction,” these annotated versions of Peter Pan take a similar, inverted approach. Tatar’s annotation is certainly the more extensive of these two annotated versions, including hundreds of annotations and separate chapters that include “A Note from the Author about Peter Pan and J.M. Barrie” and “J.M. Barrie in Neverland: A Biographical Essay.” In contrast, Hollindale’s annotations amount to a slim ten pages of footnotes, and yet the biographical voice comes through.

In creating his “definitive” Peter Pan script, Peter Hollindale carefully selects which acts, which ending, and which versions to include. He writes in his introduction,

Faced with Barrie’s unendingly self-renewing stagecraft, and his addiction to spontaneous refashioning of his plays’ significance, historians and editors of his work have had difficulty in arriving at a stable text… The more obviously mobile texts, including The Admirable Crichton and above all Peter Pan, permit all manner of synthetic reconstructions but will not yield a single text which was verifiably used in the theatre and can also be shown to be more ‘theatrical’. All we can do is to take a ‘freeze-frame; of one stage in Barrie’s thinking about a play (Hollindale xv).
Much like a biographer, Hollindale attempts to access the mind of the author (“Barrie’s thinking’), not necessarily to explain his life, but to find a “stable” text. By including Barrie’s 1928 Dedication to The Five and choosing to end the play with the scene “The Afterthought,” Hollindale frames our understanding of Barrie and Peter Pan. Moreover, Hollindale devotes nearly five pages (half of his footnotes on the entire play) to the Dedication, drawing strong parallels between the characters presented in the play with their real-world counterparts, or so Hollindale suggests. In this way, Hollindale filters Peter Pan through Barrie.

Tatar continues this with highly biographical annotations, using a vast collection of the Beinecke Library’s Barrie archive to substantiate correlations between the novel’s characters and events with real life people and experiences. Her work also serves as a compendium of Peter Pan history ranging from Barrie’s biography to film versions, musicals, adaptations, sequels, and more – all tied specifically with the chronology of Barrie’s life and framed by his (inferred) intentions. Such comprehensive histories compose the next category of Peter Pan scholarship – the two most famous, and most cited by scholars, works being Green’s more biographical Fifty Years of Peter Pan and Bruce K. Hanson’s encyclopedic Peter Pan on Stage and Screen 1904 – 2010 published in 2011.

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3 Barrie wrote “The Afterthought” in 1909 with the intention of performing it just once. However, he chose to include it in the 1928 publication. “The Afterthought” is a scene where Peter returns to Wendy’s nursery to find her grown up with a child of her own.
Production Compendiums

Both books by Green and Hanson are encyclopedic production histories of *Peter Pan* that focus more on individual productions than on overarching production trends (with the exception of Hanson’s fine chapter “A Change of Gender” that charts the increasingly common casting of a male actor as a Peter since 1982). Whereas Green’s book, published by Peter Davies still relies heavily on Barrie’s biography, Hanson focuses more on iterations of Peter Pan in the second half of its century of production, including the American Broadway musical and Filmography.

*Peter Pan* has long been a star vehicle for actresses (with a recent trend of actors, as well), and Hanson organizes his production history by the major actresses starring as Peter, from Nina Boucicault and Maude Adams to Mary Martin and Cathy Rigby. Hanson writes that his book is “intended as a celebration of the individual productions of the most popular children’s play of all time and of the performers and other artists who have been associated with the various productions since 1904” (Hanson 5). Both Hanson’s and Green’s books provide excellent compilations of research – from production photos, original designs, reviews, and personal letters and reminiscences from actors that are cited frequently by *Peter Pan* scholars.
The scholarly discussion of *Peter Pan* has long been dominated by Children’s Literature scholars, and although Jacqueline Rose is an English scholar, the dense theoretical discussion of her 1984 *The Case of Peter Pan Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* caused an uproar that is still a major part of the scholarly discussion today. While many, especially in recent years, have supported Rose’s claims, her work is still hotly contested. Take, for example, the 2009 collection of essays *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination* edited by Kavey and Friedman who write in their introduction:

Jacqueline Rose’s *The Case of Peter Pan* (1984) is both the most frequently cited scholarly work on the narrative and the most egregious example of the argument that Barrie’s desire – for children, to be a child – permeates the text and inevitably confounds its title character. She first published the study during a time when critics routinely overlaid fiction with a dizzying array of psychoanalytic categorizations, plunking authors (even long-dead ones) on the couch and publicly dissecting their psyches. Such exploration often focused on salacious revelations of an author’s previously unrevealed depravities, charges impossible either to prove definitively or to retort posthumously (Kavey 4).

Similar sentiment pervades much of literature on *Peter Pan*, so when my copy of Rose’s book arrived, I was prepared for an “egregious” reading. However, what I found was a particularly well-crafted piece of scholarship whose engagement with theory separated the book from the rest of *Peter Pan*’s previous scholarship that was wrapped up in biography and production history. As Rose’s book remains so central to *Peter Pan* scholarship, I would like to take the time to discuss her work in specific relation to the scholarly cannon.

While not wholly unfounded, the basis of most arguments against Rose’s work seem grounded in a misreading of her scholarship and a myopic attention to words such as “fetish” and “desire” that scholars such as Kavey and Friedman seem unable to divorce from a discussion of Barrie himself – again showing how a focus on Barrie’s biography has stunted the overarching scholarly inquest into *Peter Pan*. Rose’s book is *Performing Peter Pan: Gender Play in*

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4 Over the last few decades, there have been claims, derived from readings of Barrie’s novels, such as *The Little White Bird* in which his narrator describes undressing a child for
Neverland not, as Kavey and Friedman among others suggest, an inquisition into Barrie’s life. She makes it quite clear in her introduction that it is “no part of my intention to analyse Barrie, to try to produce a psychobiography which would diagnose the author so as to set Peter Pan free as a myth” (Rose 5). What Rose is attempting to do, which her opponents seem to miss despite her clarity, is to dismiss the idea that there can be literature for children; it is not an issue... of what the child wants, but of what the adult desires – desires in the very act of construing the child as the object of its speech. Children’s fiction draws in the child, it secures, places, and frames the child. How often has it been said recently that what is best about writing for children is that the writer can count absolutely on the child’s willingness to enter into the book and live the story? (Rose 2).

Despite the controversy surrounding her work, Rose’s scholarship, which came out just one year after Dr. Dan Kiley’s pop psychology book *The Peter Pan Syndrome* (a psychological study that borrows Peter as a representation of men who refuse to “grow up,”) spurred a more rigorous scholarly discussion of *Peter Pan*.

In addition to individual articles engaging *Peter Pan* published in literature journals, there have been three particularly important books published recently that advance the scholarship away from biography and production histories: two collections of essays, *J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children’s Classic at 100* (White and Tarr, 2006) and *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination* (Kavey and Friedman, 2009,) and Kirsten Stirling’s book *Peter Pan’s Shadows in the Literary Imagination* (2012). These three books as a whole consider the broader cultural implications of *Peter Pan* as cultural icon and popular myth. Although all three works feature a discussion of Barrie’s life and the bed (whom he is babysitting,) that Barrie was a pedophile or had pedophilic desires – particularly in his relations with the Llewelyn Davies brothers. This is a particularly fraught discussion that has nonetheless become part of the *Peter Pan* myth. When asked pointedly about accusations of pedophilia, Nico Llewelyn Davies denied the accusations, saying “I don’t believe that Uncle Jim ever experienced what one might call a stirring in the undergrowth for anyone – man, woman, or child...” (Chaney 214). Although Nico cannot speak for others, his comments do remind us that all such posthumous accusations are inferences. What is most important about this discussion is that we do not let the fear of upsetting a beloved story hinder our scholarship. While the language of Rose’s inquest into adult desire shaping children’s literature uses language that some find uncomfortable, it must not cloud our understanding of her theoretical discussion.
“origins” of the play/novel, *Peter Pan* is used as a tool to consider historical and cultural moments such as Murray Pomerance’s essay “Tinker Bell, the Fairy of Electricity” that historicizes *Peter Pan* within its own time of the Industrial Revolution, and David P. D. Munn’s “‘Gay, Innocent, and Heartless’: *Peter Pan* and the Queering of Popular Culture” delves into the current iterations of *Peter Pan*, which point to current perceptions of masculinity and normativity.

Each of these books and most of the scholarly essays written about *Peter Pan* come from English and Literature scholars with a peppering of scholars from other fields such as Media Studies and History. I found one essay written by a theatre scholar: Theatre History and Criticism professor Patrick B. Tuite’s “‘Shadow of [a] girl’: An Examination of *Peter Pan* in Performance,” which is surprising due not only to *Peter Pan*’s century-long history onstage in the West and around the world and its status as one of the first children’s plays, but also due to its origins in play and tradition as a lived experience that make *Peter Pan* ripe for scholarship from, among others, the fields of Theatre History and Performance Studies.

The latest scholarship, in particular Stirling’s *Peter Pan’s Shadows in the Literary Imagination*, begins to engage ideas of performativity, but, because the majority of scholarship comes from English and Literature fields, the discussion is always linked closely to text. Take John Pennington’s discussion of the lived experience of *Peter Pan* from his essay “Peter Pan, Pullman, and Potter: Anxieties of Growing Up”:

*Peter Pan*’s lack of closure gives the novel its enticing texture, making the book, to use Roland Barthes’s concept, a writerly text, one that requires the reader to complete. In other words, *Peter Pan* urges – demands may be a more accurate word – readers and theatre goers [sic] to participate in the text. At the end of Act IV of the play, Peter directly addresses the audience, asking them to help save Tinker Bell by clapping their hands if they “believe in fairies.” The novel *Peter Pan* works similarly; its writerly emphasis tempts other writers to complete the text, to revise... (Pennington 244).

This flirtation with Performance Studies – particularly the way in which a text, a performance, or an object can *script* a performance is common throughout the *Peter Pan* scholarship from the last ten years, but the scholarship never quite gets there – especially considering the reflexive way the script and the embodiment (the archive and the repertoire) can influence one another.
My thesis will use the theoretical approaches of Performance Studies to look specifically at the ways in which the embodiment of the *Peter Pan* story has affected and altered the text as well as our cultural understanding of and relationship to the text (overtly during Barrie’s lifetime and more subtly over time.) I have chosen to focus on constructs of childhood and boyhood in regards to the shaping of masculinity. Although this subject is already a part of *Peter Pan* scholarship, the discussion of the ways in which *Peter Pan* shaped the male body (rather than just the male imagination) is underdeveloped, and a Performance Studies framework will develop our understanding of *Peter Pan*’s influence as a lived experience off the stage and page. Furthermore, I will discuss my own adaptation of the play, and my challenge in capturing and showcasing the lived experience of *Peter Pan* as play while deriving the text exclusively from the archive. Before I introduce my adaptation more fully, I would like to give an overview of *Peter Pan*’s production history and the broad trends that have established the climate surrounding the play in which I shaped my own adaptation.
Production History

In 1905, less than a year after Peter Pan premiered in London, another production of the play opened in New York City starring Maude Adams and produced by Peter Pan’s original producer, Charles Frohman. While the “original” version of Peter Pan remains popular in Britain today, as it has been revived in London nearly every year since its premiere – not to mention the countless other unofficial revivals and performances – the 1904 script would seem foreign to most American audiences. Whereas the performance history in Britain has mostly been revivals of Barrie’s play, including adaptations, Peter Pan in America has been characterized more by Disney and Broadway than James Barrie.

During Barrie’s lifetime, especially within the twenty-four year period between Peter Pan’s premiere and publication, the play was unofficially part of the public domain. This sense of openness surrounding Peter Pan was created because Barrie did not produce a “stable” text. Barrie contributed to this simultaneously in two ways: by exercising his authorial control by constantly revising and rewriting the play (each production had new acts, new scenes, new endings) and by unwittingly releasing ownership (amidst the public outcry for a published version of the play, many unauthorized versions were published). The sheer amount of Peter Pan narratives written by Barrie and others early on in the play’s life added to its mythological nature. However, when Barrie published the play and bequeathed the rights to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in 1928 and 1929, respectively, Peter Pan’s “unofficial” period in the public domain ended as its new owners guarded it rights closely.

Despite this, Peter Pan has remained a popular show, and with its pervasive century-long performance history at every level of theatre around the world, getting a full-scope of its production history would be nearly impossible. We can, however, cull out trends and traditions in the production history that allow us entry points into a discussion of the changing zeitgeist of Western Culture’s collective imagination over the last century. The longest standing performance tradition is the annual Christmastime revival of Peter Pan in London. The regularity of this event lends itself to a discussion of the permutations of the production throughout time as a reflection of larger social and cultural trends in Britain (and more global trends in recent years). Americans, on the other hand, have little experience with Barrie’s script, and are most familiar with the Broadway musical version that has been performed – mostly
unchanged – for fifty years. Lastly, the movie versions, beginning with the 1924 silent movie and culminating with the most recent biopic *Finding Neverland* (although more Pan movies are in the works) bridge the American-Britain divide to speak to pop culture trends of the last century.\(^5\)

\(^5\) *Peter Pan* (or the Pan story,) especially in the past ten years has taken many forms as the basis or influence of cartoons (*Peter Panzerfaust* set during WWII), television shows (Disney Jr.’s *Jake and the Neverland Pirates*), web-series (*The New Adventures of Peter and Wendy*), video games (*“Peter Pan Return to Neverland”), and more.
In addition to the countless revivals, sequels, and adaptations ranging from plays to movies to video games, Peter Pan has been produced in London almost every Christmas season since its premiere. As a longstanding Christmas tradition, Peter Pan became a star vehicle for actresses (including Glynis Johns, Hayley Mills, and Maggie Smith), and “each year theatergoers anticipated the announcement of who would play Peter in the upcoming holiday season. And each actress would jump off a couch or chair to show off their flying abilities for publicity” (Hanson 271). In the 1982 revival by the Royal Shakespeare Company, Peter would not only be played by a boy, but by a grown man.

This choice reflects the changing cultural view of Peter Pan, whose age in the cultural imagination, had been steadily increasing since 1904; “to modern viewers both characters [Peter and Wendy] are on the verge of adolescence, rather than in the midst of childhood, and are facing sexual desire and emotional attachment along with imminent death at the hands of pirates” (Munns 223). Certainly the Disney version, which intentionally increased the age and “masculinity” of Peter, contributed to our modern conception of Peter, especially because Disney’s version was one of the few movie versions and the only one with merchandising.

While audiences were used to an older, more masculine version of Peter, they still centered the character on the verge of adolescence, and, according to the reviews and audience reaction to the 1982 revival, were not quite ready for a more overtly sexualized Peter. Scholar David Munns discusses the overall reaction to the production:

When thirty-five-year-old Miles Anderson played Peter for the 1982 season of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production, few reviewers were entirely happy with the performance: “[Miles Anderson as Peter] does not seem to be of a different flesh from the others,” commented The Daily Telegraph. Girls enacting both Peter and Wendy emphasized the asexual nature of the relationship, “with a masculine star [the] all important illusion faltered and died” (Munns 227).

This reaction did not discourage other productions as Peter throughout the 80s began to be played more regularly by males, and by the end of the 1980s, audiences more readily accepted Peter Pan productions that emphasized Peter’ sexuality.
The paradigmatic shift in the way Peter is constructed throughout the 80s has many factors, but one of the most influential changes to the narrative came in 1987 when *Peter Pan* was once again in the public domain. Although the play remains under copyright in the United States, *Peter Pan*’s copyright has expired throughout most of the world, opening the narrative up to myriad voices again.
In the vein of 50s sentimentalism, in 1954 Peter Pan starring Mary Martin premiered on Broadway. The Broadway version was shaped by its post-World War II society, which did not have as great of an appetite for the socially relevant musicals such as Show Boat (1927) or even Oklahoma! The creators of this new adaptation, including the director/choreographer Jerome Robbins, strove for escapism rather than social commentary – a common theme among the other musicals premiering on Broadway in the 50s, such as Brigadoon. Escapist musicals, which also leaned heavily on sentimentality, were reflective of the cultural climate;

By the 1950s, not only women but all of America seemed to be retreating into the confines of domesticity... response to these fears [of communism internationally and within the U.S. borders] was a heightened emphasis on ‘Domesticity, religiosity, respectability, [and] security through compliance with the system (Jones 184).

The socially satirizing musicals of the twenties and thirties lost their audiences to the escapist musicals of the 50s drawing on the new American sentiment that favored happiness, life-affirmations, and nostalgia. The move toward the sentimental and wholesome provided a ripe market for a children’s story, so the creators of Broadway’s newest Peter Pan emphasized innocence with silly songs like “I Won’t Grow Up” and saccharine lullabies such as “Tender Shepherd” and “Distant Melody.”

Perhaps contemporary collective desire to return to a time of innocence perpetuates this version of Peter Pan as a relic of the Golden Age of 1950s culture, a time period that has come to be viewed (contestably) as a time of innocence itself. The Broadway version has toured nationally for over fifty years with only three leading-ladies cast as Peter: Mary Martin, Sandy Duncan, and Cathy Rigby. Unlike the malleable story of Peter Pan, which finds its longevity in its ability to change on the British stage and the motion picture screen, the rigid tradition of this musical and its consistent leading ladies points to another of our desires for Peter Pan: the ability to return, to stay the same, to not grow up.
Peter Pan On Screen

When Disney “paid $20,000 in October 1938 for the rights to make an animated version of the tale...” the production company was uniquely positioned as it became one of the few voices with the rights to Peter Pan and the only with the rights to turn it into film. At this time, however, Disney was undergoing changes of its own, and the animated Peter Pan, which was scheduled for production and release in the early 1940s, was postponed again and again, finally being temporarily shelved during World War Two. Film and television history scholar Susan Ohmer explains this period in Disney’s history:

The very meaning of “Disney” shifted rapidly in this period. Within the broader framework of U.S. culture, this period marked an era when gender roles, the nature of fantasy, and the meaning of childhood also fluctuated (Ohmer 153). Again – as he was during World War One, Peter was reshaped to represent changing views of masculinity. Disney, in response to the “shifting ideologies of fantasy, gender, childhood, and sexuality in postwar American culture,” would break with the tradition of casting a woman as Peter, a tradition that has continued in all subsequent film versions (152).

Reflective of 1950s American gender ideology, “from the first storyboard meetings, the senior animators expressed concern that Peter not be a ‘sissy’” (174). For Disney, then, merely casting a boy in the role would not suffice in making Peter more masculine, and Disney constructed a manlier Peter. From casting fifteen-year-old Bobby Driscoll to drawing Peter as a young teenager rather than a six-year-old boy, “Disney... fundamentally altered the popular conception of Barrie’s story. In making Peter both more masculine and older than he had been previously depicted, as well as enlarging and feminizing Tinker Bell, Disney opened up the public availability of Peter Pan as an icon for burgeoning sexuality” (Munns 229).

Disney’s version holds such a large place in the history of Peter Pan on screen because it exclusively held the film rights for nearly fifty years. Apart from two live telecasts of the Broadway musical in 1955 and 1956, Disney’s cartoon remained the version of Peter Pan most people outside of Britain were familiar with. There have been few other Peter Pan movies (Maria Tatar’s filmography lists a total of 8), most of which are adaptations of the original script that displace Peter as the center of the story. The three most notable films are Steven Spielberg’s 1991 Hook (that functions as a sequel in which an adult Peter must return to Neverland to save
his children), P.J. Hogan’s 2003 Peter Pan (in which a more powerful, tom-boy Wendy – at the end – brings Peter back to life with a romantic kiss), and Marc Forster’s 2004 Finding Neverland (although it presents itself as a biopic, the film is a work of historical fiction that focuses on Barrie and his creation of Peter Pan with the Llewelyn Davies brothers).

All three movies feature a teenage Peter as opposed to the young boy portrayed in the script and novel (even Hook depicts a teenage Peter in flashbacks) and feature a more romantic relationship between Peter and Wendy (which Finding Neverland doubles in the relationship between Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies’ mother Sylvia) – a trend that is seen throughout the Peter Pan production history and continues today. 6

6 In addition to a teenage Peter, Finding Neverland portrays Peter Llewelyn Davies, whom the movie depicts as one of the inspirations for Peter, as a young boy.
Conclusion

Performance Studies will allow us to view these production trends as reflections of the specific cultural climates in which they were produced. Furthermore, by analyzing the performativity of *Peter Pan* and the scenario of masculinity, we can move the scholarly discussion of *Peter Pan* away from a quest for origins and a literary analysis of a “stable” text. Instead, we can consider *Peter Pan*’s archive and repertoire and the reflexive way these histories transmit themselves through time, shaping and being shaped by our cultural imagination.
CHAPTER TWO

The Child as an Effigy of Innocence: Great Britain and the Anxieties of Modernity

“Of all the changes that the nineteenth century had to face, the most far-reaching and potentially traumatic was the industrial revolution. Beginning with Britain, spreading to France and the northeastern United States, modern business-industrial growth brought about huge changes in the landscape, with mushrooming cities and an urban proletariat, radical movements in patterns of consumption and material expectations, severe shifts in values.”

– Michael Adams, The Great Adventure

As the Industrial Revolution transformed England from a pastoral to an increasingly urban society, deep anxieties arose in response to the rapid change and technological advances that fundamentally altered the lifestyles of many British people. As manufacturing jobs quickly shifted agrarian lifestyles, British society began to romanticize the bucolic way of life, now inaccessible amid growing industrial cities. This romanticized sentiment continued into the twentieth century when, in 1919, excitement spread through Britain as two young girls, released five photographs they had taken behind their home in Cottingley, England – the first photographic evidence of fairies.⁷ Amidst the harsh industrial life of the early twentieth century, the public – adults and children alike – were mesmerized. In a 1920 article published in The Strand Magazine, physician and novelist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle articulated the sentiment that pervaded Victorian England as he rhapsodized about the possibility that the world could be re-enchanted through ‘well-authenticated’ cases of fairy presence: ‘The thought of them, [Doyle wrote] even when unseen, will add a charm to every brook and valley and give romantic interest to every country walk. The recognition of their existence will jolt the material twentieth-century mind out of its heavy ruts in the mud, and will make it admit that there is a glamour and a mystery to life’ (Tatar 42).

⁷ The two girls, cousins Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, would admit in 1983 that the photographs were a hoax, made by photographing fairy illustrations cut out of books.
Out of this desire to recapture the “charm” of the pre-industrial pastoral life, grew an increasingly popular interest in escapist entertainment – particularly fairy stories and adventure novels that featured young protagonists exploring landscapes unmarred by industrialism.

One of the most popular and enduring stories to come out of Victorian England, that bridged the genres of fairy lore and adventure, is Sir James M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*. The main character Peter quickly became an emblem of childhood – a boy whose eternal youth gives him special access to the unmarred world of imagination. Maria Tatar explains in her annotated *Peter and Wendy* that “[t]he cult of fairy lore served both as a form of protest against the rise of industrialism and worship of material wealth and as a nostalgic gesture toward the enchantments of rural life and childhood” (37). At the turn of the century, childhood was constructed as a representation or embodiment of innocence and “became an emblem of a lost past, of a lost self, and of memory itself” (Bernstein 23).

Through this process of representation, cultural representations of the child function as effigies – substitutes for the lost past. Joseph Roach writes that a performer’s “body is an effigy [a body that stands in] as it bears and brings forth collectively remembered, meaningful gestures, and thus surrogates for that which a community has lost” (Bernstein 23). However, the body of a child does not innately bring forth collective memory; rather, the body must be inscribed with meaning, a process which is as much about remembering as it is about forgetting. Roach writes “selective memory requires public enactments of forgetting, either to blur the obvious discontinuities, misalliances, and ruptures or, more desperately, to exaggerate them in order to mystify previous Golden Age, now lapsed” (Roach 3). Therefore, in an attempt to romanticize the pre-Industrial life now lost to many Britons, the “Golden Age,” childhood innocence and connection with nature was exaggerated.

The inscription of innocence upon the child’s body, however, is a complicated process, because the *imagined* child and the *real* child often stand in opposition to one another. Robin Bernstein problematizes this dichotomy: “‘imagined’ childhood shapes the lived experience of ‘real’ juveniles, who respond by unevenly colluding in or resisting their construction as ‘children.’ Childhood… is abstract and disembodied, whereas children are tangible and fleshy” (Bernstein 22). In this way, the abstract idea of childhood as represented in culture, rather than the tangible child, performs, standing in as an effigy. Peter Pan, then, as an emblem of youth and childhood, stands in as an effigy of the lost past, attempting to fulfill “actual or perceived
vacancies... in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric" of Victorian England. In addition to using the term *surrogation* to denote the process by which a culture reproduces itself, Roach also uses the term describe the process by which an effigy (tangible or intangible) substitutes or stands in for an actual or perceived vacancy. Along with nostalgic views that conflate childhood with the lost pastoral life, “*Peter Pan* offers a nostalgic view of the middle class, offering roles for men and women that were no longer available in an unstable society in order to manage the anxiety that comes with such rapid change” (Tuite 114). In this way, Peter can surrogate the vacancy of defined gender roles by Peter becoming an effigy of innocence – an emblem of boyhood as well as youth.

At the time of *Peter Pan*’s 1904 debut on the London stage, the western idea of masculinity was undergoing a paradigm shift. As the spheres of gender identity became more rigid and womanhood became clearly defined in relation to the “cult of domesticity,” the narratives that scripted the role of men in British society and in the Western world at large took shape in opposition to the more “feminine” traits: scholar Joanna Bourke explains, “[t]he womanly woman was gentle, domesticated and virginal: the manly man was athletic, stoical and courageous” (13). As the role of women became more clearly defined in the British cultural imagination, both legally and ideologically, the role of men was less clear as masculinity was constructed in opposition to changing femininity. Thus, myths of masculinity and boyhood – especially adventure stories – were used as tools to understand and construct masculinity and boyhood as the myths created a sense of community among males.

Because childhood is imagined and gender is constructed, they require narratives that shape their constructions, and the fairy stories and adventure novels of turn-of-the-century

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8 In their book *The Modern Girl Around the World*, the editors define “girl,” which is a term that “came into popular usage in England” in the late nineteenth century; the term “Girl” signifies the contested status of young women, no longer children, and their instable and sometimes subversive relationship to social norms relating to heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood” (Weinbaum 9). Although this term seems to suggest that the role of women was not clearly defined in Britain (as thinking so would be reductive), the role of the girl as neither child nor mother may help to identify another way in which masculinity found need to define itself. If the traditional role of women was changing, and the heteronormative ideology of the day suggested the two genders be fixed in opposition, the role of man would be affected. If being a man was no longer as simple as not being a mother (relying on the ideal that a woman is a mother), what exactly did it mean to be a man?
Britain fulfilled these demands. These stories, however, did more than construct childhood as an effigy for the lost pre-Industrial golden age, they served as a site to process the trauma incurred by the stress of a rapidly changing society and a lost past. As I discussed in the Chapter 1, the repertoire of *Peter Pan* – its history of performance on the stage (the play) and off the stage (play) – uniquely positioned *Peter Pan* as a site to process trauma by creating an improvisatory space for play as a scenario. Anthropologist and social scientist Gregory Bateson explains the therapeutic properties of play:

> The resemblance between the process of therapy and the phenomenon of play is, in fact, profound. Both occur within a delimited psychological frame, a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages. In both play and therapy, the messages have a special and peculiar relationship to a more concrete or basic reality (130).

I will elaborate on the specific ways in which play serves to process trauma through an analysis of Barrie’s relationship with *Peter Pan* in the section “Play as a Means to Process Trauma in J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*” and will then center *Peter Pan* within the cultural context of early twentieth-century Great Britain, examining its influence as a cultural myth in the evolving construction of childhood (specifically boyhood) in “Peter Pan in World War One: Re-scripting Masculinity.” Just a Taylor describes the body as “the site of convergence binding the individual with the collective,” Barrie’s own experiences, influenced by his cultural and historical moment, speak to the socially constructed mental frameworks that participated in the transmission of *Peter Pan* during his lifetime.
Play as a Means to Process Trauma in J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan

In analyzing Peter Pan, it is easy to focus on the biographical information about Barrie, as the artist himself has much in common with the character of Peter Pan; “[a]s Peter Hollindale puts it, the play Peter Pan and the narrative of Barrie’s life are ‘two co-existent stories, each with the capacity to distort or confuse our understanding of the other’” (Stirling 85). Many scholars and biographers have autopsied the text of Peter Pan, elucidating every possible correlation between the fiction and the “reality.” These often speculative correlations, while intriguing, obscure the scholarly discussion of Barrie and Peter Pan, turning the play (and the novel) into an autobiography rather than a myth that at once shaped and was shaped by its cultural and historical moment. Such an emphasis on the biography of the author and his text, once again reinforces the habit of privileging the archive over the repertoire. By overlooking the repertoire of Peter Pan – the unique way it performs on and offstage – Peter Pan scholarship misses the way in which Barrie used play to process his own traumas, a microcosmic example of the way in which Peter Pan served a site for Britain to process its own traumas.

It is of particular interest that while Barrie was able to publish the novel about Peter Pan, entitled Peter and Wendy, within a matter of years after the play’s theatrical debut, Barrie tinkered with the play script for nearly three decades before publishing it. Barrie’s relationship with and special privileging of Peter Pan as play points to the therapeutic benefits as play as well as the inadequacies of surrogation: “Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure… survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternatives” (Roach 2). Because, Joseph Roach writes, “collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds” (2). If an effigy can never satisfactorily substitute for a vacancy (as the substitute is never quite the same as the “original”), how does the process of surrogation benefit the individual and the collective? Because the process of surrogation and the process of play share characteristics such as embodiment, repetition, etc., they can both work together as sites for working through individual and collective traumas (which I will discuss further and problematize throughout this section). Although I am discussing Barrie’s personal relationship with Peter Pan through his relationship with the process of playing, the ways in which Barrie interacts with his story reflect the ways Peter Pan as a cultural myth came to fulfill the need to process trauma in Britain.
Barrie’s life was one full of traumatic loss from childhood to adulthood; D.H. Lawrence once wrote to Barrie’s ex-wife Mary Cannan: “[Barrie] has a fatal touch for those he loves. They Die” (Tatar lxxi). Tatar explains Barrie, “[t]ortured by nightmares... and tormented by feelings of inadequacy, ...struggled all his life with the pall cast over his childhood self by trauma and loss” (lxx). In fact, many, including neuroscientist Dr. Robert Sapolsky of Stanford University, have cited Barrie – who stood about 5 feet tall as an adult (Hanson 20) – as a possible example of Psychogenic Dwarfism, also known as Psychosocial Short Stature (PSS) – a trauma-induced condition that Dr. Sapolsky describes as “...one of the truly bizarre outposts of medicine [that is] this disease of kids that stop growing for reasons of psychological stress” (Sapolsky). Diagnosing Barrie posthumously is absurd, but the discussion around Barrie does exemplify the stress he was under as a result of the deaths of his friends and family, and I will explore the ways Barrie coped with trauma emotionally through his creative work.

Barrie’s reaction to his first traumatic loss at the age of six, the death of his older brother, the almost fourteen-year-old David, in a skating accident, is telling of how Barrie employed play and performance, particularly surrogation, as a coping mechanism to deal with that stress and trauma throughout his life: Losing him [David] was more than she [Barrie’s mother] could bear, and she retreated to her bedroom. Jamie resorted to various strategies to draw her out, becoming adept, for instance, in the art of impersonation and pantomime. Barrie describes how he developed an ‘intense desire... to become so like him [David] that even my mother should not know the difference,’ and he practiced in secret until he had the boy’s whistle and stance (legs apart and hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers) down pat. Perhaps we can find here, as in his childhood games of acting out adventure, the beginnings of his love of play-acting, performance, and theatre (Tatar lxxii – lxxiii).

To those who have seen Peter Pan, and even to many of those who have not, the stance that Barrie imitated is immediately recognizable as the iconic stance of Peter Pan, which leads me to the hypothesis that Barrie not only used play but also used the beginnings of the play, Peter Pan, as a way to cope with the trauma of losing his brother and anxieties surrounding death. While there appears to be no public photograph depicting this stance from the original 1904 production starring Nina Boucicault, there is photographic evidence that this stance was used in the 1905
American premiere of *Peter Pan*. This stance also appears in Barrie’s personal photographs (the earliest a 1906 image of one of Barrie’s yet-to-be adopted sons\(^9\), Michael Llewellyn Davies, dressed as Peter Pan). Barrie writes of his brother in the biography he penned about his mother, *Mary Ogilvy*, saying “[w]hen I became a man, he was still a boy of thirteen,” a thought that Barrie describes as a comfort to his mother (Stirling 89). This sentiment pervaded Victorian Britain:

> Both romanticism and sentimentalism constructed the death of a child not as dispossessive but as preservative, as a freezing that paradoxically prevents the essential child-quality from ever dying through maturation. Childhood is therefore best understood as an act of surrogation that compensates for losses incurred through growth (Bernstein 24).

By playing his brother David, young Barrie turned himself into an effigy (a surrogate for David) and entered his brother – through performance – into a liminal world between life and death, embodied by an actor (James) who performed David, learning and singing David’s favorite songs and even wearing his clothes. Moreover, if childhood is lost through maturation (“losses incurred through growth”), the innocence of pastoral life is, metaphorically, lost through the growth of industry. Roach explains that surrogation, like theatrical doubling, “operates in two modes. In the first mode, one actor stands in for another...” or, in Barrie’s case, he stands in for his brother; and “[i]n the second mode of doubling, one actor plays more than one role – two (or more) masks appear on one actor” (Roach 130). Like the surrogation in Barrie’s performance of David, Barrie employs theatrical doubling in *Peter Pan*, which I will return to in my discussion of the liminal worlds Barrie creates in his theatrical texts in Chapter Two.

If, however, as Joseph Roach suggests, “surrogation rarely succeeds,” how could the process play and performance possibly be a tool to process trauma? If “the intended substitute... cannot fulfill expectations, creating a deficit,” does surrogacy (the process by which a culture “reproduces and re-creates itself”) become a twice-traumatized behavior, a restoration of trauma

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\(^9\) Barrie became a guardian (along with the Davies’ nanny Mary Hodgson) of the five Llewelyn Davies brothers in 1910 after the death of both their parents to cancer, although Sylvia Llewellyn Davies’ will is highly contested: it is speculated that “Sylvia had written ‘Jenny’ (Mary Hodgson’s sister), and not Jimmy. ‘Jimmy’ had managed, with just a few strokes of the pen, to become linked with their nanny, the closest he would get to de facto fatherhood” (xcviii).
(Roach 2)? Here, we must turn to Taylor’s scenario again. If Peter Pan exists as play (as a scenario), rather than a stable, closed text, it invites its audience to revise and re-script, and becomes a framework that allows us to understand trauma.

Because play shares a similar frame to therapy – occupying a safe space removed from everyday life, as Gregory Bateson has asserted, it may be a useful mechanism for coping with trauma. However, Johan Huizinga, a cultural historian whose 1955 book Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture helped introduce play theory, explains the main theories of play that attempt to “…define the biological function of play”:

By some the origin and fundamentals of play have been described as a discharge of superabundant energy, by others as the satisfaction of some “imitative instinct,” or again as simply as a “need” for relaxation. According to one theory play constitutes a training of the young creature for the serious work that life will demand later on. According to another it serves as an exercise in restraint needful to the individual. Some find the principle of play in an innate urge to exercise a certain faculty, or in the desire to dominate or compete. Yet others regard it as an “abreaction” – an outlet for harmful impulses, as the necessary restorer of energy wasted by one-sided activity, as “wish-fulfillment,” as a fiction designed to keep up the feeling of personal value, etc. (117 – 118).

Looking through Barrie’s biographies, we find many of the impulses theorized to necessitate play in his life. Perhaps he played to discharge the “superabundant energy” of a six-year-old boy who lived in a deeply sad house of mourning (a life Barrie describes Mary Ogilvy). Perhaps he was fulfilling an instinct, or breaking the tension or competing for attention from his bereaved mother. His playing could be a fulfillment of any number of these theories. Yet, the last theory, tying play to “wish-fulfillment” (in light of Barrie’s known love of fairy stories, in light of his fictive world of Neverland, full of fairies, pixie dust, flying, and eternal youth) seems to encompass Barrie’s impulses most fully. Likewise, the Victorian desire for escapist entertainment and the usefulness of play in dealing with the anxieties of a rapidly changing culture could be attributed to any of these theories; however, the particular interest in fairy lore could suggest a wish-fulfillment that sought to affirm personal value amid the industrial age of machines and mass production.
Barrie, inculcated in the sentimentalist ideology of Victorian Britain that asserted the idea of “dying through maturation,” and haunted by the surrogate performance of his brother who could not grow up, writes of growing up (likening it to death) in *Peter and Wendy* with a sense of fear and sadness:

All children, except one, grow up. ...Wendy knew that she must grow up.

You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end

(Barrie 1).

Is play as “wish-fulfillment,” which can be a delusory act, a constructive way to process trauma?

To determine this, we must pinpoint the wish that Barrie is making in these performances. For this I will discuss how Barrie “plays” in his personal life, specifically the performance of his brother David and his relationship with the Llewellyn Davies boys whose imaginative play with Barrie was partly the basis for *Peter Pan*. I will also discuss his work as playwright – focusing solely on *Peter Pan*, although he was a prolific author and playwright, because of Barrie’s unusually long (in comparison to his other works) writing and revision process of the script. Both his personal and professional play share a common characteristic, or character if we name him “The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up” rather than “Peter,” or “David,” or “James.”

Bruce K. Hanson, author/historian of *Peter Pan Onstage and Screen* and *The Peter Pan Chronicles* discusses what may be at the heart of Barrie’s “wish,” citing Barrie’s own self-evaluation of his work:

Barrie’s Peter Pan controls his own destiny; he chooses not to grow up. The author and his favorites among the boys whose welfare he took responsibility did not have this luxury. The two boys had no choice in the matter as they both died violent deaths before they could truly grow up. As for Barrie himself, ‘It is as if, long after writing *Peter Pan*, its true meaning came to me,’ he inscribed in his notebook many years after he penned his most famous play. ‘Desperate attempts to grow up but can’t’ (Hanson 9).

But, what purpose could play serve as a means to cope with loss if the wish cannot be fulfilled? There is no indication that Barrie suffered from any mental disorder, so we can assume that he understood what anthropologist and communications theorist, Gregory Bateson refers to as “The discrimination between ‘play’ and ‘nonplay’” (126). Bateson explains that, “...like the
discrimination between fantasy and nonfantasy, [discrimination] is certainly a function of secondary process, or ‘ego.’ Within the dream the dreamer is usually unaware that he is dreaming, and within ‘play’ he must often be reminded that ‘This is play’ “ (126). To address this question, then, we must look at other examples of play in Barrie’s life – especially as he continued to play throughout his adulthood – most notably (and well-documented) with the Llewellyn Davies boys.

Barrie credits the boys, their stories, and their imaginative play with helping to develop many of his stories – especially Peter Pan. He explains this shared creative process of telling and retelling stories referencing his relationship with the eldest brother George: “...and so we go on until no one could say whether it is more his story or mine” (Tatar xliv). In 1901, Barrie self-published two copies of a book entitled The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island in which the games he played with the Llewellyn Davies boys are documented with 35 “...captioned images after a dedication, a preface, and very brief, telegram-style chapters” (190). Although the book was published, it was not meant for the public. It is more of a scrapbook than a book, filled with photographs taken by Barrie documenting the games he played with the Llewelyn Davies boys during a summer vacation to Black Lake. The images depict battles with pirates, islands “...glistening in the sun,” and even Barrie’s dog Porthos, who was the inspiration for Peter Pan’s dog-nurse “Nana.” In the games that produced this book, Barrie played the role of “...Captain Swarthy, a dark and sinister pirate equal to Captain Hook” (190), or, as Kirsten Stirling suggests, Captain Hook – a late addition to the play] was “...imported [into Peter Pan] from a previous existence – as “Captain Swarthy” (41). It is of considerable note that within these games Barrie did not embody the role of eternal youth, but the villainous pirate whose mission it was to kill Peter Pan and the Lost Boys.

The character Captain Swarthy or his later incarnation Captain Hook can be interpreted as the physical embodiment of death, deadly and always on the prowl. Yet, Hook is someone that, within the world of the play, can be defeated, evaded indefinitely. Furthermore, Captain Swarthy/Hook is both villain and comedian. Peter Pan, as Stirling explores in her book, is deeply rooted in British Pantomime, with many of its characters falling squarely into the character archetypes of Pantomime, which I will discuss in Chapter 2. The comic treatment of Captain Swarthy/Hook, in addition to Barrie playing him during games, allows Barrie to exert some control over the idea of death, signaling his desire to demystify death through comic play.
Science philosopher Paul Feyerband explains play as “...a bricolage of experimentation... initial Playful activity is an essential prerequisite of the final act of understanding...” (Sutton-Smith 137). In this sense, play serves as a rehearsal for Barrie of an inevitable fate – allowing him to characterize it in any way he chooses and exert control through representation. In the safe space of play, Barrie’s representation of death is contained.

As a rehearsal, Barrie can repeat, retell, or revise the story as much as he pleases, which is mirrored in his many revisions of *Peter Pan* – specifically the many endings (both published and unpublished) that range from Wendy remaining happily in Neverland to Peter trying to sabotage the Darling’s return to their home to Mrs. Darling flying to Neverland on a magic carpet to visit her children (Stirling). The many revisions are indicative of Barrie’s own relationship to death and ending;

The impression that *Peter Pan* keeps ending, yet never comes to a satisfactory conclusion, finds a grim echo in a sequence of notes towards a story that Barrie made in November 1922, eighteen months after Michael Llewellyn Davies’s death. Barrie recorded a dream in which Michael came back for a year, unaware that he had drowned, but as the anniversary of his death approached he was forced to die again in the same place. The dream is followed by a sequence of notes attempting to work the dream up into a story, and these notes, even more than the dream, circle obsessively around the return to the “fatal night” as Barrie works out multiple ways in which Michael might be fated to die again... (123).

Here, Barrie’s play is influenced by fear as much as it is influenced by hope. Play is not only a rehearsal for the many ways in which death can be cheated or evaded, but it is also a rehearsal (and a reminder) of the many ways that death can win. With play, however, there is no immutable end because “Play, of course, is at the heart of experimentation... Playing is open-ended and, potentially, everybody ‘wins.’ Playing has no stated purpose other than more playing” (Kaprow 141). This is precisely the power behind *Peter Pan* as play; the Pan scenario creates a “safe” space removed from the concrete consequences and lack of control of “reality.” If the player does not achieve his desired outcome he can simply play again. This freedom to replay and repeat can either be a tool to experience impossible wishes or it can be a tool in which to obsessively replay the traumas of one’s life. As a cultural myth, *Peter Pan* allows its audiences to assert control over their own traumas – individual or collective, allowing them,
through play, the experimentation that is the “essential prerequisite of the final act of understanding.” The surrogate, then, is not so much a replacement as it is a character within the play, a tool for experimentation. Maria Tatar explains the role of Neverland in play (note the similarities between Tatar’s discussion of Neverland and Taylor’s discussion of scenario):

> Using ‘imagination’ in the root sense of the term, the characters create new identities in that secret, sacred space known as Neverland. There they inhabit a world where play rules supreme. Cut off from ordinary reality, they possess a certain freedom yet are also subject to the tensions and rules found in all games and activities that we characterize as play. That kind of play, more than the cultural work of adults in the real world, can create a space of orderly form and aesthetic beauty (Tatar xxxix – xl).

Play, therefore, with its form and beauty, is the “charm” Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was seeking in response to the industrial revolution and the “materialist twentieth century.” So Barrie’s liminal world of Neverland resonates outside of his personal life and into the broader societal audience serving as what Joseph Roach calls a cultural vortex that comes to represent a culture by utilizing and amplifying the liminality of the culture, turning it into a performance – while created by the culture, it is also derived from it – reinforcing its identity (Roach 28). Like scenarios, fairytales, as cultural vortexes, are indicative of the cultures from which they derive, and in their retellings reflect the identity of the culture. So, *Peter Pan* is as reflective of Barrie’s personal life and Victorian England as it is reflective of the cultures that have embraced the narrative as a cultural narrative, permuting and perpetuating it.

As a wildly popular play and novel as well as framework that allowed Victorian England (which shifted to Edwardian England in 1901) to process its trauma of loss through growth – symbolized by the transition from childhood to adulthood – *Peter Pan* was entered into the cultural imagination. Furthermore, as Edwardian England was faced with new traumas, *Peter Pan* was used, once again, to fill the vacancies in the social fabric. When World War One approached, the anxieties of the Industrial Revolution gave way to the anxieties of impending war; the necessity of British culture changed, and the scenario of boyhood changed, too. Boys could no longer be innocent if they were to become soldiers.

Before I go on using *Peter Pan* to examine the differences between the myth of manhood during turn-of-the-century Britain and a Britain embroiled in a world war, I must problematize
this approach. Taylor writes that “Performances may not, as [ethnographer Victor] Turner had hoped, give us access and insight into another culture, but they certainly tell us a great deal about our desire for access, and reflect the politics of our interpretations” (Taylor 28). I cannot hope to access Victorian/Edwardian England through a performance of *Peter Pan*, but tracing the changing traditions of the *Peter Pan* myth, I can see how the scenario of boyhood adapted to its cultural climate. Taylor writes that scenarios

are passed on and remain remarkably coherent paradigms of seemingly unchanging attitudes and values. Yet, they adapt constantly to reigning conditions. Unlike habitus, which can refer to broad social structures such as class, scenarios refer to more specific repertoires of cultural imaginings (Taylor 54).

*Peter Pan*’s history in relationship to the changing constructions of boyhood and masculinity is particularly interesting because it can be traced in both the archive and the repertoire (as part of a propaganda machine and the cultural imagination) – a duality that elucidates the “unsatisfying détente” that Robin Bernstein describes as a tension between the ways “‘imagined’ childhood shapes the lived experiences of ‘real’ juveniles, who respond by unevenly colluding in or resisting their construction...” (Bernstein 22). My discussion of *Peter Pan* in World War One will explore the tension between the construction and lived experience of boyhood as well as the power of a cultural myth in performance as a nation sought to prepare its boys for war.
**Peter Pan in World War One: Re-scripting Masculinity**

“...when war did come we told Youth, who had to get us out of it, tall tales of what it really is and of the clover beds it would lead to.”

– Sir James M. Barrie, “Courage”

On May 7, 1915, the British ocean liner RMS Lusitania was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-Boat, killing over a thousand civilian passengers and eventually prompting the U.S. to enter World War One. Among the 128 American passengers killed was Charles Frohman, one of the United States’ most prosperous and important theatre producers of the time. A personal friend of James Barrie and producer of many of Barrie’s plays, including *Peter Pan*, Frohman was traveling to New York, at Barrie’s request, to assist in the staging of Barrie’s new play, *Rosy Rapture* (Tatar civ). According to one survivor, Frohman’s travel companion, actress Rita Jolivet, Frohman’s last words paraphrased the words Peter Pan spoke as he awaited death in the scene Marooner’s Rock: “To die would be an awfully big adventure.” Linda Robertson, in her article on the subject of *Peter Pan* and World War One, describes Frohman’s last moments aboard the Lusitania: “As the first of two powerful green waves overwhelmed the four people clinging to each other, the man who holds our immediate attention [Frohman] said, ‘Why fear death? It is the greatest adventure in life’” (Robertson 50). Frohman’s last words were a tribute to the play he loved (“From the moment he read the play, he had been enchanted with it, sometimes stopping his friends in the street to act out bits of the play before it was produced”), and they were also evocative of the sentiment of the early 20th Century – a sentiment that equated “adventure” with “war” (Robertson 57).

In the years leading up to the war and its start, Barrie promoted this sentiment, which abounded in the literature of the day as well as the journals and letters of World War One soldiers, both in his writing and his public life in England and abroad. On September 2, 1914,  

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10 Here I must give credit to Linda Robertson and her excellent article “ “To die would be an awfully big adventure’: Peter Pan and World War I.” Her work prompted me to delve further into the sentiment that pervaded England and America during World War One and, more specifically, Barrie’s relationship with the war and the script of *Peter Pan*. I hope my article may serve to further her fine discussion by historicizing the role of Barrie in the creation of the final version of the play published in 1928.
less than a month after Britain declared war with Germany, “...C.F.G. Masterman, who had been put in charge of a new Department of Information (that is, of British propaganda), summoned a number of writers to the department offices at Wellington House11 ‘for the organization of public statements of the strength of the British case and principles in the war by well-known men of letters’” (Hynes 26). Among the writers summoned was prolific novelist and playwright Sir James M. Barrie whose play Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up had been running in England and the United States since its premiere in 1904 and 1905 respectively. Barrie’s work prior to the war, especially Peter Pan, was influential to the myth that sought to define manhood through enlistment into the “great adventure.”

Barrie carried this sentiment with him as he boarded the Lusitania in November 1914 on a trip to the United States meant to garner American support for the British war effort as “...much of the Wellington House effort was directed at the United States” (Buitenhuis 279). However, as the war began to affect Barrie, who lost not only friends but also one of his wards, George Llewelyn Davies, his sentiment began to change. Upon receiving news of George’s death in 1915, Barrie yelled “Ah-h-h! They’ll all go, Mary – Jack, Peter, Michael – even little Nico – This dreadful war will get them all in the end...” (Tatar cii). The once pro-war Barrie began to speak out against it, and in his 1922 rectorial address at St. Andrews he told the students of those myths created to draw youth into war and warned of their pretext, saying

for 50 years or so we heeded not the rumblings of a distant drum – I don’t mean by lack of military preparations – and when war did come we told youth, who had to get us out of it, tall tales of what it really is and of the clover beds it would lead to. We were not meaning to deceive, most of us were as honourable and as ignorant as the Youth themselves; but that does not acquit us of stupidity and jealousy, the two black spots in human nature, which, more than love of money, are at the root of all evil. If you prefer to leave things as they are we shall probably fail you again. Don’t be too sure that we have learned our lesson and are not at this very moment doddering down some brimstone path (“Youth and its Destiny” 13).

Because Barrie did not publish Peter Pan until 1928, twenty-four years after its premiere,

11 I will refer to the body of these collective men and their literary propaganda, though unofficially named, as the “Wellington House.”
his changing sentiment can be charted in his substantial revisions to the play. Specifically, we can chart the treatment of Peter’s line “To die would be an awfully big adventure” that permeated (and was employed as pro-war propaganda by) the United States and Britain throughout the war. Through a careful examination of both the play’s changing script and other primary sources from Barrie’s life, I hope to elucidate the affect of World War One on the myth of manhood in the western cultural imagination of the early 20th Century and one of its most famous writers, Sir James M. Barrie.

In order to chart Barrie’s changing sentiment, we must first explore the myth of the “great adventure” that abounded in the literature of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. In his book *The Great Adventure*, Michael Adams traces the genealogy of the myth of manhood that pervaded the United States and Britain around the turn of the 20th Century, discussing how the sentiment of the “great adventure” literature of the day (such as Stephen Crane’s 1895 *The Red Badge of Courage*) permeated the cultures, and manifested itself in the journals and letters of World War One soldiers – some real and some fictional.

The Victorian era, with its emphasis on the separation of the sexes, rigidly defined gender, and the myth of manhood preached athleticism, hardiness, and courage in stark contrast to the purported feminine traits associated with the cult of domesticity. In 1888, American Ambassador to France and former Union Army officer General Horace Porter explained true manhood in a speech as he asked his audience to compare two lads: ‘Let one remain in a quiet city, playing the milksop... leading an unambitious namby-pamby life, ...while the other goes out on the frontier, runs his chance in encounters with wild animals, finds that to make his way he must take his life in his hands, and assert his rights, if necessary with deadly weapons...’ He will ‘become the superior of the lad who has remained at home’ (Adams 25).

Out of this rhetoric rose an affinity for war as not only the true expression of manhood, but the only way to obtain it. Joanna Bourke, in her book *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* begins to interrogate the construction of masculinity at the turn of the century explaining “…men gained power within the public sphere, but they lost some of their domestic influence as they crowned women the ‘angels of the home’…” (Bourke 12). Masculinity, then, began to take shape in opposition to the role of women, which, by the 1870s,
had taken on a rigid social structure as “...a series of legislative reforms conferred certain legal rights on wives and mothers” (12). Inculcated by this sentiment, George Wyndham, British Under Secretary for War and professional soldier, in 1896 wrote “battle is the ultimate expression of life, the equivalent of motherhood for women. ‘The woman in love, the man in battle, may each say, for their moment, ...I was made perfect too’” (Adams 48).

As Barrie’s popular play was revived in London and transported across the Atlantic, it subtly shifted from a focus on innocence and nature to highlight its features of warfare, ruggedness, and patriotism that were becoming more important in turn-of-the –century England. In the original review of the premiere, The Times gave a full report of the play, lingering over the moments of true Patriotism with relish; “It is now time for the unhappy children to walk the plank – though two of them shall be spared to serve as cabin-boys if only they will cry ‘Down with King Edward.’ Proudly the dauntless boys reply with ‘God save the King,’ and ‘Rule Britannia.’ and so the dread plank is run out over the side” (Duke of York’s Theatre). Michael Adams explains how the myth of manhood operates in Peter Pan;

In dying well, young men are encouraged by the precepts of playing the game. When Hook is making the boys walk the plank, he allows Wendy ‘a mother’s last words to her children.’ Wendy says, ‘I feel that I have a message to you from your real mothers, and it is this: ‘we hope our sons will die like English gentlemen.’ ‘ Even Hook is at his best at the end. In the final fight, all of the seedy reprobate dissolves. He dies with good form, facing impossible odds, and this transfigures him: ‘His mind was no longer with them; it was slouching in the playing fields of long ago, or being sent up for good, or watching the wall game from a famous wall.’ How better to die than in battle, thinking of the Eton wall game (Adams 87-88).

In the Victorian and early Edwardian era, schools such as Eton were integral in the myth of manhood and in fashioning model students of masculinity. Even the villain Captain Hook operates squarely within the heteronormative model of Victorian masculinity (which he learned at Eton) upholding the tenets of proper form even in the face of death. Captain Hook’s fond relationship with Eton would be familiar to the audience of Peter Pan as the Industrial Revolution had increased the number of boys able to attend school, and along with this came another significant change in England.
When war was declared in August of 1914, the British government realized this war would be different than all the ones that came before because late Victorian legislation had raised the general level of literacy and extended the franchise; consequently there were more voters in England to be persuaded of the rightness of the nation’s cause, and they could be persuaded in writing. There were also potential soldiers to persuade, for this was to be a war fought by volunteers. And for the first time in English military history they would be literate volunteers... (Hynes 28).

C.F.G. Masterman’s literary propaganda machine, then, sought to persuade English and American youth through a continuation of the “great adventure” myth they already subscribed to.

Despite his creative writings that upheld and perpetuated this mythology that was now being employed politically, Barrie did not see himself as a political man. Although Barrie began his career as a journalist, “[h]e was never a reader of newspapers, and going into politics meant for him saying to a friend, ‘Tell me what is going on in politics, and I’ll stop you as soon as I think I have got my article’ (Jack 87). Despite his purported aversion to politics, Barrie boarded the Lusitania a few weeks after the September meeting at Wellington House for an unofficial visit to the United States to promote American military involvement. The keystone of Barrie’s visit was a meeting with Theodore Roosevelt, who was an active supporter of the war, having contributed to the manhood myth-making (in a testament to the cross-cultural nature of this sentiment) when he penned the book The Great Adventure, and who would send his own sons to Europe as soldiers long before the U.S. entered into war (Robertson 60).

In 1938, journalist Peter Monro Jack discussed Barrie’s journalism, saying Barrie “...did not know what he was talking about. He had a sense of it, and that was all; but his sense went over, and his sentiment and sensibility did the rest” (Jack 87). Was it, then, Barrie’s sense of the great adventure that sent him across the Atlantic to promote the war? One might draw the conclusion that Barrie’s mission was for love of country if it were not for the events that occurred while aboard the Lusitania.

Barrie decided that he should go to America and drum up support for the Allies. Having said to a friend ‘we must all try to do something’, he persuaded Gilmour
and Mason to go with him. In utmost secrecy about their rather amorphous mission they set off aboard the *Lusitania*. Before they had arrived in the United States word had gotten out, and the clandestine ambassadors were met by letters from the Consul-General and the British Ambassador begging Barrie to call off his mission’, in case it should offend the Americans and embarrass the British government (Chaney 304).

But Barrie did not call off his mission and instead forged on despite the wishes of his country and despite his aversion to the media. Arriving in New York, Barrie was met by Charles Frohman, “…an intimate friend of Barrie... It was Frohman who introduced Barrie to the American theatre, and it was to Frohman that the shy author fled when besieged by reporters. All his life he had staved off interviewers, but in November 1914, when arriving in New York on the ill-fated *Lusitania*, he had to submit to this ordeal and did so gracefully” (“Barrie Too Complex a Figure…”). Barrie’s visit appeared to be for business only as *The New York Times* wrote, “Except for a visit to Colonel Roosevelt at Oyster Bay, and his business conferences, Barrie succeeded in living an almost hermit-like life in the very heart of New York City” (Kilmer Sm11). Here, one cannot help but wonder why the self-professed apolitical Barrie would, against the will of his government, suffer through a siege of reporters to garner support for a war he was too old to fight. Surely sentiment alone would not lead Barrie across the Atlantic. Perhaps it was not love of country, but love of his wards that prompted Barrie’s American visit;

On 5\(^{th}\) August [1914] Peter arrived at Auch Lodge from London bringing a letter from the Adjutant of the Cambridge OTC, which said that it was the duty of all undergraduates to offer themselves for service... He and George traveled down to London, leaving Barrie and Mary Hodgson with the two younger boys in Scotland. By early September George and Peter had been enlisted in the army as junior officers, while Jack was already mobilised as a sub-lieutenant in the navy (Chaney 304).

Three of Barrie’s beloved wards were heading off to war, and he was going to get as much support for them as possible. So, when the apolitical Barrie was called to Wellington House on Sept 2, 1914, he answered the call. Although it meant an uncomfortable public life for the private Barrie, joining in the Wellington House propaganda gave him the justification and the
credentials to travel to America to meet with Theodore Roosevelt and to garner support for his country, but more importantly, his boys.

Despite the efforts of Wellington House, however, the United States would not enter war until spring of 1917. By the beginning of 1915, the war started going badly for Britain; “[t]he killing started very fast, and on a large scale... In the first three months of war, almost the entire original British army was wiped out” (Zinn 360). A sense of trepidation came over Barrie;

Although at the beginning Barrie had written to a friend that he believed ‘our young men... are to be as right as rain’, three months into the war, when there had already been appalling loss of life, he was more apprehensive. He wrote frequently that he was longing to see George and Peter, and by mid-November a note of desperation had crept into his letters (Chaney 305).

Coinciding with Barrie’s desperation came another change to the script of Peter Pan as “[t]his year [1915], and for the duration [of the war], the famous phrase ‘To die will be an awfully big adventure’ was removed from the annual revivals of Peter Pan” (307). But the coming toll of war was unavoidable, and on March 7th, the brother of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies and Gerald du Maurier – the actor that originated the role of Mr. Darling and Captain Hook, Guy du Maurier was killed in battle. On March 15th, George Llewelyn Davies, the boy Barrie credits with first saying “To die would be an awfully big adventure,” and ”[t]he boy for whom [Barrie] wrote ‘Peter Pan’ – the original, indeed, of ‘Peter Pan’ – ...died in battle. This was, the little boy who, through the kindly intervention of Charles Frohman, saw a special performance of ‘Peter Pan’ in his bedroom, because he was ill when the play had its first London performance” (Kilmer SM11). On May 17th, Charles Frohman was drowned in the sinking of the Lusitania. Isaac F. Marcossan, Charles Frohman’s biographer, in New York Times interview spoke of Barrie’s reaction to the losses he experienced in 1915 saying, “I found him much saddened... Barrie is not writing much – in fact, none of the great English authors are producing much work these days. They, like all the rest of England, are roused to the tremendous meaning and significance of the great struggle. It has bitten into their very souls” (SM11). Barrie, in a letter to Marcossan wrote “I have been a week in bed and am not sure when I shall be right again, not that it much matters (for if we are not fighting we are mere cumberers of the ground)” (SM11).

Despite the terrible carnage of the war, British media was laden with inaccurate reporting upholding the ever-victorious Britain, and Barrie, who knew the reality of the war firsthand, did
not contribute to the Wellington House propaganda in 1915. However, Barrie’s Peter Pan – especially the line from the Marooner’s Rock scene, “To die would be an awfully big adventure,” had already been entered into the cultural imagination of the day and was being used as a rallying cry. Barrie must have felt conflicted as his words were being used to draw soldiers into a war he no longer supported, a war that had killed the boy for whom those words were written, and yet he could not regain control over his story. Peter was no longer his character, but a symbol of current British boyhood – a soldier.

In November 1915, at the same time the scene Marooner’s Rock was cut from all performances in Europe, The New York Times published a tribute to Charles Frohman, Barrie’s words were used to dramatize the last moments of Barrie’s friend on the sinking Lusitania, saying Frohman died not in bitterness, but as the protagonist in a great tragedy. In the face of death... he dramatized himself and his last big scene as deliberately and as objectively as if it were the tragic, closing act of any one of the many plays he had directed for the stage at home and abroad. The moment was too magnificent as drama to be obscured by panic or futile temper. Instantly Frohman translated an incredible catastrophe into a thrilling dramatic scene, with himself as the star and the Germans as so many pirates. He saw himself in the predicament or another who had been fought by pirates and left marooned on a rock at sea (Williams X8).

One can only imagine how Barrie felt as the death of his friend was characterized as a scene in his fairytale in an effort to romanticize a deadly war into a battle between Lost Boys and Pirates. Moreover, his story had become a propaganda tool to lure boys into enlisting, and “[i]nto this pit of death and deception came the United States, in the spring of 1917” (Zinn 361). Historian Howard Zinn writes about the American perception of the war;

there is no persuasive evidence that the public wanted war. The government had to work hard to create its consensus. That there was no spontaneous urge to fight is suggested by the strong measures taken: a draft of young men [only 73,000 volunteered before the draft], an elaborate propaganda campaign throughout the country, and harsh punishment for those who refused to get in line (364).
Charles Frohman’s dramatic (or dramatized) death upon the Lusitania became a popular parable to sway public opinion in favor of the war – creating a mythology that combined the deaths of innocent civilians with the beloved fairytale that had pervaded American culture for over a decade – a fairytale many of those enlisting would have grown up with. However, this parable was a boon for a propaganda machine that had the task of “rewriting” the sinking of the Lusitania to serve its cause. Howard Zinn explains

The United States claimed the *Lusitania* carried an innocent cargo, and therefore the torpedoing was a monstrous German atrocity. Actually, the *Lusitania* was heavily armed: it carried 1,248 cases of 3-inch shells, 4,927 boxes of cartridges (1,000 rounds in each box), and 2,000 more cases of small-arms ammunition. Her manifests were falsified to hide this fact, and the British and American governments lied about the cargo (362).

Thus, the Lusitania became a tool to bolster support for the war in America and draw in soldiers under false pretenses. Barrie would not have been aware of this inaccuracy, but he was beginning to feel a strong sense that the soldiers were being mislead by propaganda, propaganda to which he felt he had contributed. Although he spoke out against it, his words had already been entered into the cultural imagination that reified the myth of manhood and were no longer under his control.

Even after war ended in 1918, Barrie was still deeply troubled by the war and his involvement in the Wellington House propaganda. He felt a great divide between the generations in Britain and focused on developing the agency of British youth.

In the notebook for that period, interspersed with notes for *Peter Pan* are ongoing thoughts on Barrie’s rectorial address at St. Andrews, plus some revealing comments about himself... ‘Great thing to form own opinion, don’t accept hearsay... Question authority. Question accepted views, values, reputations. Don’t be afraid to be among the rebels... Speak scornfully of the Victorian age. Of Edwardian age. Of last year. Of old-fashioned writers like Barrie, who accept old-fangled ideas.’ (Chaney 339).

In 1922, Barrie, as Rector of St. Andrews, gave an address to the students entitled “Courage” in which he personified and spoke to the “Youth.” Barrie had become increasingly disturbed by the way war decisions were made for Youth and actively sought to cultivate a more self-determining
and critical Youth that would challenge those decision makers. He is openly self-deprecating in his speech as he viewed himself, as once part of the Wellington House whose “...writers were too old for military service... the average age was just over fifty,” as one of those decision makers (339). Regretful of his involvement with World War One propaganda, Barrie drew a distinction between the Youth and the group to which he belonged, “The Old Men.” The concept of the Old Men, as the makers of the war and enemies of the young, had many origins; but one was certainly that meeting at Wellington House in September 1914, when those middle-aged and old writers gathered to support a war in which they would not fight (Hynes 26).

Barrie warned the students of St. Andrews against this as he urged them to take action;

I want you take up this position – that Youth have for too long left exclusively in our hands the decisions in national matters that are more vital to them than to us. Things about the next war, for instance, and why the last one ever had a beginning. That the time has arrived for Youth to demand a partnership. That to gain courage is what you come to St. Andrews for (Youth and Its Destiny 13).

Here Barrie attempts to rewrite the narrative of the great adventure as he suggests the students will find courage not through warfare on the fields of battle but through in the classroom. Barring the discovery of journal entry by Barrie on the subject, we can never know what made Barrie decide to revise and publish the script to Peter Pan nearly twenty-four years after its original premiere, but it was with this newfound sentiment that Barrie turned to his play again.

It was not until 1928 that the script of Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up was published. Along with the script came a dedication and an additional scene entitled “When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought.” Barrie dedicates his script “To The Five” – meaning the five Llewelyn Davies boys with whom he created Peter Pan while playing in Kensington Gardens. Only three of the boys were living as this dedication went to print (George had been killed in battle, and Michael had drowned a few years later while at school.)

12 In the dedication, Barrie talks of the distance he feels within his relationship to the boys and also to the script;

12 It is unclear whether Michael had died at the time the dedication was written. One of Barrie’s primary biographers, Andrew Birkin, believes Michael had probably died before Barrie penned the dedication. James Barrie’s older brother, David, had also been drowned in an accident when Barrie was six-years-old. David is widely accepted as one of the inspirations for the character Peter Pan.
I talk of dedicating the play to you, but how can I prove it is mine? How ought I to act if some other hand, who could also have made a copy, thinks it worthwhile to contest the cold rights? Cold they are to me now as that laughter of yours in which Peter came into being long before he was caught and written down. There is Peter still, but to me he lies sunk in the gay Black Lake (Hollindale 77).

The Afterthought, originally written in 1909 and intended, according to Barrie, to only be performed once, had made its way permanently into the published script. Although the final scene of *Peter Pan* had seen many incarnations and revisions, from Wendy remaining in Neverland to Mrs. Darling visiting her children on the island by way of a magic carpet, Barrie definitively chose the Afterthought to end the play as he included it in the long-awaited publication. In this scene, Peter returns to the Darling’s nursery to find Wendy grown and unable to fly; she says: “I can’t come with you, Peter – because I’m no longer young and innocent” (Hollindale 162). Why has Barrie chosen to end the play in this way? There are many reasons, including the death of the Llewelyn Davies’ mother and Barrie’s disconnect with the boys who once loved him, that affect the play’s ending. But it is Barrie’s experience with the war, and its nearly 37 million casualties (in the script, Barrie gives Hook the line “a holocaust of children”), that are most reflective of Wendy’s lost youth, a youth that Barrie would strive to protect through his public life. Most notably, Barrie gave all the rights to *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond’s Street Hospital Children’s Charity in his will – eternally protecting the youth he so cherished. *Peter Pan* becomes an effigy of a generation of lost youth, surrogating the physical loss of soldiers and the emotional loss of innocence caused by the terror and carnage of war.

At the time of Barrie’s death in 1937, the public’s sentiment had changed, too, calling Peter’s line from the Marooner’s Rock “terrible” in Barrie’s obituary, and in 1938, on the verge of World War Two, *The New York Times* published a review of Barrie’s biography saying “...though it ends with the awful sentence: ‘To die will be an awfully big adventure,’ it manages by its own simplicity to survive that false naïveté” (Jack 87).
Conclusion

In 1938, as Europe once again was headed to war, the cultural narrative of the great adventure had changed. Having experienced the harsh and unexpected realities of World War One, the once anthemic “To die will be an awfully big adventure” was widely regarded as naïve, awful. As a harbinger of this collective shift in ideology toward war, Barrie, in the Afterthought (published in 1922 the same year he spoke out against war at his rectorial address at St. Andrews), writes that as Peter flies away from the nursery window he is thinking, “To live would be an awfully big adventure” (Hollindale 163, italics mine).

By tracing the traditions of *Peter Pan*, particularly the treatment of the Marooner’s Rock scene, we can begin to parse out the changing ideologies surrounding boyhood and masculinity at the beginning of the twentieth century as they were shaped and altered by war. Chapter 3 will continue to explore the tension between imagined and lived childhood by exploring the formal and informal education of children in regard to *Peter Pan* as both popular entertainment and propaganda. Chapter 3, “Performing Peter Pan: Gender Play in Neverland,” will focus more specifically on the way education is used to create “fit” bodies, calling into question gender, sexuality, and desire as they relate to and complicate the building of a national identity. Moreover, both *Peter Pan*’s text and its performance traditions complicate the heteronormative constructions of national identity – another example of how real bodies queer imagined bodies.
CHAPTER THREE

Performing *Peter Pan*: Gender Play in Neverland

Jacqueline Rose’s 1984 book *The Case of Peter Pan Or the Impossibility of Children’s Literature* asserts through the discussion of Sir James M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* that there can be no literature for children as the very constructs of childhood itself are not defined by the child but by adults who, sometimes unwittingly, perpetuate hegemonic meta-narratives that inscribe themselves on the child body. She argues that there can be no literature for children for many reasons, including the adult forces that perceive, construct, and enforce ideas of childhood. Children’s literature does not consider what “the child wants, but [...] what the adult desires – desires in the very act of construing the child as the object of its speech. Children’s fiction draws in the child, it secures, places and frames the child” (Rose 2).

Rose thus describes the function of childhood and the child body in relation to “the nation” – or, to use cultural theorist Benedict Anderson’s term, the “the imagined community.” In the years leading up to the First World War, myths became invaluable as nation-building tools as nations began to rigidly define themselves against one another. Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, explains the ways in which nationhood is conceived: the nation “...is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 6). Because nations are imagined, they must, then, create and promote their own cultural myths that bind the members in a sense of “communion.” In order to construct and maintain this sense of nationhood, Anderson explains, the nation must create narratives that link the members together. As these narratives seek to create a uniform sense of communion, they reshape other narratives of identification to ensure cohesion. As the British government actively sought to create a sense of nationhood at the beginning of the twentieth century in particular regard to World War I, it used the already popular myth of the Great Adventure (and one of its most popular iterations, *Peter Pan*) to shape gender roles (that were already in upheaval due to the Industrial Revolution) through propaganda and formal education. Through *Peter Pan*, adult desire constructs childhood and gender roles to support an over-arching national narrative that stressed patriotism and regimented societal roles.
This chapter will build upon Anderson and Rose’s theories to analyze the ways in which *Peter Pan* was used to construct childhood and shape a sense of national communion within Britain in relationship to World War I. The section “Gender, Childhood, and the Nation: Creating ‘Fit’ Bodies” will discuss the adult desires surrounding childhood leading up to World War I – particularly the way British government, through the informal education of propaganda and formal education of public schooling, actively sought to shape the minds and bodies of its young men. The conflation of childhood and “savage” peoples (as they were sometimes defined at that time) further elucidates the colonialist ventures of Victorian/Edwardian England. More particularly, through the examination of Neverland as a liminal space, we can see how the British ideologies of gender are temporarily subverted only to be re-established when the Darling children return. The liminal space of Neverland as a social transition is a culturally constructed space or pathway between different positions in society. In effect, those who enter Neverland are meant to leave and re-enter society, as – in the case of *Peter Pan* – grown-ups. Therefore, Neverland may be representative of puberty – a space between childhood and adulthood where gender roles are tested. “Performing Gender: Queering the Principal Boy and Conventions of Pantomime” will examine how *Peter Pan* simultaneously supports and subverts heteronormative gender roles of Victorian/Edwardian England by the way gender in *Peter Pan* is performed onstage.

The subversion and re-establishment of gender in Neverland is best understood by a discussion of British Pantomime, a popular nineteenth-century British theatrical tradition (still seen today) that deeply influenced *Peter Pan*. A highly codified theatrical form, Pantomime is known for its lead crossed-dressed roles, the Principal Boy (played by a woman), and the Grand Dame (played by a man). The role of Pantomime in British society exemplifies the ways in which temporary suspension of gender roles in a liminal space, such as the theatre, allows societal roles to be re-asserted. In this way, “the play and the novel become safely recontextualized parts of the Victorian scene, and words like ‘tomboy’ become labels for life-stages we all grow out of” (Garber 168). However, Marjorie Garber, in her book on cross-

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13 Victorian England became Edwardian England in 1901 with the coronation of King Edward. While I will try to use the terms to coincide with their historical period, scholars tend to use “Victorian” to describe much of early twentieth century England, as the ideologies formed during the Industrial Revolution during “Victorian” England continued to play out well into the twentieth century.
dressing *Vested Interests*, warns, “this interpretation would be to write out, to erase, the transvestite and his/her power to destabilize and disturb” (168). Therefore, the section “‘No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man:’ How *Peter Pan* Complicates the Heteronormative Constructs of Liminality” will question how transvestitism functions in *Peter Pan* to destabilize British culture and its constructions of gender.

Because *Peter Pan*, as Barrie intended, utilizes many of the conventions of Pantomime, most notably its stock characters and plotline, pinpointing the ways the play deviates from the standard Pantomime conventions exemplifies the ways in which *Peter Pan* subverts heteronormative ideologies of gender in Victorian England.
Gender, Childhood, and the Nation: Creating “Fit” Bodies

In *The Case of Peter Pan*, Jacqueline Rose explains the “the rudiments of the more familiar adventure story: a colonial fantasy about the primitive and the child (the primitive as child), and a belief in childhood as something which is able to by-pass the imperfections of the civilised world” (Rose 53). In Chapter 1, I discussed the use of child as surrogate for a pastoral innocence, now lost, that the British society of the early twentieth century desired in reaction to the anxieties produced by the Industrial Revolution and modernity. These particular anxieties, however, would soon be overshadowed by impending war. Amid the nation building and boundary drawing throughout Europe that preceded World War One, Britain was caught in an ideological space between a desire to return to the more “primitive” state of pastoral life and the desire to exert power as a modern nation over more “primitive” peoples. Rose explains the function of the child in adventure stories at this time: “the child is serving to mediate, or resolve, a fundamental contradiction – that of seeing modern society as degenerate while still wishing to preserve its superiority over an otherwise primitive state” (Rose 53). Here the complicated relationship between national identity and constructs of childhood plays out in the adventure story, which is further complicated, as I will discuss in later sections, by gender and sexuality.

The great adventure myth was deeply engrained in the Western cultural imagination at the turn of the century, abounding in the literature of the day and embodied in the community through organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Indian Guides, YMCA, and Explorer’s Club, among others. Because this myth was directed at and perpetuated through stories and organizations for young boys, it took on a connotation of innocence. Such a connotation, however, only worked (and continues to work) to make invisible the colonialist and hegemonic forces that are inextricably linked to “the great adventure.”

By examining the enunciation of children’s literature and mythologies such as “the great adventure,” we can begin to parse out the hegemonic structures that govern and construct ideas of boyhood. Thus, our understanding of the relationship between war and masculinity becomes clearer, but the specific ways in which “those experiences [of war] still fundamentally [affect] not only the shape and texture of the male body, but also the values ascribed to the body and the disciplines applied to masculinity” still demand our attention (Bourke 30). While literature can
shape the minds of youth, it is play that shapes the body – bodies that make up the collective national body.

Because nations are imagined, they must, then, create and promote their own cultural myths that bind the members in a sense of “communion.” As a cultural myth, “the great adventure” is an important nation-building tool even though (or perhaps, as I will argue, especially because) it is viewed as a story for children, relegated to the realm of childhood. “[T]he boy’s adventure story, which came into its own in the mid to late nineteenth century,” as Jacqueline Rose states, “was always part of an exploratory and colonialist venture which assumed that discovering or seeing the world was the same thing as controlling it” (Rose 9). Moreover, the way that this myth was enacted through play made these ventures possible.

Although Rose focuses solely on constructs of childhood – as she had not the space within the parameters of her argument to venture outside – her arguments surrounding the hegemonic representations of childhood can be applied seamlessly to the examination of representations of the “Redskins” in Sir. James M. Barrie’s Peter Pan. Take, for instance, her positioning of the child within children’s literature of the day: “they [children] share a primitive or lost state to which the child has special access. The child is, if you like, something of a pioneer who restores these worlds to us, and gives them back to us with a facility or directness which ensures that our own relationship to them is, finally, safe” (Rose 9). While the infantalization of native peoples is a well-known historical problem, the ways in which childhood is constructed as “primitive” (the child as a representation of the native) could be an interesting entry point to the deconstruction of colonial narratives that expressed the superiority of Modern British society. Here, I must be clear that I do not equate “native” and “primitive,” but I do recognize the ways in which colonial powers construct the two under the guise of “noble

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14 Take, for instance, Howard Zinn’s discussion of Native peoples from his book A People’s History of the United States: 1492-Present (note the ways in which his construction mirrors the spheres of gender identity of turn of the century Britain): “If women, of all the subordinate groups in a society dominated by rich white males, were closest to home (indeed, in the home), the most interior, then the Indians were the most foreign, the most exterior. Women, because they were so near and so needed, were dealt with more by patronization than by force. The Indian, not needed – indeed, an obstacle – could be dealt with by sheer force, except that sometimes the language of paternalism preceded the burning of villages” (125).
savagery.” By examining the conflation of childhood with Philip Deloria’s term Indianess\textsuperscript{15} (and, additionally “blackness,” which I will discuss later), we can begin to understand the ways in which these detrimental colonialist narratives construct themselves and the world they seek to mythologize.

One of the most disturbing aspects of Barrie’s play and novel of \textit{Peter Pan} is the depiction of the “Redskins” who, in Neverland, form the “Piccaninny Tribe.”\textsuperscript{16} Such a conflation of representations of people of color may seem strange or even shocking to a contemporary audience, and yet it is only a historical symptom of colonial narratives that continue to permeate many of our contemporary lives. In his book \textit{Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp}, Leslie Paris explains that this conflation is neither particular to Barrie’s play nor to his time.\textsuperscript{17} “In the early twentieth century,” Paris states, “racial play at camps shuttled primarily between two important loci of imagined primitivism: Native Americans and African Americans” (191). He continues:

Minstrelsy and Indian play were thus doubly nostalgic cultural forms. Gesturing to imagined pasts, they elided the particular histories of colonial and racial oppression. In positioning people of color at a historical remove, cross-racial play allowed white-only camp communities to contain the threat that racial difference represented as a constitutive agent in white children’s subjectivity (Paris 192).

Although Paris is speaking of camp culture, the sentiments as well as the actions of campers and camp staff resonate, and are influenced by, the larger culture in which the camp is located.

\textsuperscript{15} Deloria uses the term “Indianess” to describe the perception and performance of Indians by non-Indians.
\textsuperscript{16} In addition to these “American” bodies that were constructed by white hegemonic powers to represent “Other,” the term “Neverland” (also written in the play and novel as the Never Never Land) comes from Australia, as the “Never Never” was a term for uncharted outback, further conflating bodies marked by “otherness” – Indian, Black, and Aboriginal.

\textsuperscript{17} I have chosen to use examples from America as well as Great Britain for two reasons: firstly, because representations of Native Americans have long been exported – as Deloria states, “Europeans, too, have embraced Indianess with summertime reenactment,” and secondly, and more importantly, because I want to elucidate that playing Indian is \textit{always} an appropriation. Americans have no more claim to represent indigenous bodies and cultures than any one else – to suggest that would be to suggest that American appropriations and representations are somehow more “authentic” when all such appropriations will always be inauthentic.
Moreover, summer camp must end, and the campers, armed and educated with their camp experiences, must live again outside the campsite.

Deloria, in his book *Playing Indian*, eloquently links the action of “playing Indian” with the cultural forces that drive it. Using a post-structuralist approach, Deloria examines the way in which history is written *for* the present, and how Westerners “returned to the Indian, reinterpreting the intuitive dilemmas surrounding Indianess to meet the circumstances of their time” (Deloria 7). Although Deloria’s book deals exclusively with American representations of Indianess, we can easily see (with examples such as Barrie’s depiction of the “Redskin Piccaninny Tribe”) how bodies marked as “Other” were appropriated by other colonial powers, such as Great Britain. Playing Indian – in organizations such as the Indian Guides – took on an important societal function in preparing boys for war as “men who had little education drew from other pre-war traditions (such as body-building clubs and the scouts)” (Bourke 24).

Deloria further explains this connection between technologically advancing colonial powers, such as America and Great Britain, and the people they colonize as he explains that “…the practice of playing Indian has clustered around two paradigmatic moments – the Revolution, which rested on the creation of a national identity, and modernity, which has used Indian play to encounter the authentic amidst the anxiety of urban industrial and postindustrial life” (Deloria 7). He goes further to suggest that colonial powers wrapped up in the Industrial Revolution and more contemporary relationships with technologies that change man’s relationship to the natural world are in search for ‘authenticity’; “[b]ecause those seeking authenticity have already defined their own state as inauthentic, they easily locate authenticity in the figure of an Other. This Other can be coded in terms of time (nostalgic or archaism), place (the small town), or culture (Indianess)” (101). Putting the Other in terms of time (a temporal view which demands a beginning) connects the idea of Otherness with the idea of childhood. According to the hegemonic cultural myth of “the great adventure,” as one must first be a child, one must first be savage so that one can advance into a cultured adult. Thereby the myth equates primitivism with childhood and cultural advancement with adulthood – both “primitive” body/mind and youthful body/mind may one day aspire to be a man. Moreover, Deloria’s assertion can be applied more wholly to *Peter Pan*: time (childhood), place (Neverland), and culture (Indianess). Thereby, through the perpetuation of this myth, the realms of childhood,
fantasy, and Indianess (or Otherness) are inextricably linked within the western cultural imagination.

In his 2006 essay, “Problematizing Piccaninnies, or How J.M. Barrie Uses Graphemes to Counter Racism in Peter Pan,” Clay Kinchen Smith examines the relationship between Peter and the “Redskins” who “freely exchange identities during the ‘sanguinary affair’...Such examples sensitize audiences to the performative nature of the characters (and their attendant identities) that they see upon the stage” (Smith 113). Smith’s discussion of this interchangeability upholds Deloria’s view of the function of the represented native body and Rose’s view of the function of the child as she describes that “the child is serving to mediate, or resolve, a fundamental contradiction – that of seeing modern society as degenerate while still wishing to preserve its superiority over an otherwise primitive state” (Rose 53). Here Paris’s idea of the “tradition of racial exoticism” is played on both the indigenous and child body (Paris 193). Benedict Anderson states “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 6). Thus, the ways in which boys and “Others” were imagined entered them into a kind of community of their own – even though the members may never meet, and in many ways can never meet as many of the members are not only imagined, but imaginary.

Whereas the reasoning behind colonial myths that subjugate the Other may be clear, the reasoning behind colonial myths that subjugate colonial children may be more difficult to understand. To begin to deconstruct these myths and their relationship to the time period from which they were generated, we must analyze the needs of those creating (i.e. propagandizing, teaching, etc.) such myths. For this, Joanna Bourke’s Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain, and the Great War examines the male body in relation to the nation-building powers that sought to shape and use it; “Before the [First World] war, the manipulation of public opinion was regarded as the province of the church, the press, political parties, philanthropists and non-governmental organizations, but with the declaration of war, this changed as the government mobilized its resources in an attempt to counter German propaganda” (Bourke 17). British propagandists of the Wellington House, famous British authors too old to fight in the war including Barrie, perpetuated these adventure stories in order to prepare boys for war.
As Bourke writes of the British volunteers, the majority of men’s bodies were deemed not “fit” for war. Therefore, the mental and physical education of the male body ensures its survival (not as an individual body, but a national body). Such a conception further elides the child with the Other and explains, as Rose writes, our ”...preoccupation with childhood and the desire to get back to the beginnings of our own mythical and cultural history since the child is so clearly in the service of this desire” (Rose 45). Yet, our own mythical beginning is a fiction, as constructed as the myth of “the great adventure” – both myths part of the same nationalist meta-narrative spoon-fed to youth through the games and stories of boyhood.
Performing Gender: Queering the Principal Boy and Conventions of Pantomime

The Romantic conflation of childhood and primitivism establishes childhood – more specifically, adolescence – as a liminal space that children will eventually leave to enter society as adults. Ethnographer Victor Turner describes liminal spaces as rituals of “social and cultural transitions,” so adolescence becomes a transition between childhood and adulthood. Liminal spaces, while part of the social fabric, offer a space in which to experiment, to play with societal norms. This, Turner states, is a betwixt and between position that is “frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to the eclipse of the sun or moon” (Turner 79-80). While liminal spaces are social transitions that are meant to end in a return to society, often with a more rigidly defined social role than before, Deborah Britzman explains the possibilities of such liminal spaces (possibilities that could challenge the one-sided unity of the Edwardian British nation: “Now these ideas of phantasy and symbolic space of gender play havoc with the political and every concept that must be taken for granted for something like the political to be postulated” (Britzman 337). If children are allowed to explore the fluidity of their own identity, then, within this liminal space, they may begin to question the construction of their own identity, and therefore, according to Britzman, to question the construction of political identities. Such questioning would not be beneficial to a society that was more interested in building an army than a generation of freethinkers. Thus, children’s literature and children’s play became battlegrounds for the British government to dominate, cultivating nationalist sentiment in the nation’s youth. Again, as I discussed in Chapter 1, the tension between “imagined” children and “real” children is manifest. This tension plays out on the Edwardian stage as Pantomime and Peter Pan (a play greatly influenced by Pantomime conventions) offered differing ideologies on the function of liminal spaces.

Pantomime, which developed out of commedia dell’arte and the harlequinade, became very popular in Britain in the nineteenth century, and was still a part of the British theatre tradition in the early twentieth century. Kristen Stirling explains the origins of Pantomime in Greek and Roman theatre as “The pantomimus [an actor] would play all the parts in the drama, wearing different masks for different characters, and hence was the ‘imitator of all’” (Stirling 28). This origin offers two important facets of Pantomime – firstly that Pantomime creates a liminal space in which identity is fluid; a single body may take on many roles. The roles
themselves, however, are rigid as they are denoted by the wearing of a mask. Although the actor may change from man to woman to animal, etc. the masks and the roles they denote are fixed. The masks serve another function important to Pantomime, which is the heightened awareness of performance. As Diana Taylor explains that the scenario offers an emphasis on the simultaneous viewing of both actor and role, Pantomime offers the same performative duality between the “real” and the “imagined.” The audience, then, is made aware of the theatricality of Pantomime: the roles are constructions; the actors are effigies. This will be particularly important as Peter Pan – through its performance traditions – destabilizes heteronormative gender roles through deviations from Pantomime convention.

Although Peter Pan is not a Pantomime, it shares, as Barrie intended, many of its conventions, including stock characters (“skin parts” – actors dressed up as animals such as Nana and the Crocodile), transformation scenes (the flight to Neverland), and audience participation (Peter asking the audience to clap for Tink). Marjorie Garber explains that Pantomime, by the late nineteenth century, became a Christmas tradition that typically featured fairytales (176). Stirling elaborates,

The fairy stories that have been transformed into pantomimes all follow a similar pattern. The story begins in the real world, often in a very domestic setting… Generally, too, there is an element of poverty in this domestic setting, which will be reversed as a result of the hero’s quest. The principal boy is often dressed in rags with elaborate patches… As a result of some kind of supernatural intervention – fairy godmother, genie in the lamp, magic beans – the setting shifts from the domestic to the magical. The story will close, however, back in the real world, but with some reversal to the fortunes of the hero – he or she is richer, married or in love, and has defeated the villain. A domestic frame thus contains the fantastic encounters and supernatural achievements of the story’s magical scenes” (Stirling 28-29).

The Pantomime plot models the transitional nature of liminal spaces: the hero leaves the real world in order to re-enter society in a different – purportedly better – role. Pantomime itself is a liminal space, as Jon McKenzie explains, whose “spatial, temporal, and symbolic ‘in betweeness’ [sic] allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with, and perhaps even transformed” (McKenzie 27). This suspension of social norms in the Pantomime tradition,
however, is meant to be a comedic reification of those norms as the audience laughs at characters that do not “fit.”

The Pantomime conventions that are of most interest in relation to Peter Pan are the stock roles of the Principal Boy and the Grand Dame, who are cross-dressed roles. The conventional casting in Peter Pan, then, says less about Barrie’s own gender politics than it does about the gender politics of Edwardian England. The Principal Boy, played by a woman, makes no attempt to look like a boy, and is the hero of the play – the protagonist and sympathetic character. The Grand Dame, on the other hand, typically played by a man as an ugly, mean old woman is a comedic character open to ridicule. Here the gender roles of Edwardian England become evident: the woman, whose role was expanding in the public sphere, was able to take on typically masculine roles, whereas a man taking on more effeminate roles was derided, laughed at.

The Principal Boy in Peter Pan is clear; it is Peter him/herself, but the role of the Grand Dame is more contested. I will argue that Hook fills the role of the Grand Dame even though performance tradition has cast a male actor as Hook. Before I discuss Hook, I would like to focus on the Principal Boy. Although the convention of a woman playing the Pantomime hero is socially accepted, the social acceptance does not override the power of a cross-dressed role to play with social norms. Laurence Senelick, in his book The Changing Room: Sex, Drag, and Theatre, charts the origins of Principal Boy as a female role:

As the male adolescent actor became de-glamorized during the Restoration, real teen-aged boys were viewed as hobbledehoys, awkward and vulgar. A woman could portray such a character with more grace and naturalness. In an era of increasing sentimentality these ‘hobbledehoydens,’ as they might be termed, were better than young boys at evoking pathos. More tears might be shed over a waif enacted by a woman (a victim by definition) than over a gangling youth, and the pathetic element was a satisfactory substitute for verisimilitude in male impersonation (Senelick 267-268).

Perhaps one of the reasons this is such a readily accepted convention is because the Principal Boy is an adolescent. As childhood is a liminal space in which fluidity of social roles is accepted, Edwardian England was conditioned to accept the beautiful actress portraying a young boy as the sentimental protagonist, and the male actor portraying a woman as the villain. Garber
explains that the gender politics of Edwardian England “recast (literally) the problematic perception of ‘masculinity’ and dominance in women as a contest between a boyish woman hero and a feminized male villain, both of whom are crossover figures, repeatedly twinned in the text: Peter and Captain Hook, a dream and a nightmare of transvestism” (Garber 176). Youth, as Senelick suggests, becomes a tool to excuse or overlook transvestism that is not excused in adulthood.

Yet, “to rest on this interpretation would be to write out, to erase, the transvestite and his/her power to destabilize and disturb” (168). While Garber problematizes the presence of a cross-dressed body on stage, Jacqueline Rose problematizes the function of the child. “The play [Peter Pan] more than the pantomime gives the audience ‘the right to look at the child.’ She thus directs attention away from the transvestite and toward the child” (177). Our attention, however, is on both – Peter Pan is at once a woman and a boy. I will argue that the power to upset gender narratives does not come from the transvestism onstage in Peter Pan so much as it comes from the audience’s ability to see both the actor and the character simultaneously, an almost Brechtian verfremdungseffekt (distancing effect) that draws the audience out of the imagined world of the play so that they may analyze its sociopolitical implications. The character of Hook is of particular interest because the transvestism of the role is present despite that a male actor portrays the male character as the male casting challenges the typical role of the Grand Dame.

In the original production, Barrie intended to have Dorothea Baird, the actress playing Mrs. Darling, to portray Hook, but the actor playing Mr. Darling requested to play the role (Stirling 44). Hook, however, still fills the role of the Grand Dame:

This perhaps accounts for the remnants of Hook’s feminine side in the play we know, and for Marjorie Garber’s insight that despite – or because of – Hook’s exaggerated phallic role, his long hair, blue eyes, and frilled dandiacal dress, often compounded by feminized make-up and a beauty mark, make him ‘clearly recognizable as a Dame as well as a Pirate Captain’ (Stirling 44). In this way, as Garber suggests, Hook is double cross-dressed – a man portraying a feminized male villain. The way Peter Pan plays with the typical Pantomime conventions heightens the audience’s awareness of the performance: the actress playing Peter is performing masculinity, and the actor playing Hook is performing both femininity and masculinity. A man performing
masculinity further emphasizes the performative nature of gender roles, illuminating the “masks” of gender roles as constructed rather than innate. “What the middle-class children of America – and of Britain – saw, when they looked at Peter Pan, was, then, an adult woman, who was also a little boy... this split vision is precisely what entranced, what held spellbound: the power of transvestism in and as the cultural Imaginary” (Garber 175). Although this may be unintentional, the awareness of performance that is created by the actor clearly performing the role establishes a critical distance (or verfremdungseffekt) that allows the audience to begin to question the normativity of gender roles.

This critical distance was heightened by the performance tradition of popular actresses, who made no attempt to look like boys (although they acted like boys), portraying Peter – a convention that was not widely challenged until the 1980s and is still used today in many productions. Although Peter is a boy in the novel, the play and its leading actresses in the role of Peter (Nina Boucicault, Maude Adams, etc.) were wildly popular, appearing in picture postcards, before the novel was published in 1911 (after the play had been running in annual revivals for seven years.) Even while reading the novel and the pronoun “he” to describe Peter, it is safe to say that many readers envisioned the face of one of the country’s most famous actresses when imagining Peter.

Such a representation inherently queered the identity of Peter – a dominating, intangible idea (Peter as a woman) that the Board of Education could not erase from the cultural imagination. From the original Nina Boucicault to Eva La Galiennne and Pauline Chase, the actresses’ bodies were on display:

The Principal Boy generally wears tights, shorts and high-heeled boots, emphasizing ‘his’ shapely female legs, and would typically draw attention to them by occasionally slapping his thigh heartily. With this and similar gestures the Principal Boy, paradoxically, ‘performs maleness’ while clearly demonstrating both her own lack of maleness and the general absence of maleness from the pantomime (Stirling 37-38).

Before World War One, heteronormative meta-narratives defined gender rigidly, and yet “...one intimate dilemma of gender is that we feel we may only have or occupy one side, [and, due to this binary] we find and create the condition for war” (Britzman 336). By fashioning gender as a one-sided ideology, the individually constructed body served to perpetuate and
uphold wider concepts of normalization – a rigid one-sidedness that pits people against one another as (national) bodies seek to define themselves through opposition. Therefore, Peter Pan’s complication of gender roles begins to break down the nationalist narratives of Edwardian England. Despite this, the play’s transgression is often written-off because it is safely contained by its liminal worlds (Neverland and Pantomime.) However, by altering the Pantomime plot that establishes the domestic world as the frame (and container) of the liminal space, Barrie fundamentally upsets the societal relationship with liminality.
“No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man:” How Peter Pan Complicates the Heteronormative Constructs of Liminality

Through play and performance, Barrie’s liminal world of Neverland resonates outside of his personal life and into the broader societal audience serving as what Joseph Roach calls a cultural vortex, or “metaphorical whirlpool,” that comes to represent a culture by utilizing and amplifying the liminality of the culture, turning it into a performance – while created by the culture, it is also derived from it – reinforcing its identity (Roach). Fairytales, as cultural vortexes, are indicative of the cultures from which they derive, and in their retellings reflect the identity of the culture. So, Peter Pan is as reflective of Barrie’s personal life and Victorian/Edwardian England as it is reflective of the cultures that have embraced the narrative as a cultural narrative, permuting and perpetuating it.

Barrie’s construction of Neverland is a defined symbolic space representative of the transition between childhood and adulthood, and the nature of Neverland is perfectly suited to play and play’s liminality: “Fictional islands each have their own unique symbolic geography, but, as places cut off from the rest of the world, they all provide a site for reflecting on identity or reinventing the self” (Tatar 21). Tatar’s description of the islands expresses the same idea of suspension as Jon McKenzie’s description of liminal spaces, so Neverland in its ‘in betweeness’ is not only an imaginary space, but an improvisatory space in which to play with ‘social norms.’ Barrie emphasizes the liminality of Neverland in Peter and Wendy as the novel’s narrator describes the island(s):

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 zigzag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and these are probably roads in the island; for Neverland is always more or less an island... (Tatar 73 –74)

Here the narrator of Barrie’s novel clearly links Neverland with the mind of a child, and yet it is not a space limited to children. It rather occupies the cultural imagination of a country as a whole, as a nation that has secured its boundaries to become a metaphoric island. Myths (or fairytales) retain their popularity through time because of the element of play they provide; they
are liminal spaces carved out by and in culture that allow for exploration – whether the exploration takes on the role of processing trauma, fulfilling wishes, or testing social norms. It is for this same reason that they are dangerous to the “unity” of the nation – if the nation is seeking a one-sided construction. It is for this reason that government bodies seek to control myths, their meanings and their construction. If we consider Neverland, then, as a liminal space indicative of the Victorian/Edwardian cultural imagination, we can better understand the ways in which great adventure narratives “played” with societal norms – not only metaphorically, but physically through prompting and influencing childhood play.

Children (as childhood was constructed at this time in Britain), occupying this liminal space, have a particular ability to transgress (or play with) societal boundaries, which is why many claim that they need to be molded for “their own good” (and, more invisibly, for the good of the nation.) Jacqueline Rose explains the sentiment that pervaded education in Victorian England, and – she would say – pervades education today: “[e]ducation can only be justified first by the fact that a child left to its own devices would perish” (Rose 44). Perhaps, however, such a statement veils a deeper sentiment of Victorian society.

Deborah Britzman explains the possibilities of such liminal spaces (possibilities that could challenge the one-sided unity of the Victorian British nation: “Now these ideas of phantasy and symbolic space of gender play havoc with the political and every concept that must be taken for granted for something like the political to be postulated” (Britzman 337). If children are allowed to explore the fluidity of their own identity, then within this liminal space, they may begin to question the construction of their own identity, and therefore, according to Britzman, to question the construction of political identities. Such questioning would not be beneficial to a society that was more interested in building an army than a generation of freethinkers. Thus, children’s literature and children’s play became battlegrounds for the British government to dominate, cultivating nationalist sentiment in the nation’s youth.

Through literature, government agencies such as the Board of Education sought to mold British children, specifically boys who would not only be fighting the country’s wars, but volunteering to fight them. In The Case of Peter Pan, Rose includes a long list of the “cuts” that would be made to Peter Pan for the authorized 1911 school version by the Board of Education. Below are included a few of the cuts that make for the most salient discussion points within the realm of this essay:
The authorised school version removes:

all syntax (periodisation, inversion) or tropes (metonymy, synecdoche) which are resonant of a classical literary style;

all specific cultural and material references (not just to Hook’s educational history,18 but also the more middle-class associations of the nursery...)

all signs of play or parody of its own language, especially those which comment on language as institution

all those moments when the sexuality of the text becomes explicit (in the Lagoon sequence, when Hook is being taunted by an invisible Peter, ‘He felt his ego slipping from him... In the dark nature there was a touch of the feminine, as in all the great pirates’ (Rose 126, boldface mine).

The authorized version seeks to make the story as innocuous as possible. Interestingly, it is not plot points that make up the majority of the cuts (in fact, they make up very little of the cuts.) Instead, it is the construction of the story that is altered. One of the most interesting cuts deals with the self-reflexive writing style. The self-reflexive style of Barrie’s writing, a kind of meta-writing that parallels the critical distance and heightened awareness of performance created through the simultaneous view of both actor and character on stage. Both the self-reflexive writing that comments on language as institution, thereby revealing the rhetoric of the great adventure narrative as a construction, and the self-awareness of the play as performance “critiques the enforced norms of gender and sexuality, and also all claims of normalcy, and the processes by which the borders of the normal are defined and policed” (Shlasko 125). Through a queering of language (although the application is anachronistic), Barrie was upsetting the borders of normativity.

I will return to Kristen Stirling’s conversation about British Pantomime, which represents the normative theatre performance of the turn of the century and Peter Pan, which challenges its normative ideologies. Stirling writes that “[t]he two trajectories of the common pantomime plot – the boy hero’s journey towards male adulthood and the love story which generally culminates in marriage – are both in principle made impossible by the existence of a woman in the role of the Principal Boy” (38). Barrie, like Peter, felt trapped in the transition between childhood and adulthood as is indicated by Barrie’s notebook musing, “[d]esperate attempts to grow up but

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18 The play and novel make reference to Hook attending Eton as a boy.
cannot.” Barrie’s own limitations are played out in *Peter Pan*. Deeply engrained in British Pantomime, any deviations from the standard Pantomime plot and character types help to illustrate Barrie’s own beliefs that may deviate from the societal norms of the time represented in Pantomime.

Barrie, in his self-proclaimed inability to grow up and his failed, and rumored unconsummated marriage, creates a character, Peter, who, too, fails in fulfilling the common journey of the “hero” and remains in transition (in Neverland) forever. Shlasko writes, “[a]s a subject position, queer describes people whose gender and/or sexuality fall outside of cultural norms and expectations. It describes one’s location relative to those norms, or perhaps, one’s status from the point of view of the normal as an outsider” (124). Barrie, feeling very much outside of the “normal” writes a story, which by playing with the normalized forms of Pantomime and adventure story, partly (and perhaps unwittingly) subverts them and begins to “[undo] hierarchies of identity” – an act which Mayo describes as “necessary” in queering normativity.

Intentional or not, Barrie’s most overt subversion in *Peter Pan* is not the fluidity of gender roles expressed through performance (as this fluidity is accepted as part of the liminal space of transition from adolescence to adulthood); it is, instead, his ending that subverts Edwardian ideologies: Peter, the hero, who begins his life in the real world, does not return to it. David Munns writes

> Growing up connotes progress, but by not growing up J.M. Barrie’s central character, Peter Pan, complicates the conventional idea of a successful adulthood as a desirable outcome. *Peter Pan* fundamentally critiques the appeal of chronological and psychological maturation toward adulthood, since they are the very things Peter clearly lacks (Munns 219).

By refusing to grow up and remaining in the liminal Neverland, *Peter Pan* deviates from the conventional plotlines of Pantomime and the adventure genre – genres that stressed the “necessity of returning to normal life armed with important lessons (like those the Pevencies gain when they return through the Wardrobe)” (226). Peter does not fulfill either of the two trajectories of the standard Pantomime plot: he does not marry the lead girl, Wendy, and he does not become a man; “Instead, the book and play, through their title character, valorizes a static existence where societal norms can be ignored because there is no possibility of their ever being
needed or used” (226).
Conclusion

The symbolism of Peter returning to Neverland offers many interpretations. In regard to the expanding role of women in British society under the cult of domesticity, it may suggest that there is no room for the masculine man in the domestic world. As a story used as propaganda to get boys to enlist in the “great adventure” of World War I, the failure to re-enter society may be symbolic of death and a generation of boys inspired by Pan who cannot grow up. Perhaps Peter Pan reflects the diminishing social hierarchies of the British Aristocracy, with its regimented roles and rules, that were crumbling in the twentieth century, giving way to a society in which social mobility (or fluidity) sent centuries of tradition into upheaval. While the possible interpretations are interesting, they are not so interesting as the critical distance the performance of gender in Peter Pan creates that allows the audience to disconnect with the emotional journey of the characters in order to make these types of interpretations. Peter Pan creates this critical distance in the heightened awareness of its own performance, in the self-reflexivity of its language, and the subversion of the typical Pantomime plot trajectory. Marjorie Garber writes, “Transgression without guilt, pain, penalty, conflict, or cost: this is what Peter Pan and Peter Pan – is all about. The boy who is really a woman; the woman who is really a boy; the child who will never grow up; the colony that is only a country of the mind” (Garber 184). Although Peter Pan’s transgression may seem innocuous to some, relegated to the imaginary world of childhood, it prompts the audience to question the normative and does not guarantee a return.
CHAPTER FOUR

Re-imagining *Peter Pan*

Since its theatrical debut in 1904, *Peter Pan* has pervaded (mainly) western culture for years in many forms: novels, picture books, plays, musicals, movies, television shows, video games, etc., and also in sequels, adaptations, and retellings. Through its many iterations, *Peter Pan* has outgrown its inception as a game played by James Barrie and the five Llewelyn Davies brothers and has been entered into our collective imagination as a cultural myth. Of particular intrigue is the rapidity with which *Peter Pan* gained a life separate from its text. As Peter’s shadow is detached from its body and survives as an indication of Peter, so too does the story of Peter survive, taking on a new life apart from Barrie’s original manuscript. Roger Lancelyn Green describes *Peter Pan*’s shadow in our collective imagination:

His [Barrie’s] is the only story of recent centuries to escape from literature into folklore...For every one person who has seen the play or read the story, there are hundreds who know perfectly well who and what Peter Pan is. Besides being a fairy-tale character, he is also a symbol – of what, precisely, even Barrie could not find the words to describe: ‘I’m youth, I’m joy! I’m a little bird that has broken out of the egg!’ Like folklore, Peter Pan is a constant that belongs temporarily to the teller, the listener, the actor, and the audience... (Hanson 327).

Although becoming part of the collective imagination is a gradual, unconscious, and overall collective act, Barrie (both actively and passively) created an air of mythology around his story, most notably in denying his authorship of it.

On opening night, “when the audience called for ‘author,’ it was again Ela Q. May [whom is listed in the program as “Author of the Play”] who walked onstage” (Stirling 14). Amidst the play’s success, and public cries for a published script, Barrie did not publish the script, resulting in many unauthorized versions (plays, novels, picture books, etc.) that quelled the public’s desire. By withholding a “definitive” text, Barrie gave the story of *Peter Pan* over to the public – a “theory and practice of storytelling that Barrie establishes in all the *Peter Pan* texts... The narrator of *The Little White Bird* [the novel in which the character of Peter first appears] is at pains to stress that storytelling is a communal rather than an individual action, that
stories cannot exist until they have been told and retold...” (Stirling 14). Barrie further cultivated the malleability of his story by writing new versions of the play for each of its yearly revivals (with some new scenes intended to be performed only once), publishing a novel in 1911, and proposing versions to be made into movies. When he finally published the play script, almost twenty-four years after its premiere, he again denies sole authorship:

Some disquieting confessions must be made in printing at last the play of Peter Pan; among them this, that I have no recollection of having written it... I suppose I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you [Llewelyn Davies brothers] violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you (Hollindale 75).

In refusing sole authorship, Barrie directly references those people (The Llewelyn Davies, the play’s actors, directors, etc.) that directly contributed to the story of Peter Pan, and he indirectly references the less explicit contributions from audiences and writers who have influenced his work. The myriad voices that make up the story of Peter Pan in each of its retellings gives credence to Peter Pan as a scenario. In describing a scenario, Diana Taylor cites Roland Barthes, explaining, “Like Barthes’ mythical speech, it [the scenario] consists of ‘material which has already been worked on’” (Taylor 50). Even the original manuscript of Peter Pan falls into this category as the first written iteration of a scenario that had already been worked on in Kensington Gardens for over six years (Peter Pan, specifically), and a scenario of growing up that predates Peter Pan. Taylor writes that scenarios pre-exist any specific textual of performative iterations, and Barthes, in his “Death of the Author,” supports this idea:

all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes (Barthes 1).

Although Barthes predates Taylor, this idea of literature as the neuter (what we may call the silencer) of a collective voice exemplifies the tension between the archive and the repertoire. If we apply this idea to the writing of Peter Pan, Barrie’s refusal of sole authorship can be viewed as a removal of the body that writes, and his withholding of a published script can be viewed as an attempt to maintain the special collective voice that literature silences. In this way, the
importance of Peter Pan as a game, as repertoire, is emphasized. Although western scholarship has long privileged literature (the archive), much of Barrie’s (and the public’s) relationship with Peter Pan was through play and performance (the repertoire). In this way, Peter Pan demands an inquest into its performativity and its cultural transmission through play. Furthermore, by facilitating the detachment of the story from his self during his lifetime, Barrie accelerates the mystic transition from story to myth – allowing Peter’s shadow a life of its own.

Yet, our fascination with James Barrie looms large, with a multitude of biographies and biopics, such as 2004’s blockbuster Finding Neverland starring Johnny Depp, which was turned into a musical in 2012, and “definitive” scripts, such as Peter Hollindale’s 1995 Oxford Drama Library edition. Many of these biographical works pass Barrie’s life through the filter of Peter Pan, culling out and sometimes creating inspirations for Peter Pan, turning the play into autobiography. Perhaps this fascination points to our cultural fascination with origins and authenticity, and the perception that the author can provide both. Barthes explains this perception:

The author still rules in manuals of literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews, and even in the awareness of literary men, anxious to unite, by their private journals, their person and their work; the image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions... the explanation of the work is always sought in the man who had produced it, as if, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, it was always finally the voice of one and the same person, the author, which delivered his ‘confidence’ (Barthes 1).

Our author-centered relationship with literature points to a rather ironic dichotomy: our fascination with Barrie and a definitive text persists because of the longevity of Peter Pan, and Peter Pan persists because it finds new life outside of its author and resists a definitive text.

According to the “restoration of behavior,” each retelling of Peter Pan, even if it aims to present the “original” story, cannot recreate the original. As Barrie was influenced by myriad voices and the cultural climate in which he wrote, each iteration of Peter Pan is also influenced. The mere choice to produce Peter Pan is a reflection of the contemporary cultural climate, and the treatment of the story, wittingly or unwittingly, is a cultural discussion – an embodiment of or a rebellion against a specific cultural zeitgeist. The scenario of Peter Pan – the story we keep
repeating – is the scenario of growing up. As it captured the anxieties of a technologically advancing Victorian England, symbolizing a desire to return to an innocent past, *Peter Pan* today still captures the anxieties of a rapidly developing world and a desire to return. Each iteration of *Peter Pan* plays upon this scenario, questioning the scenario in order to reflect upon it.

Before I discuss my own adaptation of *Peter Pan*, I must locate it within the contemporary context of *Peter Pan* at large. In the past ten years or so, there has been a resurgence in the popularity of *Peter Pan* that has taken two general directions: an interest in the author and the “origins” of Peter and an interest in exploring the character and/or scenario of Peter in adaptations disconnected from Neverland. I would attribute much of the resurgence to the celebration of the play’s 100th anniversary and to the play becoming part of the public domain, which has allowed for sequels and adaptations previously unauthorized. The way Barrie and Peter are portrayed reflects our contemporary desires as a culture. *Peter Pan*, then, serves as a tool (a scenario) in which to process and question our own cultural relationship with growing up, rapid cultural change spurred by technological advance, nostalgia and a wish to recapture innocence, etc.

In response to the changing attitudes towards and interests in *Peter Pan*, my adaptation and subsequent production questioned origins (placing the author onstage to embody memory and forgetting), questioned gender and sexuality (using non-traditional casting and theatrical doubling to stress play and performance), and questioned Pan a cultural myth (utilizing and deconstructing icon). My goal in adapting, then, was not to write a new *Peter Pan*, but to explore the original script (a script largely unknown to American audiences), emphasizing the role of *Peter Pan* as creative play contributes to the processing of trauma. As a director, I wanted the play to speak to a contemporary audience, examining the scenario of growing up and what it symbolizes, culling out themes and moments from the largely historical adaptation that would resonate with the audience.
Inserting Barrie into the play of *Peter Pan* was the adaptation’s biggest challenge; between Barrie’s curse on biographers and the effort of scholars, such as Barthes and Taylor, who have worked to dethrone author and archive from their exclusive roles as makers of history, I entered into the archive with great hesitation. In order to acquire the rights to adapt *Peter Pan*, I had to come up with an idea that would be appealing to the Great Ormond Street Hospital. I knew they had dealt with dark and negative interpretations of *Peter Pan* as well as bad press that had tarnished the public’s view of James Barrie – one of their most generous patrons. From Jacqueline Rose’s book that ignited a debate centered around accusations of pedophilia to the public fascination and media-fueled parallels drawn between enigmatic, infantile, and gender-bending Michael Jackson and *Peter Pan* in 2003 after charges of molestation at Jackson’s Neverland Ranch, I knew the hospital, which was already very protective over *Peter Pan*, would be particularly concerned with representations of Barrie.

The initial concept of my adaptation was to demonstrate the relationship between Barrie and his play to elucidate the history of the script (its revisions through time) as they relate to Barrie and the changing cultural landscape in Great Britain around World War One. Having Barrie onstage actively engaging in play was crucial to the adaptation. Because the idea for my adaptation was also partially inspired by a frustration over the highly fictionalized feature film *Finding Neverland* that had come to be accepted as biography, I proposed to create the adaptation entirely from the archive, using Barrie’s published works, journals, speeches, and letters to derive dialogue. While the interpretation would still be mine, the words would be Barrie’s. With these stipulations, and a research focus on the script’s development between 1897 and 1929, the Great Ormond Street Hospital granted me the right to adaptation, and I began the challenge of using the archive to create a play about the repertoire.

In the adaptation, Barrie serves as both narrator and player, moving between the “real” world of the theatre (speaking directly to the audience and existing in real time), and the “imaginary” worlds of play, fantasy, and memory (moving back and forth through time, bridging the temporal gap between stage and audience). To situate Barrie in this position of interlocutor, I shaped the adaptation as a memory play, allowing Barrie to slip between worlds – to be a part of them and reflect upon them simultaneously. As a memory play, the scenario of growing up
becomes more specific (it is not only a story about growing up, but a story about Barrie growing up, about the Llewelyn Davies boys growing up), and the liminal world of Neverland is characterized largely by Barrie’s imagination and memory. This relationship between imagination and memory, became extremely important to the adaptation; while the content of the play explored the story of Peter Pan and its creation, the construction of the play and the representation of Neverland as a liminal space was built around the relationship between memory and imagination that Barrie had described in The Greenwood Hat.

Near the end of his life, Barrie wrote a short biography of his first two years as a writer in London. The idea for The Greenwood Hat was sparked when Barrie came across an old hat box containing newspaper clippings of the articles he had written as a young man. Barrie had originally thought of subtitling the book “Memories and Fancies” but “…abandoned the idea, not being always certain, despite [his] best intentions, where the memories became fancies and the fancies memories.” In writing an adaptation of Peter Pan, I was intrigued with the space between reality and imagination, or, as Peter might call it in one his most iconic lines, the space between dreaming and awake. Barrie’s mind and Neverland serve as a meeting place of these two realms – a site for play, a site where the ordinary encounters the magical. The construction of Barrie as interlocutor represents this meeting place; he is the only character who is able to directly address the audience. He slips between the “real” world of the audience and the “imaginary” world of his memory, bridging the temporal divide. Moreover, Barrie not only conjures his memories, which appear before him, he is also able to interact with his memories, representing the connection between memory and imagination.

Constructing the world of my adaptation as a space in between “real” and “imaginary” is also meant to heighten the audience’s awareness of performance. By blurring the lines of the two, I hoped to cause the audience to question the relationship between fact and fiction. In response to the contemporary interest in Barrie’s biography and a search for authenticity and origin, the use of play and theatrical doubling (which I will discuss in the next section) is meant to challenge the pervasive notion that truth and imagination are opposites. Amid scholarship that has treated Peter Pan as a biography of James Barrie, drawing rigid parallels between people and characters (i.e. Barrie is Peter, Sylvia Llewelyn Davies is Wendy), my adaptation meant to de-emphasize these rigid correlations and refocus the audience’s attention of the importance and function of play in Barrie’s life. Instead, each actor plays multiple roles, and some roles are
played by multiple actors (for instance, Peter and Hook are played by two actors). This theatrical doubling, which I will discuss further in the section “Duality of the Actor and the Role,” heightens the audience’s awareness of the play’s performativity as well as the performativity of social roles.

My adaptation, however, is largely biographical. As the meeting place of memory and imagination, the narrator, Barrie, recounts many of his memories, and as an adaptation of Peter Pan, I cannot deny that the play becomes a biographical vehicle to explore Barrie – the very trapping I have contested. If the author is present onstage, and the play includes biography, how could I construct a play that expresses the special voice of writing that pre-exists literature (the text) without, as Barthes warns, tyrannically centering on the author? Taylor writes that transfer of knowledge through the archive is often viewed as an unchanging, unidirectional, when in fact the transfer of knowledge (especially when the repertoire is considered) is a dialogue. Scott Magelssen in his Enacting History asks “Is every enunciation of the past fraught and contestable, by virtue of the fact that every individual’s or community’s selective memory, designed as it is to affirm and shore up that individual’s or community’s identity, defines itself against and/or erases that of another?” (Magelssen 7). Therefore the transfer of knowledge – the biography of Barrie, the creation of Peter Pan – is a dialogue between the past and the present; the past is reconstructed by the present’s selective memory.

To explore these relationships between the past and present, memory and forgetting, archive and repertoire, I created a dialogue between Barrie and the story of Peter Pan. Rather than the creation and retelling of Peter Pan being unidirectional and controlled by Barrie, I gave agency to the other characters (both the real-life inspired characters of the Llewelyn Davies boys and Barrie’s family and the fictional characters of Neverland). I expressed this most fully in a meta-theatrical thread of action in which Barrie, unable to control the characters and plot that have become part of the collective imagination, rips up his manuscript and disengages with the story, walking offstage and leaving the characters on their own. In his absence, the characters fill the role of author, developing their own plotlines (Wendy convinces the boys to return to London, Hook captures the children and poisons Peter, Tinkerbell drinks the poison to save Peter). This action, that takes place during the “Marooner’s Rock” scene, is representative of the way Peter Pan was used as propaganda during World War I. Influenced by the unexpected carnage of the war and the deaths of Barrie’s friends and family – including George Llewelyn
Davies and Charles Frohman – Barrie began to speak out against the war, but the story of Peter Pan had become part of the pro-war rhetoric. The story of Peter Pan was no longer in Barrie’s control as it was used to get boys to enlist in a war that had killed George Llewelyn Davies, the “original, indeed, of Peter Pan” (Kilmer SM11). Barrie cut the scene Marooner’s Rock, in which the line “To die would be an awfully big adventure” is spoken, during all productions of Peter Pan during the war (represented in my adaptation by the ripping of the manuscript and the rupture of the play’s action), but the iconic scene and its famous line, as I discussed in Chapter 1, had become part of the collective imagination, taking on a life of its own.

Although Barrie ceased working on Peter Pan for many years, something made him return to the script to publish it in 1928. Because I could only infer what prompted Barrie to finish and publish the script, I had to decide how to portray Barrie’s return to his story. In the dedication to the script, which Barrie wrote in 1922 (probably after the death of Michael Llewelyn Davies), Barrie writes recounts an experience on a fishing trip he took with Llewelyn Davies. Michael, whom Barrie refers to as No. 4, had hoped to see Johnny MacKay – the fisherman who had taught him how to fish, but as their boat neared the pier he was nowhere in sight. Barrie asked Michael to wish for him and “contemptuously he wished, and as the ropes were thrown on the pier he saw Johnny waiting for him...” (Hollindale 86). Barrie recounts:

> My grandest triumph, the best thing in the play of Peter Pan (though it is not in it), is that long after No. 4 had ceased to believe, I brought him back to the faith for at least two minutes... I know no one less like a fairy than Johnny MacKay, but for two minutes No. 4 was quivering in another world than ours. When he came to he gave me a smile which meant we understood each other... As I have said, this episode is not in the play; so though I dedicate Peter Pan to you I keep the smile, with the few other broken fragments of immortality that have come my way” (85-86).

I chose this sentiment to drive Barrie’s return in my adaptation, a return to faith that parallels Tinkerbell’s return.

In one of Peter Pan’s most well known scenes, Tinkerbell drinks Peter’s poisoned medicine to save him. As she begins to die and her light begins to fade, she tells Peter that she thinks she could get well if children believed in fairies. Peter breaks the fourth wall and addresses the audience: “Do you believe in fairies? Say quick that you believe! If you believe,
clap your hands!” (Hollindale 41). At this moment in my adaptation, Peter addresses Barrie and asks him if he believes. In a brief return “to the faith,” Barrie claps his hands and Tinkerbell is saved. While this scene served to bring Barrie back into the story, it also served to engage the audience in a sense of play, inviting them to become agents over the story, too: they can clap or not. For this scene I chose to have Tinkerbell appear in human form. Tinkerbell reminds Barrie, much as he reminded himself in his dedication, of the purpose of writing Peter Pan:

TINKER BELL Your grandest triumph, the best thing in the play of Peter, is that long after he had ceased to believe, you brought him back to the faith for at least two minutes ...for two minutes he was quivering in another world than ours. Keep that smile with other fragments of immortality that have come your way (Ferdinand 145).

As a physical embodiment of light, love, and faith, I doubled the role of Tinkerbell, Mrs. Darling, and Barrie’s mother, Margaret Ogilvy. Mothers hold a special place for Barrie and Victorian England as women were crowned “angels of the home” in relation to the cult of domesticity (Bourke 12). Having a corporeal representation of Tink (who is often portrayed as a ball of light) was integral to the mingling of the “real” and the “imaginary.” Whereas most of the play represents these two as spaces one can inhabit, the corporeal Tinkerbell shows the two converging in one body. Because Tinkerbell is an effigy of the mother (Barrie’s real mother as well as Mrs. Darling, who is necessarily absent from Neverland), she can embody these two realms simultaneously; she is at once memory and imagination, bridging the then/now divide by conjuring the memory of the lost mother by performing in the present.

There have been productions, like the adaptation at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2013 produced by the Flying High Theatre Company that script alternate endings based on audience reaction. This particular adaptation also gave each audience member a voting card that said “London” on one side and “Neverland” on the other – allowing the audience to decide Peter’s fate. Whereas it is certainly possible that an audience would not clap for Tinkerbell (Barrie’s own script states in the stage directions “Many clap, some don’t, a few hiss... But Tink is saved”), it was never a concern as the playwright or the director that the audience wouldn’t clap. Perhaps it is the direct appeal of Peter, perhaps it is the knowledge that if they don’t clap the play cannot continue, perhaps it is a real belief in fairies, in any case, it is a suspension of disbelief that saves Tinkerbell.
In this way the authorial power is shared by both Barrie (or, an actor representing him), the Llewelyn Davies boys, the characters, and the audience. The necessity of the audience to continue the story is an overt way to emphasize *Peter Pan* as a lived experience: “The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there,’ being a part of the transmission” (Taylor 42). Although the audience needs not be vocal to be a part of transmission, my adaptation is self-aware of the conventions it uses to create and transfer meaning, striving to make the audience aware of those conventions as well. Whereas a typical audience member may not understand his/her role as an observer, s/he becomes more aware of this role when s/he is asked to participate, allowing the suspension of disbelief, the return to the faith, to be a conscious choice rather than a passive and forgone conclusion.
Duality of the Actor and the Role: Theatrical Doubling and Casting

Theatrical doubling was key to the creation of a sense of play within the adaptation. I employed several types of doubling. The cast was limited to ten actors who each played many roles. Here I employed three types of doubling: each character represented someone from Barrie’s own life (his mother, his siblings, the Llewelyn Davies boys), most of the characters played multiple roles (the actor who played Barrie also played First Twin, Hook, and Peter along with other actors), and Wendy was played as both child and adult by the same actress. The doubling was heightened, firstly, by the use of on-stage costume changes that allowed the audience to see the actors change from one character to another. Like the masks of Pantomimus in Greek Theatre, characters were signified by tangible objects – Hook’s hook, the Pirate’s hats and belts, etc. Secondly, roles were divided up between actors (the actors who played Barrie and Slightly also both played Hook, switching onstage by passing the Hook). The multiple ways doubling was used in both the writing and direction of this adaptation was meant to heighten the audience’s awareness of performance: not only could they see the characters playing onstage, they could see the actors playing as well.

My choice to employ doubling in the script and the performance was not just a concept applied to Peter Pan; doubling is an important part of the original story and provides two important functions. First, as a scenario about growing up, the children in Peter Pan assume many roles, trying them on. While playing in their nursery, Wendy, John, and Michael assume the fantastic roles of pirates, etc., and they also assume the culturally conventional roles of Mother and Father. Therefore, their doubling is a playful testing of heteronormative roles that they may assume as adults. Doubling is also used to draw parallels between characters: Mr. Darling and Hook, Hook and Peter. The former pair discussed widely throughout Peter Pan scholarship, but the latter pair, which is far less discussed, it very intriguing. Although a type of Captain Hook character was present in the games played in Kensington Gardens (Barrie often played a pirate named Captain Swartby), he was a late addition to the play.

Hook’s villainy exists in order to reflect on the nature of Peter Pan himself. Hook and Peter are doubled throughout the play, and the two key scenes establishing them as mirror image of each other lead Hook to question both his and his antagonist’s identity. In the ‘Mermaid’s Lagoon’ scene of Act 3, Peter imitates
the captain in order to trick the pirates into freeing Tiger Lily: one of Barrie’s most revealing (and directive) stage directions comments that Peter ‘can imitate the captain’s voice so perfectly that even the author has a dizzy feeling that at times he was really Hook’ (Stirling 41).

In my adaptation, I explored this stage direction, which not only doubles Peter and Hook, but Peter, Hook, and Barrie. The grammatical structure of Barrie’s stage direction is unclear; one could infer that antecedent to “he” that can imitate the captain’s voice so perfectly is Peter, but one could also infer that the “he” is “the author” – Barrie. Or, in a reflection of the way one can assume multiple roles, which I made visible onstage in my adaptation, the “he” could refer to both Barrie and Peter.

Biographers have often drawn correlations between Barrie and Peter as “the boy who wouldn’t grow up” citing Barrie’s short stature, propensity to play with children, etc. However, Barrie and Hook are rarely compared other than the biographical inclusion that Barrie often played the villainous Captain Swarthy in his games with the Llewellyn Davies boys, and Captain Hook’s first name is Jas after the name he was called by the boys, Uncle Jas. Moreover, the discussion of how Barrie may correlate to Peter and Hook interchangeably (or simultaneously) is not discussed. Whereas the embodiment of both protagonist and antagonist, the hero and the villain, does not fit common tropes, it embraces the complexities with which a social actor assumes a role or character. Taylor explains this in regard to scenarios:

> Whether it’s a question of mimetic representation (an actor assuming a role) or of per-formativity [sic], of social actors assuming socially regulated patterns of appropriate behavior, the scenario more fully allows us to keep both the social actor and the role in view simultaneously, and thus recognize the areas of resistance and tension (Taylor 52).

By doubling Peter, Hook, and Barrie in my adaptation by having Barrie play both roles, I emphasized that it is not just actors who assume roles, but social actors (entities outside of the theatre) as well – just as Wendy may play a pirate, she may also play a mother. Therefore, when Peter must choose to stay in London and grow up or return to Neverland to stay a child forever,

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19 Such a complex relationship between hero and villain in literature may have been familiar to Barrie whose childhood hero (according to Andrew Birkin) and eventual friend Robert Louis Stevenson had penned *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886.
he is choosing whether or not to assume the role of an adult. With this construction, Peter’s maturation into an adult body does not necessarily mean he will assume the role of an adult, a friction that reveals “adulthood” as a social construction.

In order to play with idea of social roles, I chose to cast a nineteen-year-old boy in the role of Peter. Whereas a female cannot grow up into a man, a male could (elucidating that social roles are not only constructions but choices). By employing non-traditional casting (traditionally female role Peter was played by a boy, and other more traditionally male roles, such as Hook, Tootles, and Michael), I hoped to gain some critical distance to make the audience think about social roles, especially gender constructions. My choice to cast a male actor as Peter, however, was not new. The Royal Shakespeare Company’s 1982 production starring thirty-five-year-old Miles Anderson as Peter came at a time when the scenario of growing up seemed to be changing: Dr. Kiley’s 1983 “popular psychology book entitled The Peter Pan Syndrome diagnosed the refusal or inability to ‘grow up’ as an actual mental disorder” (239). With this, Peter was moving out of the world fantasy, so often conflated with childhood, and into the world of scholarship. 1984 saw the publication of Jacqueline Rose’s The Case of Peter Pan; Or, The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction, which – while causing uproar among children’s literature scholars for many years – focused the public’s attention on desire and sexuality in Peter Pan.

My adaptation considers desire and sexuality in relationship to the scenario of growing up. As the contemporary western cultural climate largely experiences a kind of prolonged adolescence in which the transition into adulthood happens in the early twenties, I chose college age actors. As the director, of course, I was required to cast college actors as it was a college production; as the playwright, however, I chose to adapt Peter Pan and develop it for a college audience because the scenario of growing up is especially pertinent to an American college audience.

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20 In my production, Peter was played by a male actor, and the more traditionally male-cast roles such as Hook, Tootles, Michael, Starkey, and Nibs were played by female actresses.

21 From casting fifteen-year-old Bobby Driscoll to drawing Peter as a young teenager rather than a six-year-old boy, “Disney... fundamentally altered the popular conception of Barrie’s story. In making Peter both more masculine and older than he had been previously depicted, as well as enlarging and feminizing Tinker Bell, Disney opened up the public availability of Peter Pan as an icon for burgeoning sexuality” (Munns 229).
To represent the scenario of growing up that would relate to my audience, casting an actor on the verge of adolescence was imperative. I wanted the audience to feel the friction between the Peter and his desire to stay a child and the desires of others (such as Wendy) for him to grow up. Rather than a young Peter whose choice to remain in Neverland would seem childish and frivolous, casting an almost adult actor added to the gravitas of the decision. Peter’s body – on the verge of manliness – was incongruous with his behavior, demonstrating that he was not the boy who couldn’t grow up; he was the boy who wouldn’t grow up. If Peter is a surrogate for something lost, he does not have agency in his development, he is stuck in a limbo – relegated to Neverland.

This leads to a discussion of the last mode of doubling present in the adaptation. Unlike theatrical doubling, Joseph Roach uses the term “double” in relationship to surrogation. A double is like an effigy in that it is a surrogate, but a double is created through a slightly different process of surrogation:

The anxiety generated by the process of substitution justifies the complicity of memory and forgetting. In the face of this anxiety – a momentary self-consciousness about surrogation that constitutes what might pass for reflexivity – the alien double may appear in memory only to disappear (Roach 6).

I chose to use this type of doubling to end my adaptation. Peter, if he truly represents a lost past, cannot exist in the “real” world, and therefore cannot live in London and is relegated to Neverland, and Barrie – through the anxiety of loss – consciously chooses to double Peter. Consider this excerpt taken from the last few pages of the adaptation:

BARRIE Well, good-bye, Peter.
PETER Good-bye.
BARRIE When you come next year, Peter – you will come, won’t you?
PETER Yes. To hear stories about me!
BARRIE It is so queer that the stories you like best should be the ones about yourself.
PETER Well, then?
BARRIE I suppose it is because you have so many adventures.
PETER ‘Course it is.
BARRIE Oh, Peter, how I wish I could take you up and squidge you!
Peter draws back.

PETER I have to go.

BARRIE Yes, I know. Home.

Peter goes to the window. Barrie tries to follow him.

PETER I think it will be harder if you don’t let me go alone.

Looking back at Barrie, reassuringly.

PETER To live would be an awfully big adventure.

Peter flies into the night. Barrie runs to the window.

BARRIE (to the audience) It’s as if long after writing Peter Pan its true meaning came to me – Desperate attempt to grow up but can’t.

He looks again to the window. The lights change to give some sense of passing time. Barrie is crying like Peter was when he was attempting to reattach his shadow. Jane enters, finding Peter’s hat on the floor.

JANE Boy, why are you crying?

Barrie is silent, and turns away from Jane. She tries to engage him.

JANE Whom do you want to see most?

BARRIE (shrugs) Of course I would like most to see Peter Pan.

JANE Well, then, wish for him.

BARRIE Oh, rot.

JANE It can’t do any harm to wish.

Barrie closes his eyes and wishes – mostly to appease Jane. Jane puts Peter’s hat atop his head. She bows to him.

JANE What is your name?

PETER/BARRIE Peter Pan.

JANE I just thought it would be you.

PETER/BARRIE I came for my mother to take her to the Never Never Land to do my Spring Cleaning.

JANE Yes I know, I’ve been waiting for you.

PETER/BARRIE Will you be my mother?

JANE Oh, yes (Ferdinand 148-149)
The final act of surrogation allows the audience to question who and what Peter Pan is. Jane desires Peter, and through her desire, she assigns Barrie as his effigy. When Jane places Pan’s hat atop Barrie’s head, she casts Barrie as Pete, and he accepts this role in the vacancy of the original, much as he attempted to play his brother David decades earlier. Although Jane is trying to remember and reconnect Peter through this act of surrogation, she is ultimately forgetting him – he is no longer “tangible and fleshy;” he is reduced to signifiers: flight, pixie dust, a hat. As the story of Peter Pan is transmitted to a new generation (represented by Wendy’s daughter Jane), the story is shaped by contemporary desire. In order to accept Barrie as Peter, we must forget the real Peter, exemplifying the process of remembering as a process of erasure. In this moment, Barrie’s surrogation is a performative act of remembering that hinges upon forgetting. With each substitution, each iteration of Peter Pan, we get further and further away from the original, but it is this very act of forgetting that allows Peter to remain in our collective memory.
CONCLUSION

“To live would be an awfully big adventure”: Performance as a Vital Act of Transmission

Although Peter and the world of Neverland are imagined, the myth of Peter Pan, through performance on and off the stage, has the power to script play and shape bodies. The transmission of Peter Pan over the last century has been an undeniably vital act relying on a long tradition of performance. From its inception as an ever-evolving game in Kensington Gardens, to its influence on the Great Adventure stories that were at the heart of the Boy Scouts and other clubs, its life as propaganda that helped script cultural ideas of masculinity, to its long performance history that subverts those very gender constructs, the transmission of Peter Pan has been perpetuated by the nonarchival modes of transmission just as much as the archival modes. For instance, one of the myth’s most famous lines “To die would be an awfully big adventure” – a line that captures the desired bravery and bravado of early twentieth century explorers and soldiers – is linked to a nonarchival gesture: the iconic stance of Peter Pan, legs spread wide apart, hands defiantly on the hips, upthrust chest, and raised chin. As the archival (the line) and the nonarchival (the gesture) converge in one body through performance, the body, as Diana Taylor writes, binds “the individual with the collective, the private with the social, the diachronic with the synchronic, memory with knowledge” (Taylor 101). The gesture and the line work together to perform the idea bravery and masculinity, and yet, while the line is written in the text, the stance (which is used so commonly staged in productions) is not.

The only stage direction accompanying this line is “with a drum beating in his breast as if he were a real boy at last” (Hollindale 125). Through this stance, then, the idea of a “real boy” is transferred from one generation to the next through this nonarchival gesture. Joseph Roach explains that “Performance genealogies draw on the idea of expressive movements as mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words...” (Roach 26). In this way, nonarchival stores of history, memory, and knowledge are embedded within the text and only reveal themselves through performance. Performance, then, is a vital act of transmission. The meaning of this is twofold: vital means necessary, essential, and it also means lively, full of life. Performance is essential to the transmission of both Peter Pan and the mental frameworks it carries (constructs of gender,
childhood, etc.) because it is through performance that the embedded performance genealogies reveal themselves. If residual movements are retained within images or words, the corporeal movements (the memories of bodies) are inextricably linked to the archive.

Although the majority of its scholarship has come from the field of Children’s Literature, *Peter Pan*, the vital nature of its performance demands a Performance Studies analysis. If *Peter Pan* is read without consideration of its performance genealogy, the transmission is incomplete. Consider the traditional casting of a woman in the role of Peter. Without the deviations from Pantomime conventions that emphasize gender as a constructed role and complicate the typical trajectory of the Pantomime plot, *Peter Pan* loses its subversive power. If Peter is read as just a young boy, does the audience ever question whether or not he is a “real boy?” Do they question what constitutes a “real boy?” It is the heightened awareness of its own performativity that *Peter Pan* creates the critical distance that prompts the audience to ask such questions.

As a scenario of growing up, each iteration of *Peter Pan* may prompt its audience to consider what makes a “real boy,” but each audience will have a different answer. In 2013, while attending an adaptation of *Peter Pan* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, I found myself holding a thick piece of cardstock stamped “London” on one side and “Neverland” on the other. As the performance neared the end, and Peter balanced on the window, the threshold between the real world and the liminal world, the actors turned to the audience and asked us to vote: should Peter stay in London, or should he return to Neverland? Looking around at the audience filled with families, I first realized that our relationship with *Peter Pan* was more complex than I had initially considered. While many of the parents, doubtlessly familiar with the story of *Peter Pan*, whispered “Neverland” into their children’s ears, and nudged their Neverland cards into the air, I noticed several grim-faced children flipping their cards back and forth. Although I had previously considered what one must give up in order to become an adult, witnessing the children struggle with the decision led me to question what Peter gives up to remain a child. Seeing the few “London” signs sprinkled throughout the audience held tightly by concerned children, my vote of “Neverland,” which had at first seemed like the obvious and most fun choice, suddenly felt like a condemnation. I was making Peter say goodbye to all his friends and his beloved mother Wendy to return to a lonely island where Hook would be waiting for him.

As my feelings toward *Peter Pan* changed, I realized that the performance of the myth was not just a unidirectional transfer of knowledge and memory from past to present, but a
reciprocal relationship between past and present performances. As contemporary performances of Peter Pan color our understanding of the past, memory reveals itself as imagination. If no action can be performed exactly the same way twice, memory is constantly being reconstructed through the lens of the contemporary, and contemporary performance becomes a vital act of transmission. If, as Roach asserts, the process by which a culture reproduces itself is informed by a three-sided relationship of memory, performance, and substitution, Peter Pan re-creates memory through contemporary performance – the contemporary bodies serving as effigies (substitutes) of past performers. Through the inextricable connection between the archival and the nonarchival, performance becomes a vital and reciprocal mode of transmission: the repertoire of history embedded in the text reveals itself through performance as the contemporary performance shapes our understanding of that history. In this way, Peter Pan serves as a cultural myth as well as a myth of culture.
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APPENDIX I

Peter Pan

by Sir James M. Barrie

Adaptation by Laura Ferdinand

Acting Edition

Spring 2014
“I abandoned the idea, not being always certain, despite the best intentions, where the memories became fancies and the fancies memories.”

- J.M Barrie, *The Greenwood Hat*

Characters

*Barrie / First Twin / Hook (Act 1, 2, and 3) / Peter Pan (Act V Scene i)*
*Peter Pan / David*
*Jane / Tootles*
*Slightly / Hook (Act 4)*
*Curly / John / Nana*
*Nibs / Starkey*
*Second Twin / Smee*
*Michael / Tiger Lily*
*Mrs. Darling / Margaret Ogilvy / Tinker Bell / Mermaid*
*Wendy*

*denotes female actor*
Act I. Scene i.

Barrie stands alone onstage in a pool of light.

BARRIE Some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives, changing not through effort of will, which is a brave affair, but in the easy course of nature every ten years or so. I suppose this theory might explain my present trouble, but I don’t hold with it; I think one remains the same person throughout, merely passing, as it were, in these lapses of time from one room to another, but all in the same house. If we unlock the rooms of the far past we can peer in and see ourselves, busily occupied in beginning to become you and me.

Lights fade on Barrie, who exits. Lights up on a nursery with a large window.

JANE Won’t go to bed, Mummy, won’t go to bed!

WENDY Jane! When I was a little girl I went to bed the moment I was told. Come at once!

Jane dodges her and after pursuit is caught.

WENDY Naughtikins! To run your poor old Mother out of breath! When she’s not so young as she used to be!

JANE How young used you to be, Mummy?

WENDY Quite young. How time flies!

JANE Does it fly the way you flew when you were a little girl?

WENDY The way I flew. Do you know Darling it is all so long ago. I sometimes wonder whether I ever did really fly.

JANE Yes you did.

WENDY Those dear old days.

JANE Why can’t you fly now, Mother?

WENDY Because I’ve grown up sweetheart; when people grow up they forget the way.

JANE Why do they forget the way?

WENDY Because they are no longer young and innocent. It is only the young and innocent that can fly.

JANE What is young and innocent? I do wish I were young and innocent!
Wendy suddenly hugs her.

WENDY Come to bed, dearest.

JANE Tell me a story. Tell me about Peter Pan.

WENDY I’ve told it to you so often that I believe you could tell it to me better than I could tell it to you.

JANE Go on Mother. This is the Little House. What do you see?

WENDY I see – just the nursery.

JANE But what do you see long ago in it?

WENDY I see – little Wendy in her bed.

JANE Yes, and Uncle Michael and Uncle John over there.

WENDY Heigh ho! and to think that John has a beard now, and that Michael is an engine driver. Lie down, Petty.

JANE But do tell me. Tell me that bit – about how you grew up and Peter didn’t. Begin where he promised to come for you every year, and take you to the Tree Tops to do his Spring Cleaning. Lucky you!

WENDY Well then! On the conclusion of the adventures described in our last chapter which left our heroine, Wendy, in her Mummy’s arms, she was very quickly packed off to school again – a day school.

JANE And so were all the boys.

WENDY Yes – Mummy adopted them.

JANE Did they ever wish they were back in the Never Never Land?

WENDY I – I don’t know.

JANE I know!

WENDY Of course they missed the fun. Even Wendy sometimes couldn’t help flying, the littlest thing lifted her up in the air. The sight of a hat blown off a gentleman’s head for instance. If it flew off, so did she! So a year passes, and the first Spring Cleaning time came round, when Peter was to come and take her to the Tree Tops.
JANE OO! OO!

WENDY How she prepared for him! How she sat at that window in her going-away frock – and he came – and away they flew to his Spring Cleaning – and he was exactly the same, and he never noticed that she was any different.

JANE How was she different?

WENDY She had to let the frock down two inches! She was so terrified that he might notice it, for she had promised him never to have growing pains. However, he never noticed, he was so full of lovely talk about himself.

JANE He was awfully cocky.

WENDY I think ladies rather love cocky gentlemen.

JANE So do I love them.

WENDY There was one sad thing I noticed. He had forgotten a lot. He had even forgotten Tinker Bell. I think she was no more.

JANE Oh dear!

WENDY You see Darling, a fairy only lives as long a time as a feather is blown about the air on a windy day. But fairies are so little that a short time seems a good while to them. As the feather flutters they have quite an enjoyable life, with time to be born respectably and have a look round, and to dance once and to cry once and to bring up their children.

JANE Everybody grows up and dies except Peter, doesn’t they?

WENDY Yes, you see he had no sense of time. He thought all the past was just yesterday. He spoke as if it was just yesterday that he and I had parted – and it was a whole year.

JANE Oh dearie dear!

WENDY We had a lovely time, but soon I had to go back home, and another year passed, and Spring Cleaning time came again. And oh the terror of me sitting waiting for him – for I was another two inches round the waist! But he never came. How I cried! Another year passed, and I still got into my little frock somehow, and that year he came – and the strangest thing was that he never knew he had missed a year. I didn’t tell him. I meant to, but said to him ‘What am I to you Peter?’ and he said ‘You are my mother’ – so of course after that I couldn’t tell him. But that was the last. Many Spring Cleaning times came round, but never Peter any more. ‘Just always be waiting for me’ he said, ‘and then some time you will hear me crow’,
but I never heard him crow again. It’s just as well Sweetie, for you see he would think all the past was yesterday, and he would expect to find me a little girl still – and that would be too tragic. And now you must sleep.

JANE I am fearfully awake. Now tell me about being married in white with a pink sash.

WENDY Most of the boys married their favourite heroines in fiction and Slightly married a lady of title and so he became a lord.

JANE And one of them married Wendy and so he became my Papa! Now tell me about me.

WENDY At last there came to our heroine a little daughter. I don’t know how it is but I just always thought that some day Wendy would have a little daughter.

JANE So did I, mother, so did I! Tell me what she’s like.

WENDY Pen cannot describe her, she would have to be written with a golden splash!

Wendy hugs Jane.

WENDY That’s the end. You must sleep.

JANE I am not a bit sleepy.

WENDY H’sh!

JANE Mother, I think –

Pause

WENDY Well dear, what do you think.

Pause again – Wendy goes and looks and sees that Jane has suddenly fallen asleep.

WENDY Asleep!

Tucks her in bed, folds her clothes and puts them away. She sits by the fire to sew. Pause – then the night-light over Jane’s bed quivers and goes out. Then Peter’s crow is heard – Wendy starts up breathless – then the window opens and Peter flies into the room. He is not a day altered. He is gay. Wendy gasps, sinks back in chair...

PETER Hulloh Wendy!

She turns the lamplight away from her.

PETER Thimbles!
He leaps on to her knee and kisses her.

WENDY  Peter! Peter, do you know how long it is since you were here before?
PETER  It was yesterday.
WENDY  Oh!

He feels her cheek.

PETER  Why is there wet on your face?
She can’t answer.

PETER  I know! It’s cos you are so glad I’ve come for you.
Looking at Jane’s bed.

PETER  Is Michael asleep?
WENDY  Yes.  (Horrified at herself) That isn’t Michael!
PETER  Hullo, it’s a new one!

WENDY  Yes.
PETER  Boy or girl?
WENDY  Girl.
PETER  Do you like her?

WENDY  Yes! Peter, don’t you see whose child she is?
PETER  Of course I do. She’s your mother’s child. I say, I like her too!
WENDY  Why?
PETER  ‘Cos now your mother can let you stay longer with me for Spring Cleaning.
WENDY  Peter. I – I have something to tell you.
PETER  (running to her gaily) Is it a secret?
WENDY Oh! Peter, when Captain Hook carried us away –

PETER Who’s Captain Hook? Is it a story? Tell it me.

WENDY (aghast) Do you mean to say you’ve forgotten Captain Hook, and how you killed him and saved all our lives?

PETER (fidgeting) I forget them after I kill them.

WENDY Oh, Peter, you forget everything!

PETER Everything except mother Wendy.

*Peter hugs her.*

WENDY Oh!

PETER Come on Wendy.

WENDY Where to?

PETER To the Little House. Have you forgotten it is Spring Cleaning time – it’s you that forgets.

WENDY Peter, Peter! By this time the little house must have rotted all away.

PETER So it has, but there are new ones, even littler.

WENDY Did you build them yourself?

PETER Oh no, I just found them. You see the little house was a Mother and it has young ones.

WENDY You sweet.

PETER So come on. I’m Captain.

WENDY I can’t come, Peter – I have forgotten how to fly.

PETER I’ll soon teach you again.

*He blows fairy dust on her.*

WENDY Peter, Peter, you are wasting the fairy dust.

PETER (at last alarmed) What is it, Wendy? Is something wrong? Don’t cheat me mother Wendy, - I’m only a little boy.
WENDY I can’t come with you, Peter – because I’m no longer young and innocent.

PETER (with a cry) Yes you are.

WENDY I’m going to turn up the light, and then you will see for yourself.

PETER (frightened – hastily) Wendy, don’t turn up the light.

WENDY Yes. But first I want to say to you for the last time something I said often and often in the dear Never Never Land. Peter, what are your exact feelings for me?

PETER Those of a devoted son, Wendy. What is it? What is it?

WENDY Peter, I’m grown up – I couldn’t help it! I’m a married woman Peter – and that little girl is my baby.

PETER What does she call you?

WENDY Mother.

PETER Mother!

He takes a step towards child with a little dagger in his hand upraised, then is about to fly away, then flings self on floor and sobs.

WENDY Peter! Peter! Oh!

Wendy knows not what to do, rushes away in agony from the room – long pause in which nothing is heard but Peter’s sobs. Presently his sobbing wakes Jane. She sits up.

JANE Boy, why are you crying?

Peter rises and bows to her. She bows back.

JANE What is your name?

PETER Peter Pan.

JANE I just thought it would be you.

PETER I came for my mother to take her to the Never Never Land to do my Spring Cleaning.

JANE Yes I know, I’ve been waiting for you.
PETER  Will you be my mother?

JANE  Oh, yes.

*Peter very happy. The lamp flickers and goes out as night-light did.*

PETER  I hear Wendy coming – Hide!

*Peter and Jane hide. Enter Barrie, carrying a manuscript; he stands in the light which streams in from the open door.*

BARRIE *(reading)* All boys except one grow up. *(to the audience)* Some disquieting confessions must be made in printing at last the play of Peter Pan; among them this, that I have no recollection of having written it. Of that, however, anon. What I want to do first is to give Peter to the Five without whom he never would have existed. *(He looks at a framed picture of the Llewelyn Davies boys on his desk.)* I hope, my dear sirs, that in memory of what we have been to each other you will accept this dedication with your friend’s love. As for myself, I suppose I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you.

*The nursery swirls about him and offstage. Boys’ voices are heard offstage.*
Act I. Scene ii.

The lights rise upon an enchanted wood – Kensington Gardens colored by imagination to turn it into something of a Neverland. Barrie takes up with the five boys playing Lost Boys who come running in.

TOOTLES Has Peter come back, Slightly?

SLIGHTLY No, Tootles, no.

CURLY I do wish he would come back.

TOOTLES I am always afraid of the pirates when Peter is not here to protect us.

SLIGHTLY I am not afraid of pirates. Nothing frightens me. But I do wish Peter would come back and tell us whether he has heard anything more about Cinderella.

FIRST TWIN/BARRIE Slightly, I dreamt last night that the prince found Cinderella.

SECOND TWIN Twin, I think you should not have dreamt that, for I didn’t and Peter may say we oughtn’t to dream differently, being twins, you know.

TOOTLES I am awfully anxious about Cinderella.

NIBS All I remember about my mother is that she often said to father, ‘Oh, how I wish I had a cheque book of my own.’ I don’t know what a cheque book is, but I should just love to give my mother one.

SLIGHTLY My mother was fonder of me than your mothers were of you. Oh yes, she was. Peter had to make up names for you, but my mother had wrote my name on the pinafore I was lost in. ‘Slightly Soiled’; that’s my name.

The lost boys fall upon Slightly pugnaciously; not that they are really worrying about their mothers, who are now as important to them as a piece of string, but because any excuse is good enough for a shindy. Barrie grabs Nibs and the Second Twin, whispers to them. While the other three boys are fighting, Barrie, Nibs, and Second Twin sneak off. We hear them sing.

PIRATES (BARRIE/HOOK, SECOND TWIN/SMEE, NIBS/STARKEY) Yo ho, yo ho, the pirate life, The flag of skull and bones, A merry hour, a hempen rope, And hey for Davy Jones!

The fighting boys freeze as they hear the pirate song. They grab their weapons and climb up a tree. Curly, who is not tall enough to climb the tree is left alone. He tries to hide. The pirates enter; they have stick swords and a few other small costume pieces, such as a hat, a scarf, an earring, etc. They continue their distasteful singing.
PIRATES Avast, belay, yo ho, heave to, A-pirating we go, And if we’re parted by a shot We’re sure to meet below!

_Curly, the only one of the boys who has not sought safety in his tree, is seen for a moment near the lagoon, and Starkey is at once upraised. The captain twists his hook in him._

STARKEY Captain, let go!

HOOK Put back that pistol, first.

_Curly runs and hides behind a tree._

STARKEY ‘Twas one of those boys you hate; I could have shot him dead.

HOOK Ay, and the second sound would have brought Tiger Lily’s redskins on us. Do you want to lose your scalp?

SMEE That is true. Shall I after him, Captain, and tickle him with Johnny Corkscrew? Johnny is a silent fellow.

HOOK Not now. I want their captain, Peter Pan. ‘Twas he cut off my arm. I have waited long to shake his hand with this. Oh, I’ll tear him!

SMEE Yet I have oft heard you say your hook was worth a score of hands, for combing the hair and other homely uses.

HOOK If I was a mother I would pray to have my children born with this instead of that. Smee, Pan flung my arm to a crocodile that happened to be passing by.

SMEE I have often noticed your strange dread of crocodiles.

HOOK Not of crocodiles but of that one crocodile. The brute liked my arm so much, Smee, that he has followed me ever since, from sea to sea, and from land to land, licking his lips for the rest of me.

SMEE In a way it is a sort of compliment.

HOOK I want no such compliments; I want Peter Pan, who first gave the brute his taste for me. Smee, that crocodile would have had me before now, but by a lucky chance he swallowed a clock, and it goes tick, tick, tick inside him; and so before he can reach me I hear the tick and bolt. Once I heard it strike six within him.

SMEE _Some day the clock will run down, and then he’ll get you._

HOOK Ay, that is the fear that haunts me.

HOOK Listen! The crocodile!

Hook totters from the scene and hides. Smee and Starkey follow. Curly breathes a sigh of relief just as his two brothers, now dressed as “Redskins” with dirt streaked on their faces as war paint and leaves and feathers tucked into their hair descended silently from the tree, hanging on either side of Curly.

SLIGHTLY Have um scalps? What you say?

TOOTLES Scalp um, oho, very quick.

Curly hits them. They climb down from the tree and hassle him, taking his stick sword and running off laughing. Smee and Starkey chase after them. Barrie watches as Curly runs off after them.

BARRIE (indicating his hook) This character, as you do not need to be told, is held by those in the know to be autobiographical. (He smiles and removes the hook from his hand. We see the boys’ shadows projected behind Barrie, playing, perhaps sword fighting.)

BARRIE What was it that made us eventually give to the public in the thin form of a play that which had been woven for ourselves alone? Alas, I know what it was, I was losing my grip. (The boys shadows, one by one, exit until no players remain) A time came when I saw that you ceased to believe. In these circumstances, I suppose, was begun the writing of the play of Peter. That was a quarter century ago, and I clutch my brows in vain to remember whether it was a last desperate throw to retain the five of you for a little longer, or merely a cold decision to turn you into bread and butter. This brings us back to my uncomfortable admission that I have no recollection of writing the play of Peter Pan. You had played it until you tired of it, and tossed it in the air and gored it and left it derelict in the mud and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed some of the gory fragments together with a pen-nib.
Act I. Scene iii.

*Mrs. Darling sits in a chair with Barrie sitting beside her; Michael is sitting on the floor. Nana puts on dog ears and starts to mimic a dog. The others find this very funny. Suddenly, Nana turns her attention to Michael.*

MICHAEL I won’t go to bed, I won’t, I won’t. Nana, it isn’t six o’clock yet. Two minutes more, please, one minute more?

*Nana picks Michael up and starts heading toward the bathroom.*

MICHAEL Nana, I won’t be bathed, I tell you I will not be bathed!

*Peter’s face appears in the window. He disappears after he is spotted.*

MRS. DARLING *(Looking at the window and rising to go to it. Nana and Michael are quiet as they watch her.)* Who are you? No one there. And yet I’m sure I saw a face.

*Barrie walks over to his mother.*

BARRIE It’s not him.

*He leads Mrs. Darling to a bed to rest. Nana takes off her dog ears.*

BARRIE When my brother David was thirteen and I was half his age the terrible news came that he had been in a skating accident at school, and I have been told the face of my mother was awful in its calmness as she set off to get between Death and her boy. We trooped with her down the brae to the wooden station... Her ticket was taken, she had bidden us good-bye with that fighting face, and then my father came out of the telegraph-office and said huskily “He’s gone!” Then we turned very quietly and went home again up the little brae. She was always delicate from that hour, and for many months she was very ill. I sat a great deal in her bed trying to make her forget him, which was my crafty way of playing physician, and if I saw any one out of doors do something that made the others laugh I immediately hastened to that dark room and did it before her. I have been told that my anxiety to brighten her gave my face a strained look and put a tremor into the joke.

MRS. DARLING I want to see the Christening gown.

*Nana, no longer playing a dog, gets the christening gown from the drawer and takes it to Mrs. D, who holds it like a baby. The other children look on. Barrie speaks to the audience.*
BARRIE There was never anything in the house that spoke to her quite so eloquently as that little white robe; it was the one of her children that always remained a baby.

Barrie looks at Mrs. Darling with great anxiety.

MRS. DARLING What is the matter, dear?

Barrie puts a top hat on his head, grabs a bowtie, and in a “fatherly” voice goes on to entertain Mrs. Darling.

BARRIE: Matter! This tie, it will not tie. Not round my neck. Round the bed-post oh yes; twenty times I have made it up round the bed-post, but round my neck, oh dear no; begs to be excused. (Goaded by a suspiciously crooked smile on Mrs. Darling face) I warn you, Mary, that unless this tie is round my neck we don’t go out to dinner to-night, and if I don’t go out to dinner to-night I never go to the office again, and if I don’t go to the office again you and I starve, and our children will be thrown to the streets.

Nana, who puts on her dog ears again, and Michael play along, blanching as they grasp the gravity of the situation. Mrs. Darling looks upon them and smiles. She puts the christening gown into the drawer of the bedside table.

MRS. DARLING Let me try, dear.

In a terrible silence their progeny cluster round them. Will she succeed? Their fate depends on it. She fails – no, she succeeds. In another moment they are wildly gay, romping round the room on each other’s shoulders. Barrie looks at Mrs. Darling amidst the ruckus, smiling. Nana pursues Michael again.

MICHAEL I won’t be bathed! You needn’t think it.

BARRIE Go and be bathed at once, sir.

Michael runs and hides under the sheets in his mother’s bed. Peter’s face appears at the window, watching them all laugh and play.

MICHAEL Mother, how did you get to know me?

BARRIE A little less noise there.

MICHAEL At what time was I born, mother?

Nana curls up beside Mrs. Darling, too. Barrie stands fondly at her foot.

MRS. DARLING At two o’clock in the night-time, dearest.
MICHAEL Oh, mother, I hope I didn’t wake you.

MRS. DARLING (laughs) They are the sweetest, don’t you think?

BARRIE There is not their equal on earth.

_Nana yawns._

MRS. DARLING Time for bed.

_Peter’s face disappears. Nana, Michael, and Barrie crawl into their bed. Mrs. Darling lights their night lights. She goes to the window and looks out._

BARRIE Is anything there?

MRS. DARLING All quite quiet and still.

NANA Can anything harm us, mother, after the night-lights are lit?

MRS. DARLING Nothing, precious. They are the eyes a mother leaves behind her to guard her children.

BARRIE Mother, I’m glad of you.

MRS. DARLING (with a last look round, her hand on the lamp) Dear night-lights that protect my sleeping babes, burn clear and steadfast to-night.

_Lights down into an ethereal blue. Barrie gets out of bed and turns the light on over his desk._

BARRIE After David died, I was often jealous, stopping my mother’s fond memories with the cry, ‘Do you mind nothing about me?’ but that did not last; its place was taken by an intense desire to become so like him that even my mother should not see the difference.

_The shadow of David appears behind Barrie._

BARRIE He had such a cheery way of whistling, mother had told me, it always brightened her at her work to hear him whistling, and when he whistled he stood with his legs apart, and his hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers. I practised in secret, but after a whole week had passed I was still rather like myself. One day after I had learned his whistle from boys who had been his comrades, I secretly put on a suit of his clothes, dark grey they were, with little spots, and thus disguised I slipped, unknown to the others, into my mother’s room. Quaking, I doubt not, yet so pleased, I stood still until she saw me, and then – how it must have hurt her!
‘Listen!’ I cried in a glow of triumph, and I stretched my legs wide apart and plunged my hands into the pockets of my knickerbockers, and began to whistle.

The shadow behind Barrie becomes strangely intense for a moment as we hear the shadow’s whistle (while Barrie imitates his brother downstage) and then flickers and goes out.
Act I. Scene iv.

BARRIE The reason my books deal with the past instead of with the life I myself have known is simply this, that I soon grow tired of writing tales unless I can see a little girl, of whom my mother has told me, wandering confidently through the pages.

Wendy enters from the door through which Mrs. Darling exited. The following action occurs during Barrie’s monologue, below: She carries a basket of darning and a candle, which she puts next to the bed. As Barrie continues to speak, she goes to her brothers’ bed and pulls the sheet that they have kicked off around them again. She then gets into bed and begins to darn a sock. Exhausted, she soon falls asleep.

BARRIE My mother was eight when her mother’s death made her mistress of the house and mother to her little brother, and from that time she scrubbed and mended and baked and sewed... all these things she did as a matter of course, leaping joyful from bed in the morning because there was so much to do... I see her frocks lengthening, and the games given reluctantly up. The horror of my boyhood was that I knew a time would come when I also must give up the games, and how it was to be done I saw not (this agony still returns to me in dreams, when I catch myself playing marbles, and look on with cold displeasure); I felt that I must continue playing in secret, and I took this shadow to her, when she told me her own experience, which convinced us both that we were very like each other inside. There was always something of the child in her, and her laugh was its voice. I kept a record of her laughs on a piece of paper, a stroke for each. I showed it to her and told her that these were her five laughs, and not only did she laugh then but again when I put the laugh down, so that though it was really one laugh with a tear in the middle I counted it as two.

Barrie opens the paper tallying his mother’s laughs and out of it comes a ball of light. It darts about the room – stopping here and there, to search for Peter’s shadow.

BARRIE I have heard no such laugh as hers save from merry children; the laughter of most of us ages, and wears out with the body, but hers remained gleeful to the last, as if it were born afresh every morning.

Barrie takes a seat and writes during the next scene. Peter enters through the window.

PETER (in a whisper) Tinker Bell, Tink, are you there? Oh, do come out of that jug, Do you know where they put it? Which big box? This one? But which drawer? Yes, do show me.
Peter pulls the shadow out of the same drawer into which Mrs. Darling put the christening gown. He tries in vain to reattach it to his body. Frustrated, he cries, which wakes Wendy.

WENDY Boy, why are you crying?

PETER What is your name?

WENDY: Wendy Moira Angela Darling. What is yours?

PETER Peter Pan

WENDY Is that all?

PETER Yes.

WENDY I am so sorry.

PETER It doesn’t matter.

WENDY Where do you live?

PETER Second to the right and straight on till morning.

WENDY What a funny address!

PETER No, it isn’t.

WENDY I mean, is that what they put on your letters?

PETER Don’t get any letters.

WENDY But your mother gets letters.

PETER Don’t have a mother.

WENDY Peter! (She leaps out of bed to put her arms round him, but he draws back; he does not know why, but he knows he must draw back)

PETER You mustn’t touch me,

WENDY Why?

PETER No one must ever touch me.

WENDY Why?
PETER I don’t know.

WENDY No wonder you were crying.

PETER I wasn’t crying. But I can’t get my shadow to stick on.

WENDY It has come off! How awful. Peter, you have been trying to stick it on with soap.

PETER Well then?

WENDY It must be sewn on.

PETER What is ‘sewn’?

WENDY You are dreadfully ignorant.

PETER No, I’m not.

WENDY I will sew it on for you, my little man. But we must have more light. Sit here. I dare say it will hurt a little.

PETER I never cry. (She seems to attach the shadow. He tests the combination.) It isn’t quite itself yet.

WENDY Perhaps I should have ironed it.

Peter casts his shadow upon the wall.

PETER Wendy, look, look; oh the cleverness of me!

WENDY You conceit; of course I did nothing!

PETER You did a little.

WENDY A little! If I am no use I can at least withdraw.

PETER Wendy, don’t withdraw. I can’t help crowing, Wendy, when I’m pleased with myself. Wendy, one girl is worth more than twenty boys.

WENDY: You really think so, Peter?

PETER Yes, I do.

WENDY I think it’s perfectly sweet of you, and I shall get up again. I shall give you a kiss if you like.
Peter puts out his hand.

PETER Thank you.

WENDY Don’t you know what a kiss is?

PETER I shall know when you give it me.

Wendy gives him a thimble.

PETER Now shall I give you a kiss?

WENDY If you please.

Peter gives her an acorn.

WENDY I will wear it on this chain around my neck.

WENDY Peter, how old are you?

PETER I don’t know, but quite young, Wendy. I ran away the day I was born.

WENDY Ran away, why?

PETER Because I heard father and mother talking of what I was to be when I became a man. I want always to be a little boy and to have fun; so I ran away to Kensington Gardens and lived a long time among the fairies.

WENDY You know fairies, Peter!

PETER Yes, but they are nearly all dead now. You see, Wendy, when the first baby laughed for the first time, the laugh broke into a thousand pieces and they all went skipping about, and that was the beginning of fairies. And now when every baby is born its first laugh becomes a fairy. So there ought to be one fairy for every boy or girl.

WENDY Ought to be? Isn’t there?

PETER Oh no, Children know such a lot now. Soon they don’t believe in fairies, and every time a child says ‘I don’t believe in fairies’ there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead.

WENDY Poor things!

PETER I can’t think where she has gone. Tinker Bell, Tink, where are you?
WENDY Peter, you don’t mean to tell me there is a fairy in this room!

PETER She came with me. You don’t hear anything, do you?

WENDY I hear – the only sound I hear is like a tinkle of bells.

PETER That is the fairy language. I hear it too.

WENDY It seems to come from over there.

PETER Wendy, I believe I shut her up in that drawer! *(He releases Tink, who darts about in a fury using language it is perhaps as well we don’t understand.)* You needn’t say that; I’m very sorry, but how could I know you were in the drawer?

WENDY Oh, Peter, if only she would stand still and let me see her!

PETER They hardly ever stand still.

WENDY I see her, the lovely! Where is she now?

PETER She is behind the clock. Tink, this lady wishes you were her fairy.

WENDY What does she say?

PETER She is not very polite. She says you are a great ugly girl, and that she is my fairy. You know, Tink, you can’t be my fairy because I am a gentleman and you are a lady.

*(Tink replies)*

WENDY What did she say?

PETER She said ‘You silly ass.’ She is quite a common girl, you know. She is called Tinker Bell because she mends the fairy pots and kettles.

WENDY Where do you live now?

PETER With the lost boys.

WENDY Who are they?

PETER They are the children who fall out of their prams when the nurse is looking the other way. If they are not claimed in seven days they are sent far away to the Never Land. I’m captain.

WENDY What fun it must be.
PETER Yes, but we are rather lonely. You see, Wendy, we have no female companionship.

WENDY Are none of the other children girls?

PETER Oh no; girls, you know, are much too clever to fall out of their prams.

WENDY Peter, it is perfectly lovely the way you talk about girls. John there just despises us.

WENDY Peter, why did you come to our nursery window?

PETER To try to hear stories. None of us knows any stories.

WENDY How perfectly awful!

PETER Do you know why swallows build in the eaves of houses? It is to listen to the stories. Wendy, your mother was telling you such a lovely story.

WENDY Which story was it?

PETER About the prince, and he couldn’t find the lady who wore the glass slipper.

WENDY That was Cinderella. Peter, he found her and they were happy ever after.

PETER I am glad. (...)He jumps up."

WENDY Where are you going?

PETER To tell the other boys.

WENDY Don’t go, Peter. I know lots of stories. The stories I could tell to the boys!

PETER Come on! We’ll fly!

WENDY Fly? You can fly!

PETER Wendy, come with me.

WENDY Oh dear, I mustn’t. Think of mother. Besides, I can’t fly.

PETER I’ll teach you.

WENDY How lovely to fly!

*Peter jumps onto the windowsill.*
PETER I’ll teach you how to jump on the wind’s back and then away we go. Wendy, when you are sleeping in your silly bed you might be flying about with me, saying funny things to the stars. There are mermaids, Wendy, with long tails. Wendy, how we should all respect you.

WENDY Of course it’s awfully fas-cin-a-ting! Would you teach John and Michael to fly too?

PETER If you like.

WENDY John, wake up; there is a boy here who is to teach us to fly. Michael, open your eyes. This boy is to teach us to fly.

Wendy ushers them onto the windowsill.

JOHN I say, can you really fly?

MICHAEL How do you do it?

PETER I must blow fairy dust on you first. You just think lovely wonderful thoughts and they lift you up into the air.

The curtains shut just as the children jump out. We see their silhouettes flying in the night sky through the curtain as the set change occurs, set pieces swirling about as we move from the nursery to Never Land.
Act II. Scene i.

Lights up in Kensington Gardens.

BARRIE Second to the right, and straight on till morning. 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 zigzag lines on it, and these are probably roads in the island; for the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there. Children have the strangest adventures without being troubled by them. For instance, they may remember to mention, a week after the event happened, that when they were in the wood they met their dead father and had a game with him. It was in this casual way that I made a disquieting revelation: my life’s work may be described as playing hide-and-seek with angels. My puppets seem more real to me then myself.

WENDY (heard offstage) Poor Wendy. Poor Wendy.

TOOTLES What kind of bird, do you think?

NIBS I don’t know; but it looked so weary, and as it flies it moans ‘Poor Wendy.’

SLIGHTLY I remember now there are birds called Wendies.

BARRIE/ FIRST TWIN See, it comes, the Wendy! How white it is!

TOOTLES That is Tinker Bell. Tink is trying to hurt the Wendy. Hullo, Tink! She says Peter wants us to shoot the Wendy.

NIBS Let us do what Peter wishes.

SLIGHTLY Ay, shoot it; quick, bows and arrows!

The boys mime shooting arrows.

TOOTLES Out of the way, Tink; I’ll shoot it.

Wendy, who has been fluttering among the tree-tops in her white nightgown, falls straight to earth. No one could be more proud than Tootles. Wendy appears, and falls to the ground. The boys run and stand over her body. The others feel that he may have blundered and draw away from Tootles.

TOOTLES I have shot the Wendy; Peter will be so pleased.

SLIGHTLY This is no bird; I think it must be a lady.
NIBS  And Tootles has killed her.
CURLY  Now I see, Peter was bringing her to us.
SECOND TWIN To take care of us?
ALL Oh, Tootles!
TOOTLES I did it. When ladies used to come to me in dreams I said ‘Pretty mother.’ but when she really came I shot her! Friends, good-bye.
ALL (or some, not very enthusiastic) Don’t go.
TOOTLES I must; I am so afraid of Peter.
ALL Peter!

Peter enters.
PETER Greetings, boys! I am back; why do you not cheer? Great news, boys, I have brought at last a mother for us all.
SLIGHTLY Ay, ay.
PETER She flew this way; have you not seen her?
SECOND TWIN Oh mournful day!
TOOTLES Peter, I will show her to you.
ALL No, no.
TOOTLES Stand back all, and let Peter see.
PETER Wendy, with an arrow in her heart! (he plucks the arrow out) Wendy is dead.
CURLY I thought it was only flowers that die.
PETER Perhaps she is frightened at being dead? Whose arrow?
TOOTLES Mine, Peter.
PETER (raising the arrow as a dagger) Oh dastard hand!
TOOTLES Strike, Peter; strike true.
PETER  I cannot strike; there is something stays my hand.

NIBS ‘Tis she, the Wendy lady. See, her arm. I think she said ‘Poor Tootles.”

PETER She lives!

SLIGHTLY  The Wendy lady lives.

PETER See, the arrow struck against this. It is a kiss I gave her; it has saved her life.

SLIGHTLY I remember kisses; let me see it. Ay, that is a kiss.

PETER Wendy, get better quickly and I’ll take you to see the mermaids. She is awfully anxious to see a mermaid.

CURLEY  Listen to Tink rejoicing because she thinks the Wendy is dead! Tink, the Wendy lives.

*Tink gives an expression of fury.*

SECOND TWIN  It was she who said that you wanted us to shoot the Wendy.

PETER  She said that? Then listen, Tink, I am your friend no more.

*There is a note of acerbity in Tink’s reply.*

PETER Begone from me forever.

*Now it is a very wet tinkle.*

CURLEY She is crying.

TOOTLES  She says she is your fairy.

PETER  Oh well, not for ever, but for a whole week.

*Tink goes off sulking.*

PETER  Now what shall we do with Wendy?

CURLEY Let us carry her down into the house.

SLIGHTLY Ay, that is what one does with ladies.

PETER  No, you must not touch her; it wouldn’t be sufficiently respectful.
SLIGHTLY That is what I was thinking.

TOOTLES But if she lies there she will die.

SLIGHTLY Ay, she will die. It is a pity, but there is no way out.

PETER Yes, there is. Let us build a house around her! Leave all to me. Bring the best of what we have. Gut our house. Be sharp.

_The boys rush around constructing the house. Ad lib._

PETER All look your best; the first impression is awfully important.

_He knocks. Wendy comes out of the house._

WENDY Where am I?

SLIGHTLY Wendy lady, for you we built this house.

NIBS AND TOOTLES Oh, say you are pleased.

WENDY Lovely, darling house.

FIRST TWIN And we are your children.

WENDY Oh?

ALL Wendy lady, be our mother!

WENDY Ought I? Of course it is frightfully fascinating; but you see I am only a little girl; I have no real experience.

ALL That doesn’t matter. What we need is just a nice motherly person.

WENDY Oh dear, I feel that is just exactly what I am.

ALL It is, it is, we saw it at once.

WENDY Very well then, I will do my best. Come inside at once, you naughty children, I am sure your feet are damp. And before I put you to bed I have just time to finish the story of Cinderella.

_All, except Barrie, troop into the enchanting house, whose not least remarkable feature is that it holds them._
Act III. Scene i.

The shadow of a mermaid appears, and her singing is heard over the gentle lapping of the waves. Peter and Wendy creep nearer to her when she suddenly spots them and slips into the water. Barrie, Smee, Starkey, and Tootles are watching the scene. We are in Barrie’s office, and yet in the minds of the players, we are in a dark lagoon. Marooner’s rock is Barrie’s desk.

WENDY I did so want to catch a mermaid.

PETER It is awfully difficult to catch a mermaid. They are such cruel creatures, Wendy, that they try to pull boys and girls like you into the water and drown them.

Tootles creeps up and grabs Wendy’s leg. She is frightened and pulls away quickly.

WENDY How hateful!

Tootles laughs.

PETER Wendy, this is a fearfully important rock. It is called Marooners’ Rock. Sailors are marooned, you know, when their captain leaves them on a rock and sails away.

WENDY Leaves them on this little rock to drown?

PETER (lightly) Oh, they don’t live long. Their hands are tied, so that they can’t swim. When the tide is full this rock is covered with water, and then the sailor drowns.

Wendy is uneasy as she surveys the rock, which is the only one in the lagoon and no larger than a table.

BARRIE A threatening change has come over the scene. The sun has gone, but the moon has not come. What has come is a cold shiver across the waters which has sent all the wiser mermaids to their coral recesses. They know that evil is creeping over the lagoon.

At Barrie’s suggestion, Smee, Starkey, and Tootles grab their pirate gear. Mary Hodgson (Tiger Lily) enters, with a telegram in her hand. Smee, Starkey, and Tootles grab her and tie her up. Barrie laughs. While the pirates are busy tying up Tiger Lily, Peter and Wendy hide.

PIRATES (STARKEY, SMEE, TOOTLES) And if we’re parted by a shot We’re sure to meet below.

The pirates find the rock deserted when their dinghy strikes the rock.
SMEE  Luff, you spaleen, luff!

They are Smee, Starkey, and Tootles with Tiger Lily, their captive, bound hand and foot.

SMEE  What we have got to do is to hoist the redskin on to the rock and leave her there to drown.

Tiger Lily’s face is impassive.

STARKEY (chagrined because she does not mewl) No mewling. This is your reward for prowling round the ship with a knife in your mouth.

TIGER LILY Enough said.

SMEE So that’s it! On to the rock with her, mate.

BARRIE Not so rough, Smee; roughish, but not so rough.

TOOTLES It’s the captain’s orders.

A stave has in some past time been driven into the rock, probably to mark the burial place of hidden treasure, and to this they moor the dinghy.

WENDY Poor Tiger Lily!

STARKEY What was that?

PETER (who can imitate the captain’s voice so perfectly that even the author has a dizzy feeling that at times he was really Hook, from offstage) Ahoy there, you lubbers!

STARKEY It is the captain; he must be swimming out to us.

SMEE We have put the redskin on the rock, captain.

PETER Set her free.

SMEE  But, Captain –

PETER Cut her bonds, or I’ll plunge my hook in you.

TOOTLES This is queer!

STARKEY Let us follow the captain’s orders.
They undo the thons and Tiger Lily slides between their legs into the lagoon. Smee and Starkey talk to Barrie. They untie Tiger Lily who picks up an old tea tray to take out and wash and gives Barrie the telegram.

SMEE Captain, could we not kidnap these boys’ mother and make her our mother?

BARRIE Obesity and bunions, ‘tis a princely scheme. We will seize the children, make them walk the plank, and Wendy shall be our mother!

WENDY Never!

BARRIE What say you, bullies?

SMEE There is my hand on’t.

STARKEY And mine.

BARRIE And there is my hook.

Barrie opens the telegram with his hook, reads it, and screams out, startling Tiger Lily and the other players.

BARRIE Ah-h-h! They’ll all go, Mary – Jack, Peter, Michael – even little Nico – This dreadful war will get them all in the end!

Mary grabs the children, who are very upset and worried, to take them out of the room. Barrie has fallen into his chair, he drops the hook onto the ground. The children don’t quite understand what has happened, and fight against Tiger Lily to stay in the room.

STARKEY Captain, is all well?

SMEE He sighs.

STARKEY He sighs again.

SMEE And yet a third time he sighs. What’s up, Captain?

Barrie looks at them and musters this sentence.

BARRIE/HOOK The game is up.
Tiger Lily gathers the children up and leads them out. Tootles picks up Barrie’s hook. He tries to hand it to Barrie who turns away. Tootles cradles the hook in his arm and walks out of the room toward Tiger Lily who has been waiting for him. Barrie is alone onstage. Then, the shadow of Peter flickers behind him.

BARRIE Spirit that haunts this dark lagoon to-night, dost hear me?

Peter’s shadow becomes steady.

PETER Odds, bobs, hammer and tongs, I hear you.

BARRIE Who are you, stranger, speak.

PETER I am Jas Hook, Captain of the Jolly Roger.

BARRIE No, no, you are not.

PETER Brimstone and gall, say that again and I’ll cast anchor in you.

BARRIE If you are Hook, come tell me, who am I?

PETER A codfish, only a codfish.

BARRIE A codfish?

PETER Paw, fish, paw!

HOOK Have you another name?

PETER Ay, ay.

HOOK Vegetable?

PETER No.

HOOK Mineral?

PETER No.

HOOK Animal?

PETER Yes.

HOOK Man?

PETER (with scorn) No.
HOOK Boy?
PETER Yes.
HOOK Ordinary boy?
PETER No!
HOOK Wonderful boy?
PETER Yes!
HOOK Are you in England?
PETER No.
HOOK Are you here?
PETER Yes.
PETER Can’t guess, can’t guess! Do you give up?
HOOK Yes.
PETER (crowing) Well, then, I am Peter Pan!

Peter’s shadow begins to flicker and fade. Barrie whispers hoarsely.

HOOK Don’t desert me.

Peter’s shadow disappears.

Barrie lays his head on the desk. The lights shift to suggest the passing of time.

Tootles enters with the hook. He stands by Barrie’s desk. Barrie does not respond to him.

Tootles takes Barrie’s manuscript and reads from it, slowly as a child who is not a strong reader.

TOOTLES “Two small figures were beating against the rock, the girl had fainted and lay on the boy’s arm. With a last effort Peter pulled her up the rock and then lay down beside her. Even as he also fainted he saw that the water was rising. He knew that they would soon be drowned, but he could do no more.” How does it end?
As Barrie speaks, Wendy and Peter appear, and act out the scene upon Barrie’s desk. As he speaks, the lights and sound change – we can now get a glimpse of what Barrie is imagining.

BARRIE As they lay side by side a mermaid caught Wendy by the feet, and began pulling her softly into the water. Peter, feeling her slip from him, woke with a start, and was just in time to draw her back. But he had to tell her the truth.

WENDY Peter! Where are we, Peter?

PETER We are on the rock, but it is getting smaller. Soon the water will be over it. Listen!

They can hear the wash of the relentless little waves.

WENDY We must go.

PETER Yes.

WENDY Shall we swim or fly?

PETER Wendy, do you think you could swim or fly to the island without me?

WENDY You know I couldn’t, Peter; I’m just a beginner.

PETER Hook wounded me twice.

BARRIE He believes it; he is so good at pretend that he feels the pain, his arm hangs limp.

PETER I can neither swim nor fly.

WENDY Do you mean we shall both be drowned?

PETER Look how the water is rising!

BARRIE In flies the tail of a kite that touches Wendy softly upon the cheek.

PETER It must be the tail of the kite we made for Michael; you remember it tore itself out of his hands and floated away. The kite! Why shouldn’t it carry you?

WENDY Both of us!

PETER It can’t lift two. Michael and Curly tried.

WENDY I won’t go without you. Let us draw lots which is to stay behind.
PETER And you a lady, never! Ready, Wendy!

*Wendy is pulled away and offstage. Barrie finds it quite difficult to finish the story.*

BARRIE The waters are lapping over the rock now, and Peter knows that it will soon be submerged. Pale rays of light mingle with the moving clouds; and from the coral grottoes is to be heard a sound at once the most musical and the most melancholy in the world; the mermaids calling to the moon. Peter is not quite like other boys; but he is afraid at last. A tremor runs through him, like a shudder passing over the lagoon; but on the lagoon one shudder follows another till there are hundreds of them, and he feels just the one. Next moment he is standing erect on the rock again with a drum beating in his breast as if he were a real boy at last.

PETER To die will be an awfully big adventure.

*Barrie is overcome; he rips a page from his manuscript, crumples it, throws it on the floor, and walks offstage.*

*Tootles picks up the page and runs off after Barrie. Peter, alone, steps off the desk and surveys its contents. He picks up the telegram and reads it. Worried, he looks about, picks up a newspaper, reads it, looks saddened and walks offstage.*

*Lights fade.*
Act IV. Scene i.

We are in the home underground. Barrie’s chair remains empty. Barrie is not onstage, and tension is running high in his absence as things start to unravel.

It is a pretend meal this evening.

WENDY Si-lence! Is your mug empty, Slightly?

SLIGHTLY Not quite empty, thank you.

NIBS Mummy, he has not even begun to drink his poe-poe.

SLIGHTLY I complain of Nibs!

John holds up his hand.

WENDY Well, John?

JOHN May I sit in Peter’s chair as he is not here?

WENDY In your father’s chair? Certainly not.

JOHN He is not really our father. He did not know how to be a father till I showed him.

SECOND TWIN I complain of John!

TOOTLES I don’t suppose Michael would let me be baby?

MICHAEL No, I won’t.

TOOTLES May I be dunce?

SECOND TWIN No. It’s awfully difficult to be dunce.

TOOTLES As I can’t be anything important would any of you like to see me do a trick?

ALL No.

TOOTLES I hadn’t really any hope.

The hook is stolen from Tootles, passed around, and eventually finds itself in Slightly’s posession.

NIBS Slightly is coughing in the table.
JOHN   The twins began with tappa rolls.

SLIGHTLY   I complain of Nibs!

Nibs   I complain of Slightly!

WENDY   Oh dear, I am sure I sometimes think spinsters are to be envied.

MICHAEL   Wendy, I am too big for a cradle.

WENDY   You are the littlest, and a cradle is such a nice homely thing to have about a house.
        You others clear way now. I hear your father’s step. He likes you to meet him at the door.

*Peter enters with the newspaper, clearly agitated.*

JOHN   Any sport, Peter?

PETER   Two tigers and a pirate.

JOHN   *(boldly)*   Where are their heads?

PETER   *(contracting his little brows)*   In the bag.

JOHN   *(No, he doesn’t say it. He backs away)*

*Peter does not respond and sits in Barrie’s chair, picking up the newspaper to read.*

SECOND TWIN   Mummy, we want to hear the story of Cinderella!

SLIGHTLY   As it is Saturday night?

WENDY   Of course it is Saturday night, Peter?

*Peter shrugs an indifferent assent.*

WENDY   On with your nighties first.

*The boys disappear into various recesses, and Peter and Wendy with her darning are left by the fire to dodder parentally. Wendy hums, which has not the desired effect on Peter. She is too loving to be ignorant that he is not loving enough, and she hesitates like one who knows the answer to her question.*

WENDY   What is wrong, Peter?

*Peter hands her the newspaper. She reads aloud.*

Peter takes the newspaper and reads to her.

PETER “Since the war Barrie has only written two important things... ‘Der Tag’... and ‘A Kiss for Cinderella.’ He wrote this last work mainly to distract his mind from the horrors he had seen in France.”

He looks to Wendy for a response.

PETER It is only pretend, isn’t it?

WENDY Oh, yes.

PETER “The boy for whom he wrote ‘Peter Pan’ – the original, indeed, of ‘Peter Pan’ – has died in battle. “ It is only pretend, isn’t it, that I am their father?

WENDY Oh yes.

His sigh of relief is without consideration for her feelings.

WENDY But they are ours, Peter, yours and mine.

PETER But not really?

WENDY Not if you don’t wish it.

PETER I don’t.

WENDY (knowing she ought not to probe but driven to do it by something within) What are your exact feelings for me, Peter?

PETER Those of a devoted son, Wendy.

WENDY I thought so.

The arrival of the boys in their nightgowns turns Wendy’s mind to practical matters.

NIBS Now the story you promised to tell us as soon as we were in bed!

WENDY As far as I can see you are not in bed yet.

They scramble into the bed, and the effect is as a boxful of sardines.
WENDY Well, there was once a gentleman –

Barrie enters. He stands in the back, listening to the story.

SLIGHTLY I wish he had been a lady.

NIBS I wish he had been a white rat.

WENDY Quiet! There was a lady also. The gentleman’s name was Mr. Darling and the lady’s name was Mrs. Darling –

JOHN I knew them!

MICHAEL I think I knew them.

WENDY They were married, you know; and what do you think they had?

NIBS White rats?

WENDY No, they had three descendants. White rats are descendants also. Almost everything is a descendant. Now these three children flew away. They flew away to the Never Land, where the lost boys are.

JOHN I just thought they did; I don’t know how it is, but I just thought they did.

TOOTLES Oh, Wendy, was one of the lost boys called Tootles?

WENDY Yes, he was.

TOOTLES (dazzled) Am I in a story? Nibs, I am in a story!

PETER (determined that Wendy shall have fair play, however beastly a story he may think it) A little less noise there.

WENDY Now I want you to consider the feelings of the unhappy parents with all their children flown away. Think, oh think, of the empty beds.

FIRST TWIN/BARRIE It’s awfully sad.

WENDY But our heroine knew that her mother would always leave the window open for her progeny to fly back by; so they stayed away for years and had a lovely time.

Peter is interested at last.

FIRST TWIN/BARRIE Did they ever go back?
WENDY Let us now take a peep into the future. Years have rolled by, and who is this elegant lady of uncertain age alighting at London station?

*The tension is unbearable.*

NIBS Oh, Wendy, who is she?

WENDY Can it be – yes – no – yes, it is the fair Wendy!

TOOTLES I am glad.

WENDY Who are the two noble portly figures accompanying her? Can they be John and Michael? They are. ‘See, dear brothers,’ says Wendy, pointing upward, ‘there is the window standing open.’ So they flew up to their loving parents, and her pen cannot inscribe the happy scene over which we draw a veil.

*Peter groans.*

WENDY Peter, what is it?

*Thinking he is ill, and looking lower than his chest.*

PETER It isn’t that kind of pain. Wendy, you are wrong about mothers. I thought like you about the window, so I stayed away for moons and moons, and then I flew back, but the window was barred, for my mother had forgotten all about me and there was another little boy sleeping in my bed.

*Barrie leaves.*

JOHN Wendy, let us go back!

WENDY Are you sure mothers are like that?

PETER Yes.

WENDY John! Michael! (She clasps them.)

SECOND TWIN You are not to leave us, Wendy?

WENDY I must.

NIBS Not to-night?

WENDY At once. Perhaps mother is in half-mourning by this time! Peter, will you make the necessary arrangements?
PETER (coolly) If you wish it.

*Peter walks offstage.*

SLIGHT;Y We won’t let you go!

WENDY Tootles, I appeal to you.

TOOTLES I am just Tootles and nobody minds me, but the first who does not behave to Wendy I will blood him severely.

*Peter returns.*

PETER Wendy, I told the braves to guide you through the wood as flying tires you so. Then Tinker Bell will take you across the sea.

*A shrill tinkle.*

NIBS Tink, you are to get up and take Wendy on a journey.

*A tinkle.*

NIBS She says she won’t.

PETER If you don’t get up, Tink, and dress at once – She is getting up!

WENDY (quivering now that the time to depart has come) Dear ones, if you will all come with me I feel almost sure I can get my father and mother to adopt you.

*There is joy at this, not that they want parents, but novelty is their religion.*

NIBS But won’t they think us rather a handful?

WENDY Oh no, it will only mean having a few beds in the drawing-room.

*Everything depends on Peter.*

ALL Peter, may we go?

PETER (carelessly) All right.

*They scurry off to dress for the adventure.*

WENDY Get your clothes, Peter.
PETER  I am not going with you, Wendy.

WENDY Yes, Peter!

PETER No.

*The lost ones run back gaily, each carrying a bundle of their belongings.*

WENDY  Peter isn’t coming!

*All the faces go blank.*

JOHN  Peter not coming!

*Slightly takes the Hook and storms out of the little house.*

TOOTLES  Why, Peter?

PETER  I just want always to be a little boy and to have fun.

*There is a general fear that they are perhaps making the mistake of their lives.*

PETER  Now then, no fuss, no blubbering. *(With dreadful cynicism)* I hope you will like your mothers! Are you ready, Tink? Then lead the way.

*Tink darts up, but she is the only one. The air above is suddenly rent with shrieks and the clash of steel. Though they cannot see, the boys know that Hook and his crew are upon the Indians. Mouths open and remain open, all in mute appeal to Peter. He is the only boy on his feet now, a sword in his hand, and in his eye the lust of battle.*

*We can watch the carnage that is invisible to the children. The onslaught passes and is gone like a fierce wind. Hook and his pirates, triumphant, wait above.*

PETER  All is over!

WENDY  But who has won?

PETER  Hsh! If the Indians have won they will beat the tom-tom; it is always their signal of victory.

*The pirates beat the tom-toms of the defeated Indians.*

TOOTLES  The tom-tom!

PETER  An Indian victory! You are quite safe now, Wendy. Boys, good-bye.

WENDY  Peter, you will remember about changing your flannels, won’t you?
PETER Oh, all right!

WENDY And this is your medicine.

*She pulls a bottle out of her pocket and leaves it on the desk.*

PETER I won’t forget.

WENDY Peter, what are you to me?

PETER Your son, Wendy.

WENDY Oh, good-bye!

*The travelers start upon their journey, little witting that Hook has issued his silent orders. The children are plucked, trussed, thrown like bales of cotton from one pirate to another, and so piled up and carried off.*
Act IV. Scene ii.

Hook (played by Slightly) and Peter are now, as it were, alone on the island. Peter is on the bed, asleep, no weapon near him, holding his kiss (the thimble Wendy gave him). Hook enters. He glares at the sleeping child. He raises the hook above his head to strike, but Peter stirs and stops Hook. Barrie enters and gives Hook a bottle of poison. Hook smiles and walks to Peter’s medicine, pouring the poison into the medicine bottle. Barrie exits. Hook takes Peter’s thimble and exits.

Tink enters, seeming to pull Barrie in behind her.

PETER Who is that? (Tink has to tell her tale, in one long ungrammatical sentence.) The redskins were defeated? Wendy and the boys captured by the pirates! I’ll rescue her, I’ll rescue her! (He leaps first at his dagger, and then at his grindstone, to sharpen it. Tink alights near the medicine, and rings out a warning cry.) Oh, that is just my medicine. Poisoned? Who could have poisoned it? (Tink indicates Barrie) I promised Wendy to take it, and I will as soon as I have sharpened my dagger. (Tink nobly swallows the draught as Peter’s hand is reaching for it.) Why, Tink, you have drunk my medicine! It was poisoned and you drank it to save my life! Tink, dear Tink, are you dying? (Tink flies to her boudoir and falls on her tiny bed. The boudoir, which is lit by her, flickers ominously. He is on his knees by the opening.)

PETER Is she dying? Her light is growing faint, and if it goes out, that means she is dead! Her voice is so low I can scarcely tell what she is saying. She says — she says she thinks she could get well again if children believed in fairies. Do you believe in fairies? Say quick that you believe! If you believe, clap your hands! (To Barrie) Do you believe? Do you believe? If you believe, clap your hands!

Barrie begins to clap. The theatre lights flicker wildly and go dark for an instance as if absorbed into a black hole, whereupon Tinker Bell appears, as big as a human. She is played by the actor who plays Mrs. Darling.

TINKER BELL Your grandest triumph, the best thing in the play of Peter, is that long after he had ceased to believe, you brought him back to the faith for at least two minutes ... for two minutes he was quivering in another world than ours. Keep that smile with other fragments of immortality that have come your way.

BARRIE Oh, thank you, thank you! (To Peter) And now to rescue Wendy!
Act V. Scene i.

Aboard the pirate ship.

HOOK/SLIGHTLY How still the night is; nothing sounds alive. Now is the hour when children in their homes are a-bed; their lips bright-browned with the good-night chocolate, and their tongues drowsily searching for belated crumbs housed insecurely on their shining cheeks. Compare with them the children in this boat about to walk the plank. Split my infinitives, but ‘tis my hour of triumph! And yet some disky spirit compels me now to make my dying speech, lest when dying there may be no time for it. All mortals envy me, yet better perhaps for Hook to have had less ambition!

Barrie enters and watches Slightly.

HOOK/SLIGHTLY O fame, fame, thou glittering bauble... No little children love me. I am told they play at Peter Pan, and that the strongest always chooses to be Peter. They would rather be a Twin than Hook; they force the baby to be Hook. The baby! That is where the canker gnaws. ‘Tis said they find Smee loveable. But an hour ago I found him letting the youngest of them try on his spectacles. Pathetic Smee, the Nonconformist pirate, a happy smile upon his face because he thinks they fear him! How can I break it to him that they think him loveable? No, bi-carbonate of Soda, no, not even...

A clock strikes eight, and Starkey leads the shackled boys onstage.

BARRIE (To Slightly) Are all the prisoners chained, so that they can’t fly away?

SLIGHTLY (giving Barrie the Hook, smiling, and joining the lost boys) Ay, ay, Captain.

HOOK/BARRIE So! Now then, you bullies, three of you walk the plank to-night, but I have room for two cabin-boys. Which of you is it to be?

JOHN You see, sir, I don’t think my mother would like me to be a pirate. Would your mother like you to be a pirate, Tootles?

TOOTLES I don’t think so. Michael, would your mother like...

HOOK/BARRIE Stop this gab. (To John) You boy, you look as if you had a little pluck in you. Didst never want to be a pirate, my hearty?

JOHN When I was at school I... what do you think, Michael?

MICHAEL What would you call me if I joined?

HOOK/BARRIE Blackbeard Joe.
MICHAEL John, what do you think?

JOHN Stop, should we still be respectful subjects of King George?

HOOK You would have to swear ‘Down with King George.”

JOHN Then I refuse!

MICHAEL And I refuse.

HOOK/BARRIE That seals your doom. Bring up their mother.

Wendy is driven up from the hold and thrown to him.

HOOK/BARRIE So, my beauty, you are to see your children walk the plank.

WENDY Are they to die?

HOOK/BARRIE They are. Silence all, for a mother’s last words to her children.

WENDY These are my last words. Dear boys, I feel that I have a message to you from your real mothers, and it is this, ‘We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen.’

MICHAEL I am going to do what my mother hopes. What are you to do, Twin?

TOOTLES What my mother hopes. John, what are...

HOOK/BARRIE Tie her up! Get the plank ready.

STARKEY There is none can save you now, missy.

PETER (from offstage) There is one.

SMEE Who is that?

*Peter’s figure appears in silhouette behind the ship’s sail.*

PETER Peter Pan, the avenger!

*Starkey advances with a sword, and Pan disarms him, picking up Starkey’s sword and untiring the boys who release Wendy and tie up Smee and Starkey.*

*Peter turns to Hook.*
PETER Put up your swords, boys. This man is mine.

HOOK/BARRIE So, Pan, this is all your doing!

PETER Ay, Jas hook, it is all my doing!

HOOK/BARRIE Proud and insolent youth, prepare to meet thy doom.

PETER Dark and sinister man, have at thee.

*Hook or Peter this time! They fall to without another word. Peter is a rare swordsman. By some impalpable stroke Hook’s sword is whipped from his grasp, and when he stoops to raise it a little foot is on the blade. There is no deep gash on Hook, but he is suffering torment as from innumerable jags.*

BOYS Now, Peter, now!

*Peter raises the sword by its blade, and with an inclination of the head that is perhaps slightly overdone, presents the hilt to his enemy.*

HOOK/BARRIE ‘Tis some fiend fighting me! Pan, who and what art thou?

PETER I’m youth, I’m joy. I’m a little bird that has broken out of the egg.

HOOK/BARRIE To’t again!

*The sword fighting resumes.*

HOOK I’ll fire the powder magazine. In two minutes the ship will be blown to pieces. Back, you pewling spawn. I’ll show you the road to dusty death. A holocaust of children, there is something grand in the idea!

*Peter appears with a smoking bomb in his hand and tosses it overboard. At this sight the great heart of Hook breaks. That not wholly unheroic figure, Hook (who is now seen in shadow behind the ship’s sail,) climbs the bulwarks and prostrates himself into the water, where the crocodile is waiting for him open-mouthed. Hook knows the purpose of this yawning cavity, but after what he has gone through he enters it like one greeting a friend.*
Act V. Scene ii.

The old nursery appears again with everything just as it was at the beginning of the play, except that the window is standing open. So Peter was wrong about mothers; indeed there is no subject on which he is so likely to be wrong. Mrs. Darling is asleep on a chair near the window, her eyes tired with searching the heavens, holding the christening gown.

MRS. DARLING (starting up as if her children were coming back) Wendy, John, Michael!

Barrie enters, concerned over his mother’s start. She folds up the christening gown and puts it in the drawer.

BARRIE It touches my heart to watch you do that night after night.

MRS. DARLING What sort of a day have you had, James?

BARRIE (sitting) There were never less than a hundred running round the cab cheering, and when we passed the Stock Exchange the members came out and waved.

MRS. DARLING I am so proud, James.

BARRIE I have been put on a picture postcard, mother.

MRS. DARLING (nobly) Never!

BARRIE Ah, mother, I should not be such a celebrity if the children hadn’t flown away.

MRS. DARLING James, you are sure you are not enjoying it?

BARRIE Enjoying it!

MRS. DARLING Forgive me, dear one.

BARRIE It is I who need forgiveness, always I, never you. And now I feel drowsy. Won’t you play me to sleep on the nursery piano? And shut that window, mother dearest; I feel a draught.

MRS. DARLING Oh, James, never ask me to do that. The window must always be left open for them, always, always.

Mrs. Darling goes into the day nursery, from which we presently hear her playing. She little knows that her last remark has been overheard by a boy crouching at the window. He steals into the room accompanied by a ball of light.
PETER Tink, where are you? Quick, close the window. (He sees Barrie and falters, but, at last, he continues) Bar it. Now when Wendy comes she will think her mother has barred her out, and she will have to come back to me! Now, Tink, you and I must go out by the door. (He heads toward the door of the day nursery, where, spotting Mrs. Darling, he stops.) It is Wendy’s mother!

Barrie walks toward Peter, looking upon Mrs. Darling playing the piano.

PETER She is a pretty lady, but not so pretty as my mother.

BARRIE Do you remember your mother?

Peter is silent.

BARRIE Look at her. She is almost withered up. Her hand moves restlessly on her breast as if she had a pain there. Some like Peter best, and some like Wendy best, but I like her best.

PETER Do you remember your mother?

BARRIE When you looked into my mother’s eyes you knew, as if He had told you, why God sent her into the world – it was to open the minds of all who looked to beautiful things.

Peter takes off his hat. The music stops.

PETER She has laid her head down on the box. There are two wet things sitting in her eyes. As soon as they go away another two come and sit in her eyes.

Mrs. Darling’s voice is heard offstage.

MRS. DARLING Wendy, Wendy, Wendy.

BARRIE It is a very commonplace name, but she says it and repeats it again and again and again, lingering over it as if it were the most exquisite music and this her dying song.

PETER She wants me to unbar the window. I won’t! She is awfully fond of Wendy. I am fond of her too. We can’t both have her, lady!

Peter throws his hat on the floor. Barrie speaks to him with care.

BARRIE There is no second chance, not for most of us. When we reach the window it is Lock-out Time. The iron bars are up for life. Most of us are as honorable and as ignorant as Youth themselves; but that does not acquit us of stupidity and jealousy, the two black spots in human nature at the root of all evil.
PETER (A funny feeling comes over him) Come on, Tink; we don’t want any silly mothers.

He opens the window and they fly out. Barrie goes to the window to try to catch him. It is thus that the truants find entrance easy when they alight on the sill.

MICHAEL I think I have been here before.

JOHN It’s your home, you stupid.

WENDY There is your old bed, Michael.

JOHN It is very careless of mother not to be here when we come back.

The piano is heard again.

WENDY H’sh! That is her playing.

MICHAEL Who is that lady?

JOHN H’sh! It’s mother.

MICHAEL Then are you not really our mother, Wendy?

WENDY Oh, dear, it is quite time to be back!

JOHN Let us creep in and put our hands over her eyes.

WENDY (more considerate) No, let us break it to her gently.

Wendy slips between the sheets of her bed; and the others, seeing the idea at once, get into their beds. Then when the music stops they cover their heads. There are now three distinct bumps in the beds. Mrs. Darling sees the bumps as soon as she comes in, but she does not believe she sees them.

MRS. DARLING I see them in their beds so often in my dreams that I seem still to see them when I am awake! I’ll not look again.

Mrs. Darling sits in her chair, facing the window. Barrie puts his hand on her shoulder.

MRS. DARLING So often their silver voices call me, my little children whom I’ll see no more.

WENDY Mother!

MRS. DARLING That is Wendy.
JOHN  Mother!

MRS. DARLING Now it is John.

MICHAEL Mother!

MRS. DARLING  Now Michael. And when they call I stretch out my arms to them, but they never come, they never come!

This time, however, they come, and there is joy once more in the Darling household. The little boy who is crouching at the window sees the joke of the bumps in the beds, but cannot understand what all the rest of the fuss is about.

The other lost boys come through the window.

SECOND TWIN Do you think we should be too much of a handful? Because, if so, we can go away.

NIBS We could lie doubled up.

WENDY  I always cut their hair myself.

MRS. DARLING (in tears of happiness) I am glad to have you.

SLIGHTLY  We’ll fit in.

MRS. DARLING Then follow the leader and get your nightgowns on.

One at a time, the Lost Boys give Mrs. Darling a hug and follow John into the day nursery. Slightly puts the thimble on the windowsill for Peter before hugging Mrs. Darling. Barrie, Mrs. Darling, and Wendy are left onstage.

WENDY Peter!

Peter enters through the window. Barrie sits on the windowsill and watches the others.

PETER  Hullo, Wendy.

MRS. DARLING  Peter, let me adopt you too.

PETER Would you send me to school.

MRS. DARLING (obligingly) Yes.

PETER And then to an office.
MRS. DARLING I suppose so.

PETER Soon I should be a man.

MRS. DARLING Very soon.

PETER I don’t want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy and to have fun.

BARRIE So perhaps he thinks, but it is only his greatest pretend.

MRS. DARLING Where are you to live, Peter?

PETER In the house we built for Wendy. The fairies are to put it high up among the tree-tops where they sleep at night.

WENDY To think of it!

MRS. DARLING I thought all the fairies were dead.

WENDY No indeed! Their mothers drop the babies into the Never birds’ nests, all mixed up with the eggs, and the mauve fairies are boys and the white ones are girls, and there are some colours who don’t know what they are. The row the children and the birds make at bath time is positively deafening.

PETER I throw things at them.

WENDY You will be rather lonely in the evenings, Peter.

PETER I shall have Tink.

WENDY Mother, may I go?

MRS. DARLING Certainly not. I have got you home again, and I mean to keep you.

WENDY But he does so need a mother.

MRS. DARLING So do you, my love.

PETER Oh, all right.

MRS. DARLING But, Peter, I shall let her go to you once a year for a week to do your Spring cleaning.

Wendy revels in this, but Peter, who has no notion what a Spring Cleaning is, waves her a careless thanks.
MRS. DARLING Say good-night, Wendy.

WENDY I couldn’t go down just for a minute?

MRS. DARLING No.

WENDY Good-night, Peter!

PETER Good-night, Wendy!

Mrs. Darling leads Wendy into the day nursery with the other children. Just before exiting, Wendy turns back to Peter.

WENDY Peter, you won’t forget me, will you, before Spring-Cleaning time comes?

Peter does not respond. Mrs. Darling and Wendy exit.

BARRIE Well, good-bye, Peter.

PETER Good-bye.

BARRIE When you come next year, Peter – you will come, won’t you?

PETER Yes. To hear stories about me!

BARRIE It is so queer that the stories you like best should be the ones about yourself.

PETER Well, then?

BARRIE I suppose it is because you have so many adventures.

PETER ‘Course it is.

BARRIE Oh, Peter, how I wish I could take you up and squidge you!

Peter draws back.

PETER I have to go.

BARRIE Yes, I know. Home.

Peter goes to the window. Barrie tries to follow him.

PETER I think it will be harder if you don’t let me go alone.
Looking back at Barrie, reassuringly.

PETER To live would be an awfully big adventure.

Peter flies into the night. Barrie runs to the window.

BARRIE (to the audience) It’s as if long after writing Peter Pan its true meaning came to me – Desperate attempt to grow up but can’t.

He looks again to the window. The lights change to give some sense of passing time. Barrie is crying like Peter was when he was attempting to reattach his shadow.

JANE Boy, why are you crying?

Barrie is silent, and turns away from Jane. She tries to engage him.

JANE Whom do you want to see most?

BARRIE (shrugs) Of course I would like most to see Peter Pan.

JANE Well, then, wish for him.

BARRIE Oh, rot.

JANE It can’t do any harm to wish.

Barrie closes his eyes and wishes – mostly to appease Jane. Jane puts Peter’s hat atop his head. She bows to him.

JANE What is your name?

PETER/BARRIE Peter Pan.

JANE I just thought it would be you.

PETER/BARRIE I came for my mother to take her to the Never Never Land to do my Spring Cleaning.

JANE Yes I know, I’ve been waiting for you.

PETER/BARRIE Will you be my mother?

JANE Oh, yes.

She hugs him. The lamp flickers and goes out as night-light did.
PETER/BARRIE I hear Wendy coming – Hide!

They hide. Then Peter is seen teaching Jane to fly. They are very gay. Wendy enters and stands, taking in situation and much more. Peter and Jane don’t see her.

PETER/BARRIE Hooray! Hooray!

JANE Oh! Lucky me!

PETER/BARRIE And you’ll come with me?

JANE If Mummy says I may.

WENDY Oh!

JANE May I, Mummy?

WENDY May I come too?

JANE You can’t fly. (begging) It’s just for a week.

PETER/BARRIE And I so do need a mother.

WENDY Yes my love, you may go.

Kisses and squeals of rapture, Wendy puts slippers and cloak on Jane. Barrie blows fairy dust on her and she jumps to the windowsill ready to fly. Barrie looks back at Wendy with anxiety.

WENDY Don’t be anxious. This is how I planned it if he ever came back. Every Spring Cleaning, except when he forgets, I’ll let Jane fly away with him to the darling Never Never land, and when she grows up I will hope she will have a little daughter, who will fly away with him in turn – and in this way may go on for ever and ever, dear Mr. Barrie, so long as children are young and innocent.

BARRIE (to the audience) Well we have at last come to an end. Some of you may remember when I began: we are all older now. I thank you for your patience. In bidding you good-bye, my last words must be of lovely virtue. Courage, my children, and greet the unseen with a cheer. (thinking) Some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives. Perhaps we do change; except a little something in us which is no larger than a mote in the eye...

Tink appears flickering on Barrie’s chest.

BARRIE and that, like it, dances in front of us beguiling us all our days. I cannot cut the hair by which it hangs.
Barrie steps unto the window sill.

JANE Just think lovely thoughts and they lift you into the air.

Curtains shut as before. Gradual darkness – then two little lights seen moving slowly through heavens.

Curtain.
APPENDIX II

Peter Pan Production Guide Cover