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**PETER PAN AND WENDY DARLING.**

**A STUDY OF J.M. BARRIE'S USE OF GENDER IN HIS ORIGINAL  
PLAY *PETER PAN* AND THREE FILMIC ADAPTATIONS.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to study the figure of Wendy Darling in relation to gender portrayals and femininity, by means of an extensive analysis on J.M. Barrie's 1904 play *Peter Pan; or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*. This study will contrast the original play with three filmic adaptations, taking into account matters of intertextuality and various theories on adaptation. From a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective but acknowledging the social and historical context of the four texts, this work will consider the portrayal of female characters in the stories of Peter Pan, focusing on the importance to motherhood, and establishing Wendy as the central character around whom this study revolves.

**Key words:** Barrie, Peter Pan, Wendy Darling, gender, motherhood, adaptation.

## **RESUM**

L'objectiu d'aquest treball és estudiar la figura de Wendy Darling en relació a la representació de gènere i de feminitat, a través d'un anàlisi extens de l'obra de 1904 per J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan; or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*. Aquest estudi contrastarà l'obra original amb tres adaptacions cinematogràfiques, tenint en compte les qüestions d'intertextualitat i diverses teories en adaptació. Des d'una perspectiva del segle XXI, però reconeixent el context social i històric dels quatre texts, aquest treball considerarà la representació dels personatges femenins en les històries de Peter Pan, centrant-se en la importància de la maternitat, i establint a Wendy com el personatge principal al voltant del qual aquest estudi gira.

**Paraules clau:** Barrie, Peter Pan, Wendy Darling, gènere, maternitat, adaptació.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“To die will be an awfully big adventure”*

*(J.M. Barrie, Peter Pan or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up. 1995)*

The very first images which come to mind when the words ‘Peter Pan’ are mentioned are those of flight, magic, belief and innocence. Most people’s first memory of somebody flying is that of Peter. And then, Wendy comes to mind. The little girl who is able to travel to the remote island where all the stories she has been telling come from.

J.M. Barrie brought the figures of Peter Pan and Wendy Darling to life from his own experience, and he produced several written accounts of them. The playwright started writing about ‘the boy who wouldn’t grow up’ at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and he continued doing so up until 1928, the very last revision of the play script. Aspects such as fluidity and intertextuality are obvious both in the plot structure, and in the portrayal of its characters. The play’s immense popularity not only allowed Barrie to publish a novel, but it also opened up multiple possibilities for filmic adaptations. Along the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, a countless amount of texts have been produced, based on the Peter Pan stories, from works of fiction, to stage productions, television and film.

This dissertation will study Barrie’s original 1904 play *Peter Pan* from the point of view of gender, the way it is portrayed and treated in the text. From an extensive analysis regarding both formal aspects and the portrayal of the female characters in the play, this work will establish a comparison between the original play and three film adaptations: Disney’s *Peter Pan* (1953), Spielberg’s *Hook* (1991), and Forster’s *Finding Neverland* (2004). The main purpose of this research is to trace a contrast among the different depictions of the characters, concretely of Wendy, and to discover whether Barrie’s characters have gone through any stages of development throughout the course of a century. In order to do so, certain parameters were established, and regarding the brevity of this work, the main focus was placed on the figure of Wendy Darling, and her depictions as a mother and as a woman.

## 2. CONTEXT

### 2.1. Adaptation and The *Fluid Text*.

Adaptation is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as the process of changing to suit different conditions. In the specific case of film adaptation, the transfer being from a written text to a feature film. Even though this is a proper definition, the field of Adaptation Theory has widely evolved since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and so have people's views and concerns about this changing process. Linda Hutcheon claims that adaptation is "repetition but without replication" (2006, p. 173) since novels go through extensive reinterpretation and re-evaluation before being adapted, and this process becomes one of creation which is inevitably filled with intertextual relations. All those relations affect the whole field of literature, when a text is either influenced by other texts, other authors, or even by a later interpretation of the very same text. This is exactly the case of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. There are two valid arguments regarding the creation of 'the boy who wouldn't grow up': although many people claim, including Barrie himself, that Peter is a mixture of the Llewelyn Davies' children, there is also the belief that the playwright found the inspiration for this idea of 'never growing up' in his older brother David, who died at a very early age and therefore, was not able to grow up. The first time that a written account of the figure of the mischievous boy can be found is in some chapters of Barrie's *The Little White Bird*, and in his later novel *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. However, Barrie published his most recognised novel regarding this character in 1911, under the title *Peter and Wendy*. When coming to stage productions, it was in 1904 when the character appeared for the first time on stage, in the play *Peter Pan; or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, which featured a later sequel, *When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought* in 1908. The final version of this play was constantly revised and modified by Barrie and it was finally published in 1928 under the name *Peter Pan*.

However, not only can a text be adapted to all these changes, but it may actually flow from one version to the other, from the constantly-revised original to the final draft. This is Bryant's idea of fluidity. He describes the fluid text as "any written work that exists in multiple material versions due to revisions upon which we may construct an interpretation." (2007, p. 17) He considers the process of adaptation as one of liberation, for every time a text is revised, new ways of thinking are being explored and new possibilities open up. This is exactly the case of *Peter Pan*: so as to learn every single aspect of this character, one should read each and every account of him produced by Barrie during his lifetime, both in his novels as in his plays.

On the other hand, Robert Stam places the focus of his theory on the dialogics of adaptation, and as a result, on fidelity. He questions whether “strict fidelity” is possible at all since “the novel has a single material of expression” (2000, p. 70) which is the word. However, countless means are involved with films (from sound to moving images, or musical pieces.) By taking Stam’s argument that “an adaptation should be faithful not so much to the source text, but rather to the essence medium of expression” (2000, p. 77) the comparison that has been established regarding the three film adaptations, will deal with not so much the idea whether formal elements are maintained and well brought into the adaptation, but with the comparison between the core aspects of Barrie’s play, focusing mainly on the treatment of women and gender portrayals, and particularly, in the figure of Wendy Darling.

## **2.2. James Matthew Barrie.**

James Matthew Barrie (Kirriemuir, 1860 – London, 1937) was a Scottish author. He was born to a conservative Calvinist family in east Scotland. He graduated in Literature from the University of Edinburgh in 1882, and he worked as a journalist in London. He parodied Ibsen’s drama *Ghosts* in 1891, which turned out to be rather successful. It was in 1892, during his third play, *Walker, London*, when he met his future wife, the actress Mary Ansell.

For several years, the author worked on his novel *The Little White Bird* (1902), a series of short episodes including fantasy and social comedy. In spite of its aggressive undertones, the book reached great popularity. This was the first appearance of the figure of Peter Pan, and in 1906 the chapters which included this character were published as a children’s book called *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Barrie’s most remarkable staging took place in 1904, under the title of *Peter Pan; or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*. The play premiered in London, at the Duke of York’s Theatre, in December 1904. Four years later, the author decided to add a final scene, entitled *When Wendy Grew Up. An Afterthought*. In this scene, Peter meets Wendy’s daughter, Jane, whom he takes to Neverland. The author benefited from the fame this play provided him with, and he turned the play into the novel *Peter and Wendy* in 1911. In his last years, he decided to give the rights of *Peter Pan* to a children’s hospital in London.

### *2.2.1. Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up (1904).*

The character of Peter Pan was created by Barrie several years before he even published any written accounts of it. He had a special relationship with the Llewelyn Davies’ family, whose

children he told all kinds of stories featuring this mischievous Peter. The first formal appearance of this boy was in Barrie's 1902 novel *The Little White Bird*. However, two years later, Peter was chosen to be the main character in the 1904 play *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*. Even though the original play consisted only of three acts, it was later revised and modified into a five-act play. The final version was published a few years later, in 1928. As an introduction to the play, Barrie dedicates the character of Peter to the Llewellyn Davies' children, "without whom he [Peter] never would have existed." (1995, p. 75).

The first act begins in the nursery of the Darling family, "at the top of a rather depressed street in Bloomsbury" (Barrie, 1995, p. 87). Nana, the nurse dog, is trying to bathe the two little brothers, John and Michael, when suddenly Mrs. Darling glimpses someone outside the window. The children are getting ready to go to bed, while their parents are going out to dinner. Before leaving the house, Mr. Darling ties Nana up and this is the moment when "Peter Pan flies into the room" (1995, p. 97) with his glowing fairy, Tinker Bell. This mischievous boy has lost his shadow in the nursery, and after several attempts to get it back, he wakes Wendy up, who offers to sew it on for him. Peter asks her to fly with him to Never Land, and after blowing fairy dust on the three brothers, they all manage to fly. In the second act, the Lost Boys, the pirates and the Indians are introduced. Tinker Bell, who is jealous of Wendy, tells the Boys to shoot her, and as they do, Peter arrives. When Wendy recovers, the Boys ask her to "be our mother" (1995, p. 116), claiming that what they need "is just a nice motherly person", to which Wendy replies "I feel that is just exactly what I am." (Barrie, 1995, p. 116).

The third act develops in the Mermaids' Lagoon. "Peter and his band" (Barrie, 1995, p. 118) are hiding behind a rock, when all of a sudden, the pirates arrive with Tiger Lily, "the belle of the Piccaninny tribe" (1995, p. 110) as their captive. Peter, imitating the voice of captain Hook, commands the pirates to release her. When the cruel Hook finds out, he orders to "take him [Peter] dead or alive!" (1995, p. 123), but the Boys start fighting the pirates, who end up living hurriedly when the crocodile, who ate the captain's hand, arrives. The act finishes with Wendy and Peter about to drown in the deadly Marooners' Rock, and the boy claims "To die will be an awfully big adventure" (1995, p. 125). During the fourth act, we have simultaneous scenes in "the home under the ground with the children in it and the wood above the ground with the redskins on it". The Boys are doing a "pretend meal" and Wendy is "the head of the table" (1995, p. 126-127); meanwhile, above, Tiger Lily is telling her tribe that Peter has rescued her. When the boy arrives home, Wendy is explaining her own life story to the Boys, and she later offers to take all of them to London, including Peter, and have them adopted by her parents. Peter refuses because he "just want[s] always to be a little boy and have

fun.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 133). When they are about to leave, the pirates arrive and take the Boys and Wendy as prisoners. Once Hooks finds the tree where the Boys live in, he puts poison in Peter’s drink, but Tinker Bell drinks it to save the boy’s life. It is the audience who is in charge of rescuing Tink, by applauding and showing their belief in fairies.

The fifth and last act is divided into two scenes. The first scene develops in the pirate ship, where the children have been made prisoners. Wendy is the very first to walk the plank, but she is interrupted by the “tick, tick of the crocodile.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 140, who is actually Peter, pretending to be the crocodile to save the Boys and Wendy. Peter has won, and Hook jumps from the boat into the water, “where the crocodile is waiting for him open-mouthed.” (1995, p. 146). The second scene is set in the nursery back in the Darling’s household in London. The time that has passed since the children left is not mentioned, but it is said that Mrs. Darling has been “searching the heavens” (1995, p. 147). Before the children arrive home, Peter gets there first and tries to close the window, which has been left open since the day they left, so as to prove Wendy that her mother has forgotten about her. But he later repents, and decides to leave it open for the children to enter. As they do, and Mrs. Darling greets them, “there is joy once more in the Darling household.” (1995, p. 150). On the outside, we see the Lost Boys, and Liza the maid realizes that Slightly is her son. Finally, Peter pays a last visit to Wendy, and Mrs. Darling offers to adopt him too, but he refuses. She insists, and finally they agree that Wendy will fly once a year to Never Land, “to do the Spring cleaning.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 152). The last image we get is that of Peter and Wendy in Never Land one year later.

### **2.3. The Three Filmic Adaptations.**

#### **2.3.1. Disney’s *Peter Pan* (1953).**

Originally released in February, 1953, *Peter Pan* is the 14<sup>th</sup> Disney animated fantasy adventure film. From 1935, Walt Disney showed interest in adapting Barrie’s character, Peter Pan. However, he encountered several setbacks having to do, firstly, with the film’s rights, which were held by Paramount Pictures, and with whom he failed to reach an agreement. After the war, Disney placed Jack Kinney as the director, and the process of adaptation resumed.

Jack Kinney (Utah, 1909 – California, 1992) was an American animator, director and producer of animated shorts. He studied in California, where he was hired by Walt Disney at the early age of 21 to work at the Studio. After working in the Company for 27 years, he decided to start an independent animation studio, Kinney-Adelquist Productions, Inc. However, he

never completely detached from the Company, and in 1983, the director was awarded a Winsor McCay Award, in recognition for a lifetime devotion to animation.

Located in early 20<sup>th</sup> century London and the magic, timeless Neverland, *Peter Pan* features a boy, Peter, who refuses to grow up and spends his life on a remote island, fighting pirates with the help of the Lost Boys and an Indian tribe. However, he often flies to people's windows to listen to their stories. He has lost his shadow in the Darling nursery, and while Wendy helps him to recover it, he convinces her to act as a mother for himself and the Lost Boys in Neverland. Not only does Peter take Wendy, but also her two brothers, to live amazing adventures with a glowing fairy, dangerous pirates and mermaids, and a tribe of Indians.

### 2.3.2. Spielberg's *Hook* (1991).

Steven Spielberg (Ohio, 1946) is an American filmmaker, considered one of the pioneers of the New Hollywood era. Born in Cincinnati, he moved to Los Angeles with his father, with the ambitious goal of becoming a film director. While he was still studying, he was offered an intern job at Universal Studios, where he directed a short film. The vice president of the studio was so impressed by its success, that he offered Spielberg a seven-year directing contract, turning him into the youngest director to ever work for a major Hollywood studio. However, it was in 1975, with *Jaws*, when he became a widely known director, and one of the youngest multi-millionaires in America. Some years later, he built his own studio, DreamWorks, which has produced most of his works from that point onwards.

In 1991, Spielberg directed the fantasy-adventure film *Hook*, an American sequel to Barrie's novel *Peter and Wendy* with a script written by Hart and Marmo. Spielberg himself claimed he felt quite a strong connection to the character and personality of Pan, stating in an interview "my first memory of anybody flying is in *Peter Pan*" (Bahiana, 1992). Ever since he was a kid, the director had had the desire to direct an adaptation of Barrie's play.

Peter Banning is the main character of the film *Hook*, which focuses on an adult Peter who has forgotten everything about his childhood, including his life in Neverland as Peter Pan. The man is now married to Moira, Wendy's granddaughter, and he has two children and a demanding job. It is when the family is in London visiting their grandmother Wendy, that Peter is forced to return to Neverland to save their children, who have been kidnapped by Captain Hook. Throughout the magical journey, he remembers who he really is and it turns him into a better person. In spite of being amongst the highest-grossing pirates' films, the general response was not that positive, and it was once regarded as "expensive, overlong, surprisingly

heavy-handed” (French, 2008). Even Spielberg himself claimed in an interview “I still don’t like that movie” (Kermode & Mayo, 2013).

### 2.3.3. Forster’s *Finding Neverland* (2004).

Marc Forster (Germany, 1969) is a German-Swiss-American film director, producer and screenwriter. At 20 years old, the director moved to New York, where he attended NYU’s film school, and later he moved to Hollywood. In 2004, Forster directed *Finding Neverland*, which was nominated for 5 Golden Globe Awards, as well as 7 Academy Awards. The director received BAFTA for his work with this film. In 2016, Walt Disney Pictures released *Christopher Robin*, the live-action adaptation of *Winnie the Pooh*, under the direction of Forster. He is currently active, working on different projects.

*Finding Neverland* is a 2004 fantasy drama film, directed by Marc Forster and written by David Magee. As Columbia Pictures owned the rights to Barrie’s original play, and they were also working on another adaptation, they agreed with Miramax to delay *Finding Neverland*’s release. Thus, even though the movie was originally set to be released in 2003, it opened in October, 2004, in the UK. Despite having direct references to Barrie’s play, the film is actually based on Knee’s play *The Man Who Was Peter Pan* (1998), and it deals with the life and career of playwright J.M. Barrie during the years he was working on his play *Peter Pan*, as well as with his special relationship with the Llewelyn Davies’ family.

## 2.4. Wendy Darling and Treatment of Gender.

The way gender is portrayed in literature and film is heavily biased. However, as claimed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, femininity and masculinity are no more than performative acts, which can be represented by anyone at any time through language, since there is not a solid original pattern to follow, but a general conception of how women are supposed to behave as opposed to men. Therefore, the pre-existing construction of gender roles are “a copy of a copy, and these series of copies have no original.” (Butler, 1990, p. 7)

Maggie Humm claims that film “often and anxiously envisions women stereotypically as ‘good’ mothers or ‘bad.’” (1997, p. 79) This is exactly what we find in the character of Wendy Darling, not only in all three film adaptations, but also in Barrie’s play. These stereotypes Humm is discussing, have to do with visual arts, as well as with literature. In the original play, the way Wendy is described by stage directions mirrors the domestic, motherly

look a woman was supposed to have at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as women were “always glad to be of service” (Barrie, 1995, p. 94). When coming to the 1953 version, *Peter Pan* is considered a Disney classic, and therefore, a stereotyped film filled with traditional portrayals of gender, race and sexual orientation, among others. In this sense, and according to Towbin et al., in most Disney classics “women are helpless and in need of protection [...] domestic, and likely to marry.” (2003, p. 31). In spite of the passing of half a century, it was not that hard to portray the conceptions of femininity and masculinity from the play into the Disney film, as, generally, people’s minds had not suffered much of a change. Nevertheless, both Spielberg’s and Forster’s adaptations of *Peter Pan*, and as a result, their adaptations of all the characters and gender portrayals, are quite affected by the context in which they were released, that is, the turn of the twenty-first century: *Hook*, in spite of being characterised by mostly an all-male cast, features two powerful characters, the grandmother and the little girl Maggie, both of them representing Wendy at some level, who portray gender roles in a very specific, modern way that immediately distances this adaptation from the original portrayal of Wendy. This contemporary account of the figure of Wendy is even more present in *Finding Neverland*, where a widowed middle-aged woman, symbolically representing that girl who wishes to fly to Neverland, helps the original author Barrie bring *Peter Pan* to life. Despite maintaining the mood of the original text, the perspective they adopted is quite different from the one of Disney’s, in particular, regarding femininity, motherhood, and gender portrayals.

### 3. ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. Formal Aspects and Themes in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.

Barrie's original play has been described as a modern play when it comes to its formal twists. When it was first staged in 1904, *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* completely shattered the conventions of the theatre of that time. Apart from having people flying on stage and featuring a human-like dog, the play breaks with the fourth wall, as it explicitly invites the audience to participate in the story, by clapping their hands to save Tinker Bell from dying. This fact does not only reflect on the modernity of the play, but it also has to do with its plot: Barrie intended "audience members young and old display child-like behaviour" (Filimon, 2013, p. 226), which is exactly what happens in the story, and as the playwright himself proved, it can also happen in real life, in a theatre filled with grown-up people.

With the help of magic stories and adventurous games, Wendy and Peter explore such themes as childhood and domesticity. But, together with the other Lost Boys and children in the play, they are not the only characters who are constantly playing games. The Darling parents disguise themselves and pretend to belong to an upper class, just to fit in with their neighbours and Mr. Darling's co-workers. The concept of the family is also explored by Barrie: Neverland is presented as the complete opposite of the "nuclear family, commonly regarded as the basis of society". (Filimon, 2013, p. 229). Thus, in that magic land where there is no order to be found, chaos reigns. However, Barrie makes sure to subvert our expectations, by presenting the Darling family as a typical one, but yet with some slight changes: Mr. Darling is not the common image of the *paterfamilias*, as he is constantly ridiculed and ignored, and he quite often displays that child-like behaviour mentioned before.

Nonetheless, one of the most central issues in Barrie's play is the imagery and symbolism of the flight. Peter literally fled away to Neverland, escaping from a grown-up life. It has often been argued that the main reason behind Wendy and her brothers' trip to Neverland is due to the fact that Mr. Darling tells his daughter that her nights in the nursery will be over from that night onwards. The cultural implications of this fact are devastating to the girl, since it not only means she will have to leave childhood behind, but also that she will have to become a woman, and consequently, a mother. Therefore, that same night she manages to fly and escape to a magic land, where time stays still and children fail to grow up.

Even though the timing in *Peter Pan* may seem like an external factor to the plot, it is actually the complete opposite. In London, time is given such great importance that it is

introduced by no other symbol but that of the magnificent Big Ben. In Neverland, despite its aim to remain timeless, Barrie constantly reminds us of the passing of time by means of the figure of the crocodile, who is actually referred to as a female character. The nameless crocodile is Hook's clearest enemy: the animal swallowed the pirate's arm, and with it, his watch. From that moment on, she moves around Neverland with a ticking clock inside, which serves to make everyone aware of her danger. Several researchers have claimed that in spite of not having a name, the gendering of the crocodile is quite relevant, since once again, "time, the ultimate destructive force, is marked as feminine." (Gryctko, 2016, p. 152)

### **3.2. *Peter Pan; or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up and Peter Pan.***

So as to establish a clear-cut comparison of the different adaptations of *Peter Pan*, Barrie's 1904 play will be regarded as the original text even though, as mentioned before, this play was not the first time where the figure of Peter appeared. On the other hand, even if Disney's *Peter Pan* is thought to be the original, first reproduction of the play on the big screen, it is actually not the very first filmic adaptation. In 1924, Brenon released a silent film, which has been described as a "faithful record of a typical stage production." (Crafton, 1989, p. 33) Barrie himself was not very keen on this adaptation, since he regarded it as a "repetition rather than an adaptation", and as the author claimed "the only reason for a film should be that it does the things the stage can't do." (Brenon, 1953) Therefore, for obvious reasons, this analysis will establish the 1904 play as the original and the 1953 film as the original adaptation to carry out the comparison between several aspects of the text and its adaptations.

Whereas the beginning of the original play is located in a "rather depressed street in Bloomsbury" (Barrie, 1995, p. 87), the Disney movie substitutes the adjective 'depressed' for 'quiet' and adds "that corner house over there, is the home of the Darling family" (Kinney, 1953). The issue of timing is clearly relevant to both Barrie and Disney: the former marks the beginning of the action by emphasizing that the clock strikes six, while the latter shows the passing of time with no other symbol but that of the Big Ben. One of the first writers Disney asked to analyse and adapt Barrie's text, Dorothy Ann Blank, suggested that regarding the children's return home, timing should be treated "as a flight of imagination, rather than an actual absence of weeks or months" (Crafton, 1989, p. 36) so as to avoid such a melancholic ending. All through the action, the concrete time of the year is unclear, even though we could suppose that it is around Spring – at least in London – when by the end, Wendy's mother claims her daughter will go back to Neverland once a year to do the "spring cleaning" (Barrie, p. 152) for

Peter. Nonetheless, as a result of Barrie's imagination, "on the island all the four seasons may pass while you are filling a jug at the well." The passing of time is constantly stated in the play, as the second act begins when "Peter's star wakes up" (Barrie, 1995, pp. 105-106) in the island of Never Land. As claimed by Crafton, "the time of the narrative to follow is paradoxically in the present but also timeless." (1989, p. 38)

The famous nursery scene went through several alterations during the production of the film. At first, it was suggested that it would be Mrs. Darling the one to find Peter's shadow and show it to her husband, just like she did in the original play: "The boy escaped, but his shadow had not time to get out // Mary, why didn't you keep that shadow? // I did. I rolled it up, George, and here it is." (Barrie, 1995, p. 92) Nonetheless, in the Disney movie, after much debate they finally opted for Wendy to be the one who found the shadow, and when she spots Peter trying to get his shadow back, she claims "I saved your shadow for you." (Kinney, 1953) This particular scene was especially challenging due to its crucial meaning when coming to Wendy's transition from childhood to adolescence. Barrie's intention for this change was charged with melancholy: "Tonight's my last night in the nursery // But that means... no more stories." (1995, p. 100) Therefore, "the end of her nursery life is the end of the tale, of her childish imagination, and her entry into the world of her mother and father." (Crafton, 1989, p. 41) In the Disney movie, when the father suggests Wendy had a room of her own, every single member of the family, including Nana, is surprised, but the action quickly changes to a chaotic situation, where Mr. Darling stumbles and falls to the floor. The man is ridiculed, and with him, his idea of Wendy leaving the nursery to grow up, in the properly accepted social way.

### **3.3. *Peter Pan and Hook.***

The clearest difference between *Peter Pan* and *Hook* is the main character's age. The 1991 film features an adult Peter, who has completely forgotten about his childhood. "To die, as Peter knows, may be a great adventure; to grow up, in the proper, socially accepted way, is the end of all adventure." (Gryctko, 2016, p. 142) This is exactly what happened to Peter when he met Moira, Wendy's granddaughter, in one of his visits to the Darling household. At that moment he decided he wanted to grow up. Thus, here lies the main distinction between Peter Pan and Peter Banning: the conscious decision of growing up.

Usually, the beginning of a film is a key point as it tends to determine the movie's main purpose. In *Hook*, the first faces we see are those of little children, thus, it could be guessed that the film is mainly addressed to a young audience. The location is that of a school theatre,

where the parents attend a representation of the nursery scene in *Peter Pan*, with very young children as actors. Among them, there is Peter Banning's daughter, Maggie, playing Wendy.

The importance of names is notable in the film. Almost all the characters' names are taken from Barrie's *Peter Pan*: the main character is called Peter, his wife is Moira, which is Wendy's middle name, and their grandmother is no other but the original Wendy Darling, as herself firmly claims in the movie. Names such as Tinker Bell, Hook, Smee, Liza, Tootles, and several other Lost Boys' names are maintained. However, there is a brand-new figure in this reinterpretation of the original *Peter Pan*: Maggie Banning, Peter's daughter. As a new character, the writers considered her worthy of a different name, for there was no Maggie in Barrie's play, and if they would have wanted to go on with the original naming, they could have either opted for Angela, which was also Wendy's middle name, or Jane, Wendy's daughter in the sequel *When Wendy Grew Up*. Even though it might just be a slight change without importance, it could also be argued that Spielberg decided to create a new name so as to distance Maggie from the figure of Wendy, as it will later be discussed.

Several other details are constantly reminding the audience of both the original play and Barrie. For instance, Granny Wendy talks about a neighbour who wrote down all the stories she was told as a little girl. Unsurprisingly, his name was Mr. Barrie. Also, in her nightstand we can see a copy of the novel *Peter and Wendy*. When Tinker Bell comes to convince Peter to go to Neverland and save his children, she claims "I drank poison for you. You used to call me Tink. Have you forgotten that?" But Peter does not remember her, and he calls the fairy a "big damn bug", (Spielberg, 1991) and he almost has her killed when he claims he does not believe in fairies.

On the other hand, the film sometimes shatters the expectations by using irony. At the beginning of the film, while on their way to London, it is shown to the audience that Peter Banning, formerly Pan, is afraid of flying. Like the characters, the issue of the flight has also gone through several changes, as now Tootles claims he has forgotten how to fly, "No more happy thoughts. Lost, lost..." (Spielberg, 1991) Once the family gets to granny's house, the son Jack is explaining what it is that his father does for a living. Granny Wendy claims "Peter, you have become a pirate" when the boy says he "blows" opponents "right into the water" (1991) in his company. There is also the important image of the window. It is one of the very first images Peter spots once he is inside the house. When he sees that his children are standing close to the open window, he tells them to stay away, reminding them of their danger. Then, as his son Jack recalls "they all have bars", (1991) the audience learns that the windows in the Banning's household are nothing like the ones in the Darling's.

Childhood is treasured all through the film. “No growing up. Stop this very instant” (Spielberg, 1991) is the only rule granny Wendy asks the children to follow while they are in her house. The mother, Moira, nostalgically claims about the early years that “It’s a few years. Then it’s over.” (1991) It comes as rather puzzling, then, that the only character who is unable to remember his childhood and the idea of being a child is Peter. The man tells his son to “stop acting like a child” (1991) and to grow up. He seems to have forgotten the concepts of magic and belief as well, for when he is asked by her daughter whether their grandmother is the real Wendy, he replies with a resounding ‘no’. However, his trip to Neverland will change the man, as he is reminded by one of the Lost Boys “you promised never to grow old.” (1991)

### **3.4. *Peter Pan and Finding Neverland.***

Even in a more obvious way due to its genre, Forster’s *Finding Neverland*, a biopic about J.M. Barrie’s experience writing *Peter Pan*, has clear hints that are constantly reminding the audience about the actual existence of the playwright and his original production of *Peter Pan*. A great deal of real-life aspects proves the film’s authenticity. For instance, Forster makes Barrie’s “childless marriage to Mary” (Travers, 2004, p. 2) very obvious, as well as the fact that Mary Ansell was a former actress, which is told to the audience through the elderly couple Mr. and Mrs. Snow. The film features several characters inspired on real people such as the American theatrical producer, Charles Frohman. The friendship between Barrie and Arthur Conan Doyle is also made visible, as they share opinions on the playwright’s life and career decisions while watching a game of cricket. The audience is also given insights to Barrie’s personal life, from his childhood stories such as losing his brother David at a very young age and how that “was the end of boy James”, (Forster, 2004) to his marital problems with Mary and her affair with Gilbert Cannan, an associate of Barrie’s.

As Barrie explains to his producer, “Peter is a boy who stays young forever. He believes in it long enough and hard enough.” (Forster, 2004) This is exactly the core meaning of *Finding Neverland*, and ultimately of the 1904 play *Peter Pan*. Death is quite present in this movie, as the boys first experienced their father’s death, and now, their mother’s. However, Barrie firmly believes that “she went to Neverland” and he tells the little Peter that he “can visit her any time you want if you just go there yourself.” Peter asks how, and Barrie tells him to “Just believe, she’s on every page of your imagination.” (2004) The main distinction between this movie and the original *Peter Pan*, is that the person who flew back to Neverland was Peter, while in this case it is Wendy the one who ended up there, and Peter the one with the possibility to visit her.

### 3.5. Common Traits.

Barrie makes Tinker Bell drink the poison that Hook made for Peter, but he also comes up with a way of saving her: the belief in fairies and the later applause of the theatre audience. After much debate, Disney decided to omit this scene, since they thought it would be difficult to achieve in a film. Nevertheless, in *Hook* this idea is included, but with a slight modification: it is not the applause that saves Tink, but the belief in fairies: Peter Banning has to believe in Tinker Bell in order to save her life. In *Finding Neverland*, this is conveyed when Barrie brings Neverland to Sylvia's house. When the fairy drinks the poisoned medicine, the narrator shouts "If you believe, clap your hands", (Forster, 2004) and even the uptight Mrs. Du Maurier gets involved in saving Tink from dying. As a matter of fact, Forster's movie is *the* film about the importance of believing. Symbolised by the famous kite the Llewelyn Davies' youngest son, Michael, tries to fly, the audience is able to understand the relevant role that believing and magic played in Barrie's imagination. The kite – or the importance of believing– is actually what saves Wendy from drowning in the Marooner's Rock in the 1904 play: "The kite! Why shouldn't it carry you?" (Barrie, 1995, p. 124).

The passing of time is constantly reminded to the audience in all the four texts that have been analysed. Whether it is the transition from childhood to adulthood that Wendy goes through and Peter denies to go through, or Peter Banning's conscious decision of leaving childhood behind and growing up, as J.M. Barrie claims in *Finding Neverland*, "it's all the work of the ticking crocodile, isn't it?", to what Mrs. Snow replies "Time is chasing after all of us. Isn't that right?" (Forster, 2004) In the 2004 film, "the character and play represent Barrie's determination never to grow old." (Tibbetts, 2005, p. 554) Highly related to the idea of the *tempus fugit*, there is the notion of the 'adventure of death'. To Barrie's Peter, "to die will be an awfully big adventure" (1995, p. 125) while to the adult Peter Banning in *Hook*, when by the ending of the movie, he is asked whether his adventures are definitely over or not, he firmly claims "To live would be an awfully big adventure." (Spielberg, 1991)

## 4. GENDER

### 4.1. Gender Portrayals.

Both the permanent battle of the sexes and the portrayal of gender are the clearest subtexts in *Peter Pan*, carried out by two central figures: that of the sexual pursuer and that of the mother. In “an all-boy world” (Kissel, 1988, p. 37) with “no female companionship” (Barrie, 1995, p. 101) like Neverland, those female characters who inhabit the island have taken their particular roles, and when Wendy arrives and questions that order, altering and disrupting their lives, a conflict is created, not only among the female characters, but affecting all the characters in general in one way or another. In his play, Barrie presents femininity as a characteristic trait very closely tied to “conventionality, adulthood and death.” (Gryctko, 2016, p. 143). Therefore, the portrayal of gender in *Peter Pan* is related to the shift from childhood to adulthood, and the ultimate stage of death. When coming to gender roles, which have a constant overwhelming presence in the play, Barrie manages to establish a clear-cut distinction between boys and girls: while the boys’ only mission in Neverland is to have fun with the games they play, “Wendy’s play replicates her home life” (Gryctko, 2016, p. 144) and again reflects on the ideas of domesticity and womanhood.

In relation to domesticity, Barrie presents the domestic as a children’s game by placing Wendy, a little girl, as the main character to portray this trait. Both at the very beginning of the play, when Wendy and her older brother John are pretending to be their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Darling, “as if gender roles are performed” (Wilson, 2000, p. 597), and also when Peter and Wendy are playing at parenting the Lost Boys, “It is only pretend, isn’t it, that I am their father?” (Barrie, 1995, p. 129) we can see not only a representation of the so-called ‘ideal family’, but also a glimpse of the middle class. Therefore, the play highlights the relevance of social roles in the construction of individual identity, by qualifying these games as an “imitative game of adult life”, putting together the “adult male and female roles in Western society.” (Kissel, 1988, p. 38)

### 4.2. In *Peter Pan; or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up* and *Peter Pan*.

*Peter Pan* was produced in 1953 by the company Walt Disney. According to an extensive research on the Walt Disney corporation, Towbin et al. reached the conclusion that, when coming to portraying gender, in most of the Disney Classics “men are naturally strong and

heroic”, while “women are helpless and in need of protection” (2003, p. 29-31). Obviously, in some ways, *Peter Pan* confirms this generalization, but it also has some exceptions, for instance, regarding the nature of the character of Peter: he is a young boy who lives in a magic land where he and plenty of other boys do not grow up. Nonetheless, the majority of the male characters living in Neverland are heroic, as the Indians fight the Pirates, the Pirates fight the Lost Boys, and the Lost Boys fight them in return. However, when coming to the male characters in the Darling household, they are the ones depicted as in need of protection: Mr. Darling needs the constant reassurance of his wife, Mrs. Darling, and his lack of maturity, authority and power within the house are obvious: “I warn you, Mary, that unless this tie is round my neck we don’t go out to dinner to-night.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 91) The two boys, John and Michael need not one, but three female figures to take care of them: Mrs. Darling, Wendy, and Nana, the nursemaid. On the other hand, female figures are depicted in a variety of different ways: the dangerous and captivating mermaids; the fierce Tiger Lily; and the fairy Tinker Bell, who saves Peter in several occasions during the film. With the slight exception of Tiger Lily, not one of the female characters needs protection; they are all strong and powerful women. We find exactly the same situation in the Darling family: Mrs. Darling, Wendy and Nana are domestic women, but none of them needs to be protected by the male characters while they are in London, rather the opposite, they are the ones who protect the men in their house.

There are several differences in the plot between the play and the movie, which at first sight might seem too tiny to be relevant, but which actually make a huge difference when dealing with gender portrayals and femininity. The way women are portrayed in *Peter Pan* is “stereotypic and similar to the gender portrayals in the first animated Disney film in 1937.” (Wiersma, 2001, p. 17). All female characters are physically equal: small, thin and white (with the exception of Tiger Lily).

Wendy is described in the Disney film as the “supreme authority on Peter Pan and all his marvellous adventures”, (Kinney, 1953) which she actually is, since she created him by telling stories about his character, and as a result, she has full command of him. Sometimes, the film and the audience seem to forget that. This may be due to the fact that not everyone is so pleased about Wendy’s authority, as for instance, her father, Mr. Darling, who goes mad when he learns his daughter is telling stories to her brothers: “Wendy? Story? Haven’t I warned you about stuffing the boys’ heads with those silly stories?” (1953) This is highly related to the traditional idea of keeping women illiterate so as to avoid them from developing a mind of their own. If the original play is considered, one of the first descriptions we get of Wendy is that she is “always glad to be of service” (Barrie, 1995, p. 94). It is true that Barrie reflects

domesticity in relation to gender portrayals and the way women were supposed to behave at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – mainly because he was writing at that particular time. - For instance, when the time comes to wake the Lost Boys up, while the play claims they do so on their own, for Disney, it had to be Tinker Bell, a female character, the one to wake them up, thus making obvious that such a domestic action ought to be carried out by a woman or a mother, and therefore establishing a clear connection between femininity and domesticity. However, several stage directions or parts of the dialogue are introduced to subvert the expectations: Wendy, a teenage girl, is “the one of the family who can be trusted to know or not to know” (1995, p. 96) thus, proving that she indeed, has a mind of her own. On the other hand, the Lost Boy Nibs introduces the issue of women’s financial independence when he claims he remembers his mother telling his father “Oh, how I wish I had a cheque book of my own.” (1995, p.107) Nonetheless, in the portrayal of women, and especially of Wendy, Barrie associates again domesticity to femininity in the very last act, when in the pirates’ ship “the first glance” he makes her see is that of a deck which “has not been scrubbed for years.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 140)

Competition between women is another important issue that is developed more extensively in the film than in the play. Wendy, Tinker Bell, and Tiger Lily all seem interested in Peter, and this fact implies a fight among them to ‘get’ the boy’s love. In the nursery, Tink pulls Wendy’s hair and “says you’re a big, ugly girl”; in the Lagoon, the mermaids “only try to drown her.” (Kinney, 1953) Even though it could be argued that Peter is just a little boy and he does not pay attention to girls, it is made quite explicit that the boy is perfectly aware of the situation but prefers to appear unaware of it: “Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it’s not my mother.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 130) Near the ending, Smee tells Hook that “Pan has vanished Tink on account of Wendy.” (Kinney, 1953)

Female characters in *Peter Pan* “disguise their real responses and seldom speak them aloud.” (Kissel, 1988, p. 34) In a stage direction we learn that Wendy has not spoken her truth, as it is claimed “whatever her private opinion must be.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 132) Tinker Bell speaks ‘the language of the fairies’ and it is only slightly understandable by Peter and the Lost Boys. When the film was being produced, the voice-over narrator at the beginning of the movie was meant to be Wendy, due to her “mellow, soothing voice of a bedtime storyteller.” (Crafton, 1989, p. 38) However, as a last-minute change, Disney finally opted for a deep, male voice, once again reflecting on the patriarchal undertones of the film.

Both the play and the film constantly make the audience aware of the fact that Peter is the strong and powerful character. The scene where the Lost Boys shoot Wendy and she falls

to the ground is a clear example of this idea. Even though in the film the heroicity of Peter is made much more explicit, when he rescues Wendy in the air and keeps her from falling, in Barrie's play, it is the boy the one who checks on her and claims that he saved her, since "the arrow struck against this [the thimble]. It is a kiss I gave her; it has saved her life." (Barrie, 1995, p. 113). In the movie, Peter Pan complains "Girls talk too much", (Kinney, 1953) while in the play he claims "Wendy, one girl is worth more than twenty boys" and "Girls are much too clever to fall out of their prams", to which Wendy answers "Peter, it is perfectly lovely the way you talk about girls" (1995, pp. 99, 101). However, the 'lovely' 1904 Peter went through several changes in the hands of Disney. Despite these aspects, sometimes, as it occurs in this film, "men display what are traditionally thought to be feminine traits." (Towbin, 2003, p. 28) Hook, and in general, all the Pirates are often described as "there is a touch of the feminine in Hook, as in all the greatest pirates," as well as "Smee at his sewing-machine, which lends a touch of domesticity to the night." (1995, p. 122, 138) When coming to Peter, the boy is described as "small and sprightly" (Barrie, 1995, p. 97) qualities which are not usually regarded as virile as usually portrayed in literature and film, but rather, they are seen as feminine attributes.

#### **4.3. In *Hook*.**

As claimed before, the main difference between Peter Pan and Peter Banning is that of the age, and in the boy's life, quite similarly to the world of Neverland, "adult manhood is imagined as something that begins against the man's will." (Gryctko, 2016, p. 145) The relationship established between age and gender is obvious, and as the 1991 film presents us with, it is because of Moira that Peter decides to leave Neverland and grow up. Therefore, the very first instance of guilt is placed upon the female figure.

The concepts of gender portrayals are explored quite differently in this film as compared to the original *Peter Pan*. For instance, when Hook ties Peter's children up, Maggie and Jack, the pirate asks their father to fly so as to save them. The man is portrayed as a fearful and weak character, and seeing him struggling, his daughter Maggie claims "Mommy could do it." (Spielberg, 1991) This line could be interpreted as both implying that it is so easy that even their mother could do that, or else, a better option could be that it is 1991 and the empowering of women is present. The tables have turned and it is now their mother, due to her condition as mother or that of a woman, the one who would be able to save her children's life, unlike their father. Nonetheless, the characters who are portrayed more differently are the mermaids. Even

though it is true that in the original version they did not intend to draw Peter, but Wendy, they were still portrayed as dangerous and able to take somebody's life. In *Hook*, when Peter falls into the water from the pirate ship, the mermaids are the ones who save him, bringing him back to the surface.

Nonetheless, several aspects remain unchanged from the original film. It is again Tinker Bell the one in charge to wake the Lost Boys up. When Maggie is asked by captain Hook whether their mother loves them or not, she firmly nods, claiming "she reads to us every night." Peter enters Wendy's house and he suddenly remembers everything, he has the image of "her darning us socks and telling us stories." (Spielberg, 1991)

Maggie is the central female character in this movie. She could be said to represent a modernised interpretation of Wendy, and even though she is quite distanced from the original, they still share some traits. At one point in the film, Maggie starts singing a beautiful song, like a nursery rhyme, that is heard all over the Neverland island and it makes everyone stop and listen. This idea of the captivating woman and of the eternal mother altogether is kept from the original, but unlike the 1953 version, in *Hook* this figure is represented by the same person, Maggie.

#### **4.4. In *Finding Neverland*.**

The concept of the family is explored in the film through two particular family structures, that of the Llewelyn Davies, with a widow, four children and a grandmother, and that of Barrie and Mary's childless relationship. For Barrie to be able to write his play, he needs to disrupt the Llewelyn Davies' family, or as Mrs. Du Maurier puts it, "destroying her family's future", (Forster, 2004) as well as his own. Sylvia Llewelyn makes Barrie see that by the ending, he is committed to her family: "You brought pretending into this family, James. We pretended you are part of this family. Now it doesn't matter if this is true. Now, even if it isn't true, I need to go on pretending, until the end, with you." (2004) On the other hand, when *Peter Pan* is premiering in the theatre, Barrie apologises to his wife Mary for not being a 'good husband', and she asks him not to be sorry, because otherwise he could never have been able to write such play. At the very end of the film, Forster presents us with a type of structure that is as far from a nuclear family as possible: with Sylvia's death, Barrie becomes the boys' guardian, together with their grandmother. This family can be contrasted to the one in the Darling household, even if the real "Sylvia is the inspiration for Wendy Darling" as "the eternal mother." (Shipley, 2012, p. 152)

Consequently, a parallelism between Sylvia and Wendy is established. Motherhood, however, is the only trait they could be said to share to a certain extent, as Wendy would never allow her children to jump on the bed, and Sylvia simply apologises for the chaos. Their personalities are nothing but alike: Sylvia is a self-sufficient, independent woman who takes care of her four children mainly by herself. Moreover, Wendy would never spend so much time with a married man, spending summertime in his country house. She would ‘behave as a lady’, but instead, Sylvia does what she feels like doing, without considering neither other people’s feelings, including those of her mother and those of Barrie’s wife Mary, nor society at all. Therefore, Sylvia is both an inspiration and a development of Wendy’s character at the same time. Real-life Sylvia did inspire Barrie to create Wendy in terms of motherhood, but their portrayal is quite different. Nonetheless, she is clearly the figure of Wendy in this film the same way Barrie is that of Peter. They are constantly playing games, pretending to be a family, as she herself claims. When the playwright tells her about Neverland he promises “one day I’ll take you there” (Forster, 2004) just like Peter Pan does with Wendy. Thus, Forster portrays this “juxtaposition of Barrie at the terminally ill Sylvia’s bedside with Peter bravely trying to save Wendy from death.” (Wilson, 2004, p. 7) Barrie is able to commit both to Sylvia and to her family in the same way he fails to commit with his own wife, who after reading the playwright’s diary, claims “I was hoping you would take me to Neverland” (Forster, 2004) but instead, she feels left out from the story.

#### **4.5. Common Traits in the Four Texts Regarding Femininity.**

There is a common trait in all the texts regarding “gender differences and the belief in imagination.” (Crafton, 1989, p. 38) In the original play, when Mrs. Darling asks her husband to keep Nana in the nursery because she “saw a face in the window”, (Kinney, 1953) Mr. Darling incredulously replies “a face at the window, three floors up? Pooh!” (Barrie, 1995, p. 92) In the 1953 adaptation, when in the nursery, the narrator tells the audience that “Mrs. Darling believed that Peter Pan was the spirit of youth... but Mr. Darling – Well, Mr. Darling was a practical man.” (Kinney, 1953) The way Peter Banning is portrayed in *Hook* is more than enough to understand that a man like that will not ‘waste’ his time in trying to believe in magic, not even when his little daughter Maggie makes him sniff a flower because “it smells nice” and he claims “It’s paper, honey.” (Spielberg, 1991) *Finding Neverland*, nonetheless, presents rather the opposite: Barrie’s imagination and belief in magic are constantly present, and the two more sceptical and serious characters are two women, Mary and Mrs. Du Maurier.

The figure of the saviour goes through some modifications, and eventually, ends up disappearing. Both in the 1904 play and the 1953 film, although it may seem that the character who always saves the day is Peter Pan, it is not. Firstly, if it were not for Tinker Bell and her pixie dust, the three brothers could not even have flown to Neverland, as one happy thought was not enough. Peter would have died if it had not been for Tink and her decision of drinking the poisoned medicine. In *Hook*, it could be said that Peter is the least heroic character of all. Tink is clearly the saviour in the 1991 movie: she flies to London to convince Peter to go to Neverland and save his children; later, she is the one who manages to make him remember his childhood; when she kisses him, she makes him come down to earth and realise he has a mission on Neverland. The list is endless; but she does not do all these deeds by herself. She has the assistance of other female characters, such as the mermaids, who save Peter from drowning when he falls from the pirate ship, as well as the vital help of granny Wendy, who is the first one to try and make Peter remember about his childhood. Thus, in these cases, a few exceptions regarding Towbin's research can be found, for not all men appear "naturally strong and heroic," just like not all "women are helpless and in need of protection." (2003, p. 29, 31) In *Finding Neverland* there is no figure portrayed as the saviour, maybe because there is not a character who is in need to be saved. Even if they do support and help each other in one way or another, neither Barrie, nor Sylvia or any other character ask for assistance at any point in the film. The only thing that could be said to function as a saviour is the belief and the power of imagination. Maybe here lies the main distinction between the first text, Barrie's play, written at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the 2004 film, produced exactly a century later: the humanity. Every time, the characters in *Peter Pan* are portrayed as more real and humanised figures, and even though there are still distinctions in gender portrayals, they are not the core of the text anymore.

#### **4.6. Motherhood.**

The concept of motherhood, or parenthood in general, plays an important role in *Peter Pan*. Similarly to several other aspects in the play, motherhood is tightly bound to gender portrayals and the battle of the sexes, and it is explored by Barrie mainly through the figure of Wendy Darling, among others. As Chodorow posits, "Masculinity and the masculine roles are fantasized and idealized for boys, whereas femininity and the feminine role remain for a girl all too real and concrete." (1984, p. 367)

Feminine or female identification is an idea which Barrie deals with in depth in his writing of *Peter Pan*. As it has often been claimed, “females tend to identify with aspects of their own mother’s role specifically.” (Chodorow, 1984, p. 364) One of the main aims of Wendy’s trip to Neverland is to become a mother to the Lost Boys, and she manages to do so by imitating the mother role she is so used to seeing, that of her own mother, Mrs. Darling. As mentioned before, the play presents its characters, both children and adults, as people who are constantly playing games. It does not come as a surprise, then, that one of the very first scenes the first act introduces us to is the scene where Wendy and his brother John are playing a game, pretending to be their parents. This game of pretending does not cease, but rather it increases, when the siblings fly to Neverland. Peter convinces the girl to go to Neverland by flattering her, and, at a point where “Wendy is in a state of identification with her mother,” (Smith, 2012, p. 519) she gratefully agrees. The girl feels she is exactly what the Boys need, what Peter defines as “a nice motherly person.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 99) When in Neverland, Wendy remains faithful to the mother version she is accustomed to seeing in her household: she takes care of the Boys, prepares them the famous ‘pretend meals’ and maintains order in the ‘home under the ground’, where Peter and the Lost Boys live.

In spite of the constant identification of the little girl with her mother, it could be argued that there is a slight change in Wendy’s attitude during her time on the island. Concretely in the third act, when she is about to drown together with Peter in the Marooner’s Rock, she stops acting like the figure of the perfect mother, and moves to a more standard and common mother. This idea can be seen when the girl cries in despair, “I’m sure I sometimes think that children are more trouble than they are worth.” (Barrie, 1995, p. 124) These two particular instances have been regarded as “Wendy’s pass from being a little girl in a state of identification with her mother to a young woman with more trust in her own integrity.” (Smith, 2012, p. 526) Even though there is a slight difference between Wendy’s and Mrs. Darling’s attitude, they are basically the same figure, cut out by the exact same social pattern. Not only can this be seen along the play, but also in the 1908 sequel *When Wendy Grew Up*, when Peter comes back to the Darling household to take Wendy’s daughter, Jane, to Neverland with him. This last image Barrie offers, “suggests that Jane’s experience of her father, and her parents’ marriage, may not have been dissimilar to Wendy’s.” (Smith, 2012, p. 532)

Barrie makes Peter’s aversion towards mothers very present throughout the play, but more precisely at two particular moments: in the first act, when the boy claims “mothers are very overrated persons” (Barrie, 1995, p. 98), as well as in the last moments of the play, when Wendy and her brothers are flying home from Neverland, and the boy gets there first to close

the window, so as to prove Wendy that her mother has forgotten about her. This idea of the 'closed window' is later to be found in the 1906 novel *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Peter, after hearing what is like to be a grown-up, decides to leave for Neverland. But only a few days later, the little boy regrets his decision and decides to go back. However, the real world is not as timeless as Neverland, and at that moment, "the window was closed, and there were iron bars on it, and peering inside [Peter] saw his mother sleeping peacefully with her arm round another little boy." (Padley, 2012, p. 276) Nevertheless, it is not only in Peter's thoughts where Barrie places this dislike of mothers, but also in the narrator's thoughts, as they claim in one of the stage directions "I had meant to say extraordinarily nice things about her, and not one of them will I say now." (Barrie, 1995, p. 90). Apart from Peter, Tootles, the little Lost Boy, clearly states that "mothers alone are always willing to be the buffer, we cannot help but despise them for it." (Barrie, 1995, p. 107) In case that was not enough, he later shoots the person who was supposed to be her new mother, Wendy, when she arrives to Neverland. Therefore, it is generally through the eyes of the male characters where a negative image of motherhood, and as a result of womanhood is seen.

Nonetheless, these characters cannot be defined as ideal parental figures. Firstly, not even once in Barrie's descriptions of Peter Pan, is there a mention of the boy's father; thus, he does not have a clear role to follow or imitate. It does not come as a surprise, then, that he has absolutely no clue on how to act like a father. Barrie shows him overwhelmed by the situation when, together with Wendy, they pretend to be the Lost Boys' parents, and the boy anxiously asks "it is only pretend, isn't it, that I am their father?" (Barrie, 1995, p.129) In the end, he is only a little boy, and he is only playing a game. However, there are "evident father-like attributes" (Padley, 2012, p. 278) in Peter's character. Apart from the Boys and Wendy regarding him as a father figure, he imitates and portrays such behaviour when he arrives home as "a breadwinner" and asks for "a little less noise there" (1995, p. 129) the same way Mr. Darling uttered the same request at the beginning of the play. Moreover, the Indian tribe refers to Peter as "Great White Father." (1995, p. 128) However, not all the Boys are so happy with Peter's fatherhood. When John asks Wendy to sit in Peter's chair, she denies his request by claiming that it is his father's place, to which the boy replies "He is not really our father. He did not even know how to be a father till I showed him." (Barrie, 1995, p. 127) Thus, in John's character it can also be spotted a slight parenting attribute, that of teaching your children to act properly.

The idea of parenthood is explored rather differently in *Hook*. Even though at the beginning of the film, Peter conveys the idea of the 'excellent breadwinner' and the 'disastrous

father', missing his son's baseball game because of work, he later changes, or better, Neverland changes him. He seems unable to rescue his children because he is incapable of flying, but when the Lost Boys tell him he needs to think of a happy thought, he realises his happiest thought is to be a father to Jack and Maggie, and then, he can fly. Even Rufio, the toughest Lost Boy, claims he wishes to have a dad like Peter.

In *Finding Neverland*, Forster presents us with a devoted, lovely mother to their children but who has nothing to do with the role of the Victorian mother that Barrie portrayed with Wendy Darling. She is a widow who takes care of her four children mainly by herself, sometimes with the help of the boys' uptight grandmother, and on other occasions with the assistance of a charming playwright who finds inspiration in them. The boys' father is deceased, but that fact is not presented as troublesome until the moment when Sylvia falls ill and eventually dies as well. Then, Barrie is appointed co-guardian of the children, together with their grandmother, forming a family as far from a typical, nuclear family as possible. As far as I am concerned, Barrie acted as the boys' friend, playmate, guardian, uncle – actually, they referred to him as Uncle Jim – but never as a father. Here lies the distinction between a 1904 play, with the Victorian ideal family of the father, the mother, and the three children, and a 2004 film, with absolutely no need for a father figure.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to establish a comparison between the different depictions the character of Wendy Darling has been given throughout the years in terms of the gender constructions at work in each of the different versions, and especially those dealing with the treatment of femininity and motherhood. Several obvious changes can be clearly spotted in the depiction of this character, mainly due to the long time-span since Barrie's original Wendy, which appeared for the first time on stage at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in 1904, and her symbolic appearance in the most recent movie that has been analysed in this study, which dates from 2004.

In order to establish a well-based contrast between the original text and the filmic adaptations, an extensive research has been carried out, both considering the historical and social context in which the four texts were produced, as well as a critical analysis of several formal aspects of the play and the three films. As the main aim of this study was to focus on gender and the depictions of the female characters each author offered to their audiences, the core part of this work has been dedicated to the establishment of a comparative study of the construction of femininity in the four texts, of parenthood in general, but of motherhood specifically.

As it was initially thought, the way Disney's *Peter Pan* presented the character of Wendy was not very dissimilar from Barrie's account of the girl, in spite of the fact that the film was released half a century later. Considering this aspect, and after properly establishing an analysis and a contrast between Barrie's and Disney's *Peter Pan*, it was decided to put the two original texts together, those being the 1904 play and the 1953 film, and consider such comparison against the two other movies from a common point of view from the original texts.

Conclusively, the present study has proved that the character of Wendy has gone through significant changes throughout the years and that is, exclusively, after Disney's adaptation of the play. Nonetheless, the concept of motherhood and its subsequent depictions are the ones which have increasingly received more attention. Thus, the construction of motherhood, as a specific trait of femininity and a common attribute to female characters, has also been evolving with the passing of time – again, with the clearest exception of Disney – and therefore, giving new meanings to the concept of family and parenthood in general.

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