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PETER AND WENDY (1911): MODERNISM AND THE REINVENTION OF TRADITION

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Signat 

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To my parents and grandma for blindly believing that I read all the books I own, although they do not know a word of English.

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To the teachers and professors who made me fall in love with literature and the English language.

And to everyone who has made me the person I am today.

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Through the narratological analysis of *Peter and Wendy* (1911), I intend to claim active readership as a source of critical thinking. Separating the Author from the text, which, in the case of *Peter and Wendy,* has developed into many controversial approaches towards the study of the novel, allows thinking outside the supposed autofictional implications of authorship and places readers as the main actors of study. Narratology enables the reader to access the intentions of the source text and focus on how the text is written rather than what the Author's absolute intentions were. Thus,the reader becomes active.

Moreover, an active reading of *Peter and Wendy* helps to define the novel as a Modernist literary piece. This consideration calls into question the framing of the novel exclusively as a fairy tale or as Children's Literature which, as it is studied in this EDP, has restricted the novel inside definitions that are observed to be inaccurate once narratology becomes the main source of analyses.

I believe that quality education needs critical thinkers —people able to escape conventions and understand art, society, history, etc. through perspectives that demand active endeavours. *Peter and Wendy* is part of children's culture and is, therefore, available to children to read and start exercising their critical thinking in the world of literature. Reading means educating.

ABSTRACT

In this End of Degree Paper, I have analysed *Peter and Wendy* by J. M. Barrie (1911) as a Modernist text in terms of style and narratology: the innovation and complexity of the narrative voice together with the satirised use of traditional fairytale iconography and Victorian characteristics demonstrate stylistic characteristics of the British early 20th-century literary movement. In fact, the contrast between traditional traits and Modernist narratology clearly defines the socio-historical context of the novel: the Edwardian period, defined as a hinge between the most traditional and Victorian heritage and the sudden changes of modernity, which implied not only social consequences but also a new redefinition of literature. Moreover, I have detached from this project any possible Author-based readings (which have stained the novel with studies of perversion and paedophilia) in order to defend that active readership encourages critical thinking through a Post-structuralist application of text analyses.
Key Words: Peter Pan, Modernism, Tradition, Active Reader, Narratology, Edwardian Period.

RESUM

En aquest treball de fi de grau he analitzat *Peter and Wendy*, de J. M. Barrie (1911), com un text modernista en termes d'estil i narratologia: la innovació i la complexitat de la veu narrativa, juntament amb l'ús satíric d'iconografia de contes de fades tradicionals i personatges victorians demostra caracteristiques estilistiques pròpies del moviment literari de principis del segle XX anglès. De fet, el contrast entre els trets tradicionals i la narratologia Modernista defineix clarament el context social i històric de la novel·la: el període eduardià, definit com la frontissa entre l'herència més tradicional i victoriana i els canvis sobtats de la modernitat, que no només va tenir conseqüències socials, sinó que també va implicar una nova redefinició de la literatura. A més, he ignorat qualsevol enfocament basat en l'autor (quan s'ha donat aquest punt de vista a l'estudi de la novel·la s'hi ha destacat aspectes de perversió i pedofilia) amb l'objectiu de defendre la lectura activa com a eina de foment de pensament crític a través d'una pràctica postestructuralista d'anàlisi de textos.
Paraules clau: Peter Pan, modernisme, tradició, lector actiu, narratologia, període eduardià.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1904, James Matthew Barrie's play *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, was first performed. The eternal boy was born in the novel *Little White Bird* (1902), but it was not until its reformulation and performance as a play that the character became a celebrity (Zipes, 2004, p. xviii). Seven years later, the play became a novel called *Peter and Wendy* (1911).

Despite the main character's popularity generated by the play, the novel, and the many contemporary filmic adaptations such as Disney's 1957 and 2002 interpretations, Spielberg's *Hook* (1992), or the forthcoming David Lowery's *Peter and Wendy* for Disney+ (April 2023), the novel is subject to many academic approaches that have overlooked its narratological analysis and, by extension, not taken into account *Peter and Wendy* as a Modernist text. There are indeed many narratological studies that define the novel's style as Modernist (by scholars such as Jack Zipes or Maggie Tonkin), but other, more explored branches of analysis (psychoanalysis, Author-based approaches, etc.) have overshadowed this consideration. The aim of this project is to highlight Barrie's novel as a product of Modernism in terms of stylistic and narratological aspects as a response to the socio-cultural context of the novel, the Edwardian period. Moreover, it will also be stated that this context novel encourages the text's use of traditional aspects (fairy tale iconography and Victorian characterisation) in order to both achieve its narratological aim[1] and also represent the clash between tradition and literary innovation. *Peter and Wendy* is about, and it is written as, Modernism against tradition.

Although I will focus on the novel's narratological techniques used to define the text as part of the Modernist literary movement, some plot and character analysis will also be necessary since they also represent the clash between tradition and modernity, but these approaches will be mentioned superficially in order to nourish the narratological study. My intention is not to disregard or look down on other studies of the novel (psychoanalysis or Author-based, for instance) but to defend that, once the novel is exposed only for the way it is

[1] The concept of "narratological aim" that is constantly referred to in this EDP is understood as the intention of the narrative voice through the peculiarly Modernist techniques it uses, which, as it is explained in Chapter II, defines *Peter and Wendy* as a novel that imitates Children's literature in order to explain childhood to adults. Once this intention has been defined, I will proceed to interpret why the text used traditional features and how they contrasted with the style. Both lines of analysis complement each other to generate a contrast that is explored further on.
Setting a specific "aim" of the novel seems contradictory with the Post-structuralist claim of rejecting any "true purpose" of the text. Nonetheless, this "aim" should be understood as my personal and supported interpretation of the narrator's intention. I am not claiming Jaqueline Rose's (1984) approach, for instance, is wrong, but rather that it is not my interpretation of the text and, by extension, not the approach of this analysis.

written and only from the intentions of the narrative, *Peter and Wendy* becomes a purely Modernist text that describes the dichotomies between two worlds that are quickly crashing.

1.1. Defining Peter and Wendy

As previously stated, *Peter and Wendy* have been broadly analysed by many other approaches, such as psychoanalysis or gender studies, for example. However, the complex nature of the novel and the many different discussions in terms of definition, have placed the text in an unstable situation: in order to analyse the text, the novel must be defined within a few parameters.

The historical period in which the novel was written and published represents one of the many difficult considerations. The Edwardian period was a moment of cultural, historical, and artistic (therefore, literary) transition from Victorianism to Modernism (Thale, 1974, p. 25). Moreover, the short duration of the period makes it very difficult to define any literary piece within a concept such as "Edwardian literature"; if they have a common characteristic, it lies in their use of traditional aspects inherited mainly from Victorianism and the early innovations of Modernist style. Barrie's novel will be defended hereby as a direct definition of its times: the text exposes tradition through a very innovative style which contrasts those two realities and highlights its crash: Victorianism and fairy tales will be revisited through a very complex and Modernist narrative voice, multiplicity of styles, and other techniques that will be explored in further chapters.

Peter and Wendy was in fact published before some significant and formally-defined Modernist novels such as *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf (1927), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1920), both by James Joyce, among others. But Barrie's novel already displays many of the stylistic and narratological techniques of Modernism. Even though the novel does not chronologically belong to the movement's apogee by only a few years, *Peter and Wendy* is, in terms of style and narratology, purely Modernist. This has led to a general chronological overlook of formal consideration of the text as part of the literary movement, which is even more enhanced by the labelling of *Peter and Wendy* as Children's Literature.

Jaqueline Rose's "The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction" (1984) is one of the more renowned studies on *Peter and Wendy* from a psychoanalytical and narratological perspective. However, although Rose claims otherwise, her essay is full of Author-based statements that relate the novel to perversion and even paedophilia. It will not

be this essay's intention to argue if J. M. Barrie was indeed a paedophile or not, since this project supports and uses as a theoretical basis Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967) and, by extension, a Post-structuralist approach that will separate the Author from the text. This analysis will be strictly detached from any consideration or implication of J. M. Barrie in the formulation of the novel. Where some scholars have used "the author" as the subject for some of the novel's narrative, stylistic, and iconographic decisions, I will use "the narrator" instead.

Besides, Jaqueline Rose defends the impossibility of writing Children's Fiction by using *Peter and Wendy* as an example. Regarding this categorisation, I will treat *P&W* (Peter and Wendy) as a novel that imitates proper structures and iconography from Children's Literature but only in order to accomplish its narratological aim. As a consequence, Barrie's novel will be considered a pseudo-Children's Literature piece. The implications of this consideration will be used in order to develop a narratological context for the novel.

1.2. Tradition against modernity: literary contrasts

Until the arrival of the Modernist movement in the English early-20th century society and, by extension, literature, English novels were defined by a marked teleology and a broad use of third or first person narratives (technique that, for instance, *Peter and Wendy* will blend). Although there are some hints of change of focalisation in previous literary pieces (for example, *Jane Eyre*'s swap from external from internal focalisation) and other innovative techniques, the Modernist movement was, by far, the most ground-breaking phenomenon in terms of innovation and disruption.

Some of the early-Modernist techniques that *Peter and Wendy* uses are also seen in other fully-defined Modernist novels: the multiple perspectives in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) or the miscellany of styles in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920). With his previous contextualisation, I have not intended to describe *Peter and Wendy* as an inspiration for Woolf and Joyce, but rather to place Barrie's novel closer to their movement than to Victorian fiction.

For instance, although the unreliability of narrators is, from a Post-structuralist perspective, obvious, literature has traditionally not been aware of this notion and, consequently, has not incorporated this as a conscious technique. *Peter and Wendy* will, however, use a clearly aware, unreliable narrative voice, which, together with other stylistic innovations, separates the novel from previous narratological notions of fiction.

1.3. Structure

The following chapter will be devoted to understanding the Victorian and fairytale aspects that the novel uses in order to contextualise traditional literary and cultural heritage. However, these implications in the text are purposely nuanced with complex readings: the Victorian characters slowly move towards modern behaviours, and the fairytale iconography and structures appear satirised or redefined.

Chapter III, is dedicated to the stylistic and narratological Modernist techniques in the novel, which has been the most straightforward analysis of the text since they were directly relatable to other strictly-framed Modernist literary pieces.

1.4. Methodology and intention

My intention beyond the analysis of *Peter and Wendy* is to claim the exercise of active readership as a resourceful strategy towards understanding literature and narratology and, therefore, encourage critical thinking towards text and literature analysis. In order to claim so, Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" will be used as the theoretical background for separating the Author from the text and allowing active readership to act. As he claimed: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.". I believe that, in this particular case, the presence of J. M. Barrie has overshadowed the majority of scholar studies due to the constant reaffirmation of paedophilic behaviours, which, despite being true or not, have stained many of *Peter and Wendy*'s analyses.

With regard to the narratological analysis in Chapter III, Gerard Genette's terminology is used in order to understand the many innovative techniques of the narrator. As a whole, this essay will follow a Post-structuralist approach.

2. FAIRY TALES AND VICTORIAN ASPECTS IN *PETER AND WENDY*

Peter and Wendy was published in 1911, that is, during the so-called Edwardian period, when the latter traces of Victorianism encountered the new and groundbreaking demands of modernity and its literary manifestation, Modernism. The novel uses its iconography, pseudo-Children's Literature formula, and characterisation within the parameters of some traditional and Victorian literary traces. However, the style and narratological techniques used in the text are purely Modernist. *P&W* purposely explores this contrast in order to perform its

in-between characteristic: reflecting a traditional literary background that is slowly moving towards stylistic innovation. Although it might seem that the traditional characteristics and the innovative style and narratology move in different directions, both planes of analysis describe a society in change: *Peter and Wendy*'s satire on Victorianism and the use of a fairy tale-like genre and iconography are the basis upon which the Modernist style is built.

2.1. Victorian characterisation: a satire

As R. W. Stevenson explains: "As in Modernist fiction, artists made changes not necessarily in their subject or theme or in the nature of what was represented: but in the form and structure of the representation: the style and strategy of the art itself." (1992, p. 6). In the case of *Peter and Wendy*, the traditional literary traits will be in charge of the iconographic, structural, and character construction aspects. They are not innovative since they are extracted from previous literary periods and, therefore, the "nature of what is represented" remains familiar to the reader. The modernist qualities will be explored through narratology and genre construction.

Peter and Wendy's characters have been broadly studied inside psychoanalysis, gender studies, post-colonialism, etc., but the intention of this chapter is to explore the satirical representations of prototypically Victorian characterisations and highlight their slow detachment towards, or clash against, modernity. Some scholars, such as Ann Wilson, have pointed out that the novel deals with issues that commonly appear in other Edwardian texts: the rise of the middle class, the arrival of modernity, gender inequality, etc. (Wilson, 2000, p. 8). In the case of *P&W*, these recurrent topics can also be studied through the characters. The novel satirises many of those Victorian behaviours in order to review how the Edwardian society slowly escaped from traditional, Victorian-inherited constructs towards the new social structures of modernity. The following are some examples of this satire.

Wendy is, almost by definition, the example of Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House" (1854) in which the poetic voice describes the canon for wifehood in the Victorian period and marks the standardisation of female submission in its period. For instance, Wendy is visibly attached to household duties and struggles throughout the novel with her constant desire to become a mother to Peter Pan and the Lost Boys. In Chapter VI, she accepts being their mother as if that was her inner nature.

> Then all went on their knees, and holding out their arms cried, "O Wendy lady, be our mother."

> "Ought I?" Wendy said, all shining. "Of course it's frightfully fascinating, but you see I am only a little girl. I have no real experience."
> "That doesn't matter," said Peter, as if he were the only person present who knew all about it, though he was really the one who knew least. "What we need is just a nice motherly person."
> "Oh dear!" Wendy said, "you see, I feel that is exactly what I am." (Barrie, 1911, p. 65)

She is, as "The Angel in the House" describes, a woman whose life is extremely attached to pleasing men, becoming submissive to their will, and accepting the role of mother even though she is just a girl: <<Man must be pleased; but him to please // Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf // Of his condoled necessities // She casts her best, she flings herself. >> (Patmore, 1854). Wendy declares her submission not only to the children, but also to patriarchal structures and the "patriarchal child" (Morse, 2006, p. 288), in this case, Peter Pan, who is in charge of the island and the patriarchal structures of his clan.

As a matter of fact, Peter chooses her to go to the Neverland because he expects her to behave motherly (Hidekazu, 2017, p. 64). Her behaviour is inherited from Victorian standards and applied to the Edwardian period in the form of tradition. That is, the concept of girlhood was strictly attached to notions of motherhood as "The Angel in the House" not only as a social construct but as an established educational system (Hidekazu, pp. 64-65). Wendy is subdued to the traditional Victorian processes of turning young girls into mothers or, at least, becoming as attached to household duties as grown-up mothers were expected to be.

However, the novel contrasts Wendy's Victorian inherited behaviours with Mrs. Darling's approaches to the New Woman. Although this concept was not strictly defined until the 1920s, when Henry James in *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), encouraged by the late 19th century feminist movement, used the term to define an independent woman slowly distancing herself from social attachments to household duties and marriage and therefore entering the public sphere (Stevens, 1998).

Mrs. Darling is already hinting at this new concept of womanhood as independent and slowly distancing herself from household duties and motherhood. She is conscious of the impossibility of sustaining all her children, and, due to the family's economic struggles, she detaches herself a bit from her responsibilities as a mother. She is, of course, outside the educational system, so she is no longer attached to the social inputs that imply women to become mothers as Wendy is. It is evident that Mrs. Darling is still absorbed inside the Victorian standards of motherhood since she is still the one in charge of taking care of the children and feels absolute responsibility for it, but the socio-economic impossibility of

becoming the "ideal" mother in her society leads her to distance herself from a strict, house-restrained notion of motherhood and, for instance, use a dog as a nurse for her children:

> Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling has a passion for being exactly like his neighbours; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, owing to the amount of milk the children drank, this nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog, called Nana, who had belonged to no one in particular until the Darlings engaged her.
> [⋯]
> She proved to be quite a treasure of a nurse. How thorough she was at bath-time, and up at any moment of the night if one of her charges made the slightest cry. (Barrie, 1911, p. 7)

As she describes, she uses Nana as a nurse since she wants to resemble her rich neighbours, a more modern family, and gain the independence that an ordinary nurse would provide her. However, the dichotomy between being a "middle-class" family and demanding a slight female independence leads her to hire a dog instead of a person. It seems that Nana, a dog, is well-prepared to become a mother. Although interpretations might differ, in my reading, the novel satirises the traditional notions of motherhood first by making Mrs. Darling notice the impossibility of what society demands of her, and also by describing a dog as a presumably perfectly prepared mother. Nana will be in charge of the children while their parents are at a party; Mrs. and Mr. Darling have left their duties to attend the public live at night. Mrs. Darling is, therefore, becoming less attached to household duties and motherhood, although there are still reminiscences of the Victorian legacy in some of her attitudes. As a result, she encounters a society in change: Victorian standards clash against the early construction of a New Woman, class distinctions, and modernity.

Mr. Darling's masculinity is also satirised in the novel. As Gaarden defines: "Victorians developed models of mature masculinity around the fundamental ideal of self-control." (2017, p. 69). In Chapter II, George Darling exemplifies this notion of manhood inherited from Victorianism:

> The romp had ended with the appearance of Nana, and most unlikely Mr. Darling collided against her, covering his trousers with hairs. They were not only new trousers, but they were the first he had ever had with braid on them, and he had to bite his lip to prevent the tears coming. (Barrie, p. 17)

Gaarden (2017) also describes the Victorian/Edwardian masculine attitudes as impossible to retain childhood "savagery" and as a behaviour that naturalises aggressivity and a lack of anger contention (p. 70).

A clear example of this masculinity is presented later in the novel, when Mr. Darling is conscious of his failure as *pater familias* and his masculinity is ridiculed. He accepts Nana has been smarter than him, and, surrendered by his failure, he crawls towards Nana's kennel as if he was a dog himself to stay there and claim "this is the place for me" (Barrie, 1911, p. 136). His attitude is not only considered "simple" and childish, but he also treats himself as a dog. His "self-control" and paternal position are satirised by animalistic behaviours, while Nana is considered more suitable for the role of mother. The masculine, Victorian-inherited behaviours do not fit a world in which children fly free towards new adventures outside domesticity.

Although these are only three examples of character satire, there is clear evidence that, although some characters are quite Victorian in their behaviour, all of them experience conflicts with modernity. The notion of family is subverted and described as impossible under the standards of Victorianism. There is a tendency to slowly move away from traditional structures and towards new possibilities.

2.2. Fairy tales in Peter and Wendy

2.2.1. Iconography

The paratextual illustrations drawn by Francis Donkin Bedford are the first iconographic evidence of traditional elements in the novel. They appeared in the original 1911 edition of *Peter and Wendy* and also in the 2004 Penguin Classics' edition. In his illustrations, fairytale iconography is very present. Apart from its scenarios, characters, and creatures, *Peter and Wendy* was already visually set as a fairy tale.

Moreover, inside the diegesis, the Neverland is full of traditional fairytale iconography. The reality of the island allows itself to become a fairytale and jump from the post-Victorian scenarios in London. In the Neverland, the Darling siblings, together with Peter Pan, Tinkerbell, and the Lost Boys, enter a dimension where many fairytale icons (characters, scenarios, and even objects) coexist and, by extension, form a unified reality. Pirates, fairies, mermaids, beasts, and Redskins are the icons the novel uses, not only to generate a sense of adventure and a fairy tale world, but also to confront the "non-fictional" reality (London) with the newly established fantasy. Apart from encapsulating the island's

iconography inside the label "fairy tale", there are, as a result of using traditional icons, many intertextual references that summon familiar images to the reader.

The crocodile that haunts Captain Hook recalls Moby-Dick, the humongous white whale that Captain Ahab desires to kill in vengeance, in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). Both beasts have bitten off their respective captains' limbs: Hook's hand and Ahab's leg, respectively (Williams, 1963, p. 483). However, the novel satirises their similarities: "Ahab may chase the White Whale to avenge his swallowed leg, but the Ticking Crocodile chases Hook because his arm has been so delicious" (Williams, p. 483).

The pirates on the island continue a historical and literary tradition of piracy, remembering fictional characters like John Long Silver in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), or real life figures like Captain Christopher Newport. Fairies are also a continuation of Children Fiction's tradition in literary pieces like The Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella* (Charles Perrault, 1834), The Wicked Fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Puck in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600), or The Blue Fairy in Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1881-1882). Mermaids also appear in H. G. Wells' *The Sea Lady* (1901), Oscar Wilde's "The Fisherman and His Soul" (1981), and folk tales like *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen (1837). As for the Redskins, the novel continues (through satirised criticism or not) a tradition of alienating Native-Americans and characterising them as savages, as in Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), encouraged by the British Empire and Colonialism.

The island itself is also a geographical trope used in many English fiction novels, for instance: Robinson Crusoe's "Island of Despair", *Treasure Island*'s "Skeleton Island", "Laputa" in *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift (1726), or *The Island of Doctor Moreau*'s "Noble's Isle" in H. G. Wells's novel (1896).

As a whole, *Peter and Wendy* is full of traditional iconography (characters and scenarios) that brings back many literary tropes. Therefore, there is no innovation in the use of those characters, but rather a miscellany and rebirth of already explored characters. This traditional background is the base upon which the novel builds its Modernist style.

2.2.2. Between Fairy tale and fantasy literature

Although the narratological aim of the novel will be thoroughly addressed in the third chapter of this essay, it must be understood that *Peter and Wendy* pretends to be a fairy tale because its narratological aim is to explain childhood to the reader/audience. Hence, the structures and

iconography of the novel will be formulated in order to accomplish this goal. Nevertheless, there are some traces in *P&W* that refer to the text as an imitation of a fairy tale as a form of narrative technique rather than as a substantial genre formulation; the text is written from a sort of genre retrospective used to imitate techniques from fairy tales while hinting at some of its natural fantasy literature structures.

As Maria Nikolajeva (2003) points out, *Peter and Wendy* displays plot structures that are recurrent in fantasy literature rather than in fairy tales:

> The initial setting of fantasy literature is reality. [⋯] From this realistic setting, the characters are transported into some magical realm, and most often, although not always, brought safely back. Alternatively, the magical realm itself may intervene into reality, in the form of magical beings ([Peter Pan]), magical transformations, or magical objects. (p. 142)

However, as she later explained, fairy tales maintain the reader and characters unquestionably inside the magical world and reality; they accept the iconography and structures of the fantastic reality. On the contrary, the characters from fantastic literature who belong to the non-magical world do question those fantastic events and beings (Nikolajeva, pp. 151-152). In the case of *P&W*, both Peter Pan and the Darling siblings accept the Neverland and its characters, like in fairy tale structures, because the narrator's aim is to explain the island as a place that is inhabited by every reader's child mind.

Peter and Wendy presents a very complex analysis when trying to define what it really *is* and what it *pretends* to be. As Nikolajeva also points out: "Fantasy literature is a conscious creation, where authors choose the form that suits them best for their particular purposes" (p. 139). As said before, the "particular purpose" of *P&W*'s narrator[2] is to explain childhood to adults, so the form that best suits this aim is mimicking some fairytale iconography and plot structures while hinting at the natural fantasy literature genre behind the pseudo-genre.

This is, in fact, a retrospective of literary genres that some precedent Postmodernist authors used in order to satirise and parody previous historical and literary periods: *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles (1969) using Victorianism, or Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) using fairy tales and folktales. *Peter and Wendy* needs to review fairy tales from a physical and historical distance in order to highlight the contrast between a tradition that is suddenly encountering the transgressive attitudes of Modernism and, by extension, modernity.

[2] Although Nikolajeva refers to the author as the one in charge of the narratological techniques, since this essay tries to separate Author from text, I will consider the narrator as the creator of the narrative.

3. THE MODERNIST STYLE IN *PETER AND WENDY*

The early Modernist qualities of the novel must not be understood as precedent and inspiration for the many modernist authors of the British 20th century, but rather as a source of early Modernist techniques that aimed towards the proper formulation of the movement and as an effect of the demands of a society changing towards modernity. This chapter will not try to find any of *Peter and Wendy*'s modernist characteristics in any of the precedent movement's literary examples; the target of this chapter is to develop how innovative the novel is in terms of style and narratology and how it steps further from Victorianism and other classical literary techniques. As stated in the previous chapter, the innovative characteristics of modernist fiction lie more in their form and structure than in their topics (Stevenson, 1992, p. 6); *P&W* follows this argument.

The Edwardian period witnessed the origins of the Modernist period, a literary movement that escaped the teleological structures of Victorian and traditional literature and began a significant embracement of experiential styles. Among many notable narrative authors, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce are the most renowned names. As R.W. Stevenson argues in *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (1992), modernist novels are usually defined by their "rejection of techniques and conventions apparently inappropriate or 'too clumsy' for new interests at the time" (p. 2). For instance, with help and inspiration from Picasso's early Cubism, perspective was considered plural in the many representations of Modernist art.

That is, in terms of writing, novels were no longer held under one or more fixed perspectives but rather roamed in between perspectives and focalisers where a single reality could be perceived not as a single and objective structure, but rather as a subjective representation (p. 6). Peter Childs defines literary Modernism as a "tendency towards narrative relativity [···], use of perspective, unreliability, anti-absolutism, instability, individuality, and subjective perceptions (2008, p. 66), therefore, away from Victorian notions of narratology. In Stephen Kern's *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* (2011), the author describes the Modernist will to escape the "realist novels" and their approach to how to represent reality through literature. Teleology is no longer seen as an accurate representation of realist writing. Rather, plural focalisation becomes the more noticeable technique of Modernist text to achieve naturalness.

The implication of a new concept of reality in literature, and its consequent usual incorporation of multiple perspectives, developed unreliable fiction. If the narrator assumes their role as one of the many possible perspectives of a fiction, the text becomes an individual

product of the narrative voice: a rhetorical form of telling one of the many possible perspectives that is no longer understood as the one and true view of a story; reality is no longer objective. This notion gave birth to the unreliable and deficient Modernist and Postmodernist narrator that appears in *Peter and Wendy*.

Reminding R. W. Stevenson's claim:"As in Modernist fiction, artists made changes not necessarily in their subject or theme or in the nature of what was represented: but in the form and structure of the representation: the style and strategy of the art itself." (1997, p. 6), the narratological structures and forms in the novel are in charge of manifesting the Modernist innovation, contrasting themselves with the crowded Victorian and fairytale tropes that result and become familiar to the reader. Therefore, innovation lies not in the characters and iconography but rather in their textual and artistic representation.

3.1. A mixture of styles and tones

As it has been mentioned before, *Peter and Wendy* is the narrative adaptation of a play named *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904); as a matter of fact, *P&W* was the only novel by J. M. Barrie since he was mainly a playwright. However, those dramatic origins were not left aside in the reformulation of the play into a different style: *Peter and Wendy* is full of dramaturgical techniques that generate a mixture of styles that places the resulting novel closer to the Modernist characteristic of innovative use of merged literary styles.

One of the most memorable moments in the play included the participation of the audience. When Tinkerbell is about to die, the audience was asked "If you believe in fairies, clap your hands" in order to save her life, to which they respond with a surprising thunderous noise (Zipes, 2004, p. xviii). The play demanded the participation of an active audience, which was translated into the novel in the form of active audiences outside the island:

> She was saying that she thought she could get well again if children believed in fairies.
> Peter flung out his arms. There were no children there, and it was night time; but he addressed all who might be dreaming of the Neverland, and who were therefore nearer to him than you think: boys and girls in their nighties, and naked papooses in their baskets hung from trees.
> "Do you believe?" he cried.
> Tink sat up in bed almost briskly to listen to her fate.
> She fancied she heard answers in the affirmative, and then again she wasn't sure.
> "What do you think?" she asked Peter.
> "If you believe," he shouted to them, "clap your hands; don't let Tink die."

> Many clapped.
> Some didn't.
> A few little beasts hissed. (Barrie, 1911, p. 114)

Peter seeks voices beyond the Neverland: everyone dreaming about the island is required to save the fairy, which exemplifies both the novel and the play's need for an audience or, at least, someone outside the action who not only witnesses the actions, but also takes part in them

Even though the narrative voice in the novel will be developed further, the constraint addressing of the narrator to the audience, or the readers in this case, is one of the clearest examples of dramaturgical techniques adapted to the narrative text. In the latter quote, the narrator talks directly to the reader: "...nearer than *you* think". The novel is conscious of its addressee, and it demands a certain degree of participation from them: "Look at the four of them," (p. 12). The verb used in this quote places the reader as a witness of the actions through an external perspective in which the narrator also takes part: "If you and I or Wendy had been there, we should have seen that he was very like Mrs. Darling's kiss." (p. 12). The narratee becomes, therefore, both the reader and the audience since they are required not only for the reading of the action but also for their participation in or even merging into the story.

As seen in the following examples, the style of the novel describes some scenes in a very performable manner:

> "The boys vanish in the gloom, and after a pause, but not a long pause, for things go briskly on the island, come the pirates on their track. We hear them before they are seen, and it is always the same dreadful song:" (p. 48)

> "A moment after the fairy's entrance the window was blown open by the breathing of the little stars, and Peter dropped in." (p. 23).

The detail of the characters' entrances resembles stage directions, which are similar to the play's, although their format is adapted for the narration. If these excerpts are compared with their respective dramatic counterparts, it becomes clearer that the novel is nourished by stage performability:

> "(*Not for long is he belaboured, for a sound is heard that sends them currying down their holes; in a second of time the scene is bereft of human life. What they have heard from near-by is a verse of the dreadful song with which on the Never Land the pirates stealthily trumpet their approach*—) (Barrie, 1904, p. 197)

> "(*Then the window is blown open, probably by the smallest and therefore most mischievous star, and Peter Pan flies into the room. In so far as he is dressed at all it is in autumn leaves and cobwebs*)" (Barrie, 1904, p. 97).

In fact, the stage directions are more prosaic than the novel's. Both of them specify time, place, and mode of entrance, but the first set of quotes, the ones from the novel, gather all the indications a stage direction should have with almost no prose in them. (Hollindale, 1995, pp. xv-xvi).

For instance, in "The boys vanish in the gloom, and after a pause, but not a long pause, for things go briskly on the island, come the pirates on their track. We hear them before they are seen, and it is always the same dreadful song:" (p. 48). The narrator describes, in this order, how the Lost Boys exeunt, the timing, a brief description of how the island's perception of time works, the arrival of pirates, and how they enter. There is little space for any narrative development, almost all of these novel quotes are indications of the characters entrances and exits.

However, the play's stage directions specify that, for example, the window is *perhaps* opened by a star. In this case, the use of "perhaps" resembles the insecurity of the narrator in the novel when they tell the story: "If he thought at all, but I don't believe he even thought," (Barrie, 1911, p. 25). Moreover, it defines prosaic elements that do not give indications of where the characters are or how they leave or enter the scene. Whether the window is blown by a star or not, since it is not clear, it is not relevant for the performability of the play.

Moreover, as R. D. S. Jack claims, the Neveland's bellic structure resembles the Shakespearean Romance cyclical structures (1994, p. 159). Both the novel and the play describe this composition with satirical circular chases:

> The redskins disappear as they have come like shadows, and soon their place is taken by the beasts, a great and motley processions: lions, tigers, beards, and the innumerable smaller savage things that flee from them, for every kind of beast, and, more particularly, all the man-eaters, live cheek by jowl on the favoured island. Their tongues are hanging out, they are hungry to-night.
> When they have passed, comes the last figure of all, a gigantic crocodile. We shall see for whom she is looking presently.
> The crocodile passes, but soon the boys appear again, for the procession must continue indefinitely until one of the parties stops or changes its pace. Then quickly they will be on the top of each other. (Barrie, 1911, p. 51)

The distinction between stagable and narrative narrative is highlighted by the narrative tone, which constantly shifts even from universal statements to purely subjective discourses. The first passage of the novel clearly defines the multiple tones of the narrator (Tonkin, 2014, p. 272):

> All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was this. [⋯] I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, [⋯]. This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end. (p. 5)

The novel begins with what the narrator understands as an "universally-acknowledged statement" (which reminds of the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)) to then move towards an openly subjective assumption: "I suppose she must...". Further on, the narrator addresses the reader to introduce another "commonly known" or rather "directively intended comment" on growing up: "You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end".

Through these techniques, the duality of styles and tones, the novel reflects a moment of social, historical, and literary change: the notions of a single style in a novel are broken, and the collision between objective and subjective realities that modern times implied is highlighted.

3.2. Closeness between narrator and reader: the rhetorical novel

Peter and Wendy (1911) does not only reflect a fusion between play and novel but also explores a blend of written and oral text. As stated before, due to its dramatic origins, the audience serves as readers and also as spectators, whom the narrative voice addresses; the text becomes rhetoric. Placing the audience physically inside the action suggests that the narration is being told orally and that the diegesis is the transcription of it. As James Phelan describes, the rhetorical approach in texts defines an audience that the narrator addresses: the narratees (2017, p. 92).

Defining who the audience is, and consequently defining the narrator's aim, has become one of the most intrinsic aspects of the novel's narratological analysis, and, what is more, it is one of the dilemmas behind placing or misplacing the novel as Children's Literature. As the scholar Jack Zipes argues, even though the characters, scenarios, and structure of the conflict might indicate that the reader deals with a fairytale for children, the

novel's actual narratological aim is targeted towards adults and, more specifically, to the child inside each of them.

> "...the narrator of the novel is sharing his story with adults and, given his intimate knowledge of children and their world —something he tends to lord over his readers— the narrator has made it his mission to explain children to adults." (Zipes, 2005, p. xxii).[3]

Even though the iconography in the novel and play is reminiscent of Children's classical literature (pirates, fairies, etc.), they are only the means by which the narrator exposes and explains childhood to the adults.

The narrator often asks the reader to act as if both of them were physically close: "Look at the four of them," (Barrie, 1911, p. 12). There are other instances of the narrator taking the role of audience altogether with the reader: "Now that we look at her closely and remember the gaiety of her in the old days, all gone now just because she has lost her babes… (p. 137). Verbs such as "look", "let us", "watch", etc. place the narrator as a physical companion to the audience. They metaphorically float over the Neveland and the narrator encourages the reader to take a closer look. Although the narratee has not a word to say, and the narrator pours the story to them and, therefore, has control over the narration, the narrator is able to invite the reader and modify the story, becoming, as a consequence, god-like figures upon the action:

> Let us now kill a pirate, to show Hook's method. Skylights will do. [···] Such is the terrible man against whom Peter Pan is pitted. Which will win? (p. 50)

Or in:

> "Suppose, to make her happy, we whisper to her in her sleep that the brats are coming back. They are really within two miles of the window now, and flying strong, but all we need whisper is that they are on the way. Let's.
> It is a pity we did it, for she has started up, calling their names; and there is no one in the room but Nana." (p. 137)

Phelan (2017) describes this type of audience as the "narrative audience":

[3] Zipes assumes he/him pronouns for the narrator.

> The fourth audience, exclusive to fiction, is the narrative audience, an observer position within the storyworld. As observers, the members of the narrative audience regard the characters and events as real rather than invented, and, indeed, they accept the whole storyworld as real regardless of whether it conforms to the actual world. (p. 92)

However, if the narrator and the audience are able to interfere in the story, then the action of the novel is questioned: to what extent is the whole novel not a product of the narrator? Are the narrator and the narratee actually modifying anything, or is it just one of the narrator's techniques to take the audience closer to the diegesis and action? The unreliable narrator is born. Moreover, the constant modification of the narration takes the novel closer to its fairytale inspiration. The oral characteristics of tales imply constant reformulation of their formulas, where the storyteller shapes the narrative according to their individual purposes (Nikolajeva, 2003, p. 139).

In written texts, however, the focalisation is strict, and the readers cannot explore beyond what is focalised. On the contrary, orality allows each narrator to diverge from the action and, therefore, allows the reader to observe the action from different perspectives if the storyteller considers them in their reformulated narration. *Peter and Wendy* reunites both aspects: the narrator is able to modify the action because they are performing an oral narrative; however, since there is only one diegesis, the audience realises that this rhetorical structure is only a pretension by which the narrator accomplishes its narratological aim.

The result of this technique, together with the unreliable narrator that will be described in the next section, is, as James Phelan (2017) describes: a closer distance between the narrator and the audience:

> Unreliable and deficient narration can have effects on audiences along a spectrum ranging from bonding to estranging. Most work on unreliable narration since Wayne C. Booth introduced the term in 1961 has assumed that its effects are estranging, that is, they increase the interpretive, affective, ethical, or other kinds of distance between authors and audiences, on the one hand, and character narrators, on the other. (p. 94)

3.3. The many functions of the narrator and their unreliability

The appearance of an audience and the ability to manipulate the action imply that the narrative voice has to be aware that they are telling a story. If there is someone witnessing the action, and the narrator encourages them to participate or even empathise with the action and

characters, the action is perceived as a play that someone is introducing to the audience. As a result, the narrative becomes highly subjective and narrator-based: the one telling the story and encouraging the readers/audience to participate is the narrator. However, even though the narrator is the one in charge of the story, the audience is placed at the same level since they have to suppose, observe, and interfere in the story together.

The narrative voice must reveal that they are not only in charge of the narration, but also aware of their possible unreliability: "I suppose it was all especially entrancing to Wedny, because those rampagious boys of hers have her too much to do" (Barrie, 1911, p. 69), the narrator supposes but does not know, and they are shown as vulnerable story-tellers that are sometimes even overwhelmed by the requirements of their role: "To describe [all of Peter's adventures] would require a book as large as an English-Latin, Latin-English Dictionary, and the most we can do is to give one as a specimen of an average hour on the island. The difficulty is which one to choose" (p. 71). In this quote, the narrator not only includes the reader as one of the possible narrators with the use of "we", and therefore places the narratee as the next ones to tell the story (what Zipes calls "sharing the story"), but also claims that describing what Peter does on the island by using an example is beyond their capacities. They know they are in charge of a narration and that it implies certain difficulties. The reader comes across a narrator who exposes their defects in their duties. Even though the story is filtered exclusively through the narrator's perspective, the constant suppositions and guessing allow the reader to doubt the narrative voice and define it as unreliable. If the narrator is inferring from the action and characters, the reader is also allowed to do so.

Moreover, although the action is supposed to be objective, the narrator cannot contain any possible subjective approach to the story. For instance, the narrator is openly critical of the characters: "You see, the woman had no proper spirit. I had meant to say extraordinarily nice things about her; but I despise her, and not one of them will I say now." (p. 136). The reader must either accept the narrator's comment or question their assumptions since the narrator is constantly proving themselves unreliable. As a result, the audience becomes active and aware of the struggles of the narrative voice through their constant interference. In fact, the narrator interferes so much in the story that they accomplish some of Gérard Genette's "functions of the narrator" that affect the diegetic narrative mood directly (1980, pp. 255-256):

There is a narrative function since the narrator assumes a certain degree of detachment from the diegesis. The communicative function appears whenever the audience/reader is directly addressed: "If you could keep awake (but of course you can't), you would see your

own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her." (Barrie, 1911, p. 8). Moreover, the self-conscious narrator allows their narration to become a conversation between the storyteller and the narratee: "If you could keep awake (but of course you can't) you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her" (p. 8)

The testimonial function defines the level of certainty and precision towards the diegesis, which is constantly reflected in the narrator's many suppositions and even mistrusts of some characters: "If [Peter] thought at all, but I don't believe he ever thought." (p. 24).

The directing function that Gérard Genette defines as the mood of a narrator who "performs a directing function when he interrupts the story to comment on the organisation or articulation of his text (involvement)." is sometimes implicit in the rest of the narrative functions that define a narrator that is aware of themselves and also of the fictionality of the action. But there is one clear case in which the narrative voice directly addresses the ending of the diegesis, by prolepsis, and also briefly discusses the possible paths the action may take and their respective consequences to the diegesis: "Will they reach the nursery in time? If so, how delightful for them, and we shall all breathe a sigh of relief, but there will be no story. On the other hand, if they are not in time, I solemnly promise that it will all come right in the end." (Barrie, 1911, p. 34).

Last but not least, the ideological function, by which the narrator stops the story to comment on their involvement, is intrinsic to the text since the narrative voice constantly takes the narratee outside the action to approach some information about children or the reader's childhood. Zipes defines the voice as "an omniscient narrator who takes delight in playing with his readers and imparting his vast knowledge about children" (2004, p. xxiii).

If we consider the assumption that the narrator "plays with the readers", we might doubt that all their constant doubts, suppositions, and expectations of the story, together with their master domain of the story that, as a whole, accomplishes their narrative mission, are proof of unreliability used as a form of falsely exposing the narrative voice in order to make the audience participant in their "game"; of their ideological and doctoring function:

> "...the "doctoring" narrator is *always* addressing other adults as implicit readers of this novel, [···] [The narrator][4] is clearly in command of the characters, plot, and setting. [They] know what [they] want to present and

[4] From this moment on in the quote, Zipes refers to J. M. Barrie as the one that "is in command of the characters, plot, and setting.". However, this project claims the separation between novel and Author and, therefore, the narrator is considered the one in control of those narrative aspects.

> does not hesitate to present an image of imaginative play by children." (Zipes, 2004, p. xxiv)

In "The Case of Peter Pan; The Impossibility of Children's Fiction" by Jacqueline Rose (1984), the author distinguishes Barrie, and by extension the narrator, as an insecure voice with an unclear aim that derives from a constant shift in roles: servant, author, and child (pp. 73-74). However, Rose overlooks the novel's narratology and does not perceive those many roles as an attempt by the narrator to perform the many narrative functions and to become a directive narrator that explains childhood to adults (Zipes, p. xxiv). She defines it as an unstable voice rather than a purposefully shifting narrator.

The narrator is able to enter the scene and make the reader accompany them, they make the character act at their will, etc. If they doubt or mistrust the characters at some point, it is only because they are pretending so in order to achieve and encourage an active readership.

As a whole, the existence of an audience (both as narratees and as narrative audiences, as Phelan (2017) described), together with the multiple roles of the narrator, create a narrative voice that diverges from any strict perspective. The audience is given the perspective of a god-like but deficient and unreliable narrator, which breaks with the traditional notions of Victorian and classical narrations.

3.4. Multiplicity of focalisers: a game of perspectives

Although there is clearly one narrator and a single type of focalisation, the novel uses multiple focalisers to make the reader perceive the action through different eyes and minds. This multiplicity encourages plural perspectives on the same story, which is another distinct narrative trait of Modernism[5]. However, analysing the focalisation in *Peter and Wendy* becomes a bit mischievous once you define it as internal, external, or zero-focalisation. Gérard Genette defined the latter as instances of a narrator who knows more than the characters (1980). Although this is the case in *P&W*, the omniscient narrator often focalises the action from the perspective of one character. That is, even though the narrator and reader have access to all of the character's thoughts (as seen before, they are also able to modify the action and their minds), the narration often shifts its focus to a character that will become the main character of the chapter, although the narrator will constantly move outside and inside that character's mind.

[5] Virginia Woolf would also use this narrative technique in *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

Since the novel is meant to help adults understand childhood, the best way to introduce this doctoring function is through an adult focaliser: Mrs. Darling. The novel not only introduces the action through her perspective, but also introduces her background story as if she were the main character of *Peter and Wendy*.

> Mrs. Darling was married in white, and at first she kept the books perfectly, almost gleefully, as if it were a game, not so much as a Brussels sprout was missing; but by and by whole cauliflowers dropped out, and instead of them there were pictures of babies without faces. She drew them when she should have been totting up. They were Mrs. Darling's guesses. (Barrie, 1911, p. 6)

Mrs. Darling works as a focaliser mainly throughout the first and second chapters in order to propose to the reader that there is and has always been a Peter Pan in each adult:

> Occasionally in her travels through her children's minds Mrs. Darling found things she could not understand, and of these quite the most perplexing was the word *Peter*.
> [···]
> "He is Peter Pan, you know, Mother."
> At first Mrs. Darling did not know, but after thinking back into her childhood she just remembered a Peter Pan who was said to live with the fairies… (p. 10)

However, suddenly the narrator changes the focaliser and gets inside the siblings' minds to later come back to Mrs. Darling's:

> Of course the Neverlands vary a good deal. John's, for instance, had a lagoon with flamingoes flying over it at which John was shooting, while Micheal, who was very small, had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it. John iced in a boat turned upside down on the sands, Michael in a wigwam, Wendy in a house of leaves deftly sewn together. John had no friends, Michael had friends at night, Wendy had a pet wolf forsaken by its parents.
> [···]
> Occasionally in her travels through her children's minds Mrs. Darling found things she could not understand, and of these quite most perplexing was the word *Peter*. (p. 9-10)

Although there is zero-focalisation, the narrator's god-like abilities allow them to shift from one perspective to another. But they have preferences: depending on their interests, they choose a main focaliser. The narrator is able to enter Mrs. Darling's mind to expose how adults forget about Peter Pan's existence and how only children are the ones that are able to

make an adult remember. However, once the target audience is established by the first focaliser, the novel will slowly move away from her to focus on the Darling brothers, Peter, Wendy, Captain Hook, or even the Neverland itself in order to expose and explain childhood to adults.

In Chapter III, the narrator uses zero-focalisation in order to present the action both from outside and inside the character's thoughts. In "Come away, come away!" there is no clear focaliser but rather a mix of Wendy, Peter, and Tinkerbell. Although the narrator remains omniscient throughout the whole novel, there are some characters that are potentially focalisers in some chapters, while there are others where the perspective seems rather removed from a single focalisation.

The novel, through its style, also shapes itself into a documentary in order to either describe the Neverland, as in Chapter V ,"The Island Come True", where the narrative voice changes their focalisation in order to see the island from above and describe it thoroughly. It seems that the island is another character and the narrator gets inside its mind and structure:

> Feeling that Peter was on his way back, the Neverland had again woke into life. We ought to use the pluperfect and say wakened, but woke is better and was always used by Peter.
> In his absence things are usually quiet on the island. The fairies take an hour longer in the morning, the beasts attend to their young, the redskins feed heavily for six days and nights, and when pirates and lost boys meet they merely bite their thumbs at each other. But with the coming of Peter, who hates lethargy, they are all under way again: if you put your ear on the ground now, you would hear the whole island seething with life. (p. 47)

In Chapter IX, for instance, Peter Pan is the main focaliser and protagonist's perspective:

> The last sounds Peter heard before he was quite alone were the mermaids retiring one by one to their bedchambers under the sea.
> [⋯]
> He thought it was a piece of floating paper, perhaps part of the kite, and wondered idly how long it would take to drift ashore. (p. 85).

In chapter XVI, "The Return Home", the narrator allegedly addresses the constant change of perspectives and their inability to maintain one: "It seems a shame to have neglected No. 14 all this time; and yet we may be sure that Mrs. Darling does not blame us." (p. 135).

The result of these techniques is a novel that claims the subjectivity and multiplicity of perspectives on reality (a very Modernist approach to modern times) and works on two

levels: the narrator's unreliability and their ability to change the action, and the use of many characters as focalisers of the same story. *Peter and Wendy* is a story about the possibility of many realities: every child has their own Neverland (Barrie, p. 9), the narrator doubts the action, they change it, and every character is given a voice that perceives the action differently.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this EDP, I have tried to defend *Peter and Wendy* (1911) as a Modernist text, as many scholars such as Zipes and Tonkin have done. However, I intended to do so not only by analysing its stylistic and narratological innovation, but also by analysing the text's constant revisiting of traditional literary structures and iconography. *P&W* mischievously uses Victorianism and fairy tales together with a purely Modernist style in order to highlight the contrast between innovation (modernity) and the tradition of its time.

In my experience, it would have been impossible to fully understand the text if it had not been for the previous framing and definition of the novel. Separating the author from the text, detaching it from any psychoanalytic approach, and even surpassing any possible controversies has helped focus exclusively on the purpose of the narrator and, by extension, the novel's narratological aim, which was crucial once understanding the novel as Modernist: when the narrator is understood not as a source of perversion or as a reflection of autofiction, the novel unwraps its complexity and intentions.

Although the Edwardian period was too short in time to define any possible literary movement attached to it, this characteristic enhances the peculiarity of this period: a sudden hinge between the traditional heritage of Victorianism and a quick encounter with the modernist incomes of a society in change. This is precisely what *P&W* explores when its stylistic experimentation is fused with the traditional aspects we can find in the text. By reflecting on and revisiting some classic (Victorian and fairytale) iconography and characterisation and nourishing them with the complexity and unreliable, multi-perspective narratives of Modernism, the reader witnesses a clash between these two worlds.

Considering *Peter and Wendy* (1911) not as a fairy tale but rather as a "pseudo-fairy tale" implies a better understanding of the contrast between what is expected from Children's literature and what the novel truly offers. This text, although it uses fairytale iconography, satirises those images and characters in order to highlight the encounter between the two cultural and historical eras. Moreover, the many Victorian characterisations slowly move

towards the cultural demands of the new century, thus exposing the dichotomies that this clash implies. Even though the Modernist movement was not clearly defined in 1911, there are already traces of the innovative techniques that the early-20th century movement used in literature and art.

The narratological study of *Peter and Wendy* has become the most direct approach to defending the novel as Modernist: the complexity of the narrator and the many innovative techniques that are present throughout the text purely outline some Modernist novel traits: multiple focalisers, change of perspectives, unreliable narrators, and multiplicity of styles. The layers of complexity in the text defy the previous narratological conventions inherited from Victorianism and classic fairy tales, even though it uses them to contrast its style.

As a whole, *Peter and Wendy* is not only Modernist in its narratological style and complexity of the narrative voice but also in its complexity in revisiting previous literary genres and characteristics for the purpose of reaching its contextual goal: describe the Edwardian period. The analysis of the text under my hypothesis surfaces many of the novel's contradictory uses of tradition and modernity: for instance, observing Victorian characters that slowly move towards modern behaviours, understanding the narrative voice as constantly entering and escaping the action, or observing oral style mixed with narrative features. When these contradictions are understood as techniques that the narrator purposely uses in order to highlight historical contrast. Therefore, I can conclude that *Peter and Wendy* has enough proof to be considered a well-defined Modernist novel.

All of these analyses and conclusions in relation to the novel have led to a common redefinition of the text: *Peter and Wendy* is a Modernist novel that retells and uses Victorian and fairy tale traditions in order to highlight how modernity affected previous literary and cultural implications.

P&W is, moreover, an exercise in literary retrospectives and revisitings, which might be the reason behind defining it as Children's Literature or as a fairy tale. The novel is, in fact, a pseudo-Children's Literature witten through some of the most Modernist technique innovations. It is both Victorian in character and Modernist, a fairy tale and a reformulation of it, and a novel and a play at the same time. As for the narrator, they are inside and outside the action, they are reliable and unreliable, and one of the many focalisers of the story.

❦

Personally, I had to develop a very critical reading and analysis style in favour of analysing the text outside the plot and away from any possible Author-based approach. Barthe's "The Death of the Author" has been a key theoretical background in order to give birth to an active readership, be able to analyse beyond the structures of the text (fairy tale iconography, Victorian characters, etc.), and embrace both innovation and tradition as two unified narrative strategies. My approach was possible thanks to my previous detachment from psychoanalytic and Author-based studies of the novel.

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