



Female gender roles in *Peter and Wendy* from a Feminist perspective

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Abstract

This study is a literary analysis of J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*, which focuses on how Wendy and her mother are described and what actions and behaviors are applied to them. A clear gender-difference is presented, where the female characters move in the domestic realms. The analytical approach is based upon Deborah Madsen's description of socialist feminism as well as psychoanalytic feminism and Carol Gilligan's idea of morality of responsibility complemented by Ann Alston's description of family in the early twentieth century. Using these theories my study shows that the patriarchal gender-norms of society are evident in every part of the novel.

Keywords: gender-roles, power in relationships, morality of responsibility, feminist

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Introduction

The story of Peter Pan and the Lost Boys in Neverland is a widely known children's tale that, despite being written in 1911, still is popular today. Many children enjoy the story of the boy that never grows up and all his male friends on the island called Neverland. The original title however, written by J. M. Barrie, was *Peter and Wendy*. This literary analysis will focus on Wendy, how she is presented and what message the novel has to the boys and girls that read the story today of how girls should be and act. I will also include Wendy's mother Mrs. Darling in my analysis since she is a great influence on Wendy. I will be searching for gender-specific descriptions of the character's behavior with the aid of socialist feminist theory. Socialist feminism bases the theory on the roles assigned to women separated from class, such as housewife, mother, sister, mistress and so on, which I find applicable since Wendy and her mother certainly are described as middle-class, but in Neverland there is no class system of that kind described. I will also explore the ideas of family and the roles within the family assigned to females, daughter and mother, and female identity development, using psychoanalytic feminism. The ideas of Carol Gilligan how female identity development can be seen as 'morality of responsibility' and how nurturance and care is the context in which it is formed. I will use Ann Alston's description of the "Turn of the Century Family" to provide historical context for my discussion, since the novel written in 1911 describes society at that time. Alston speaks of domesticity and the central role family has in children's literature and the security it brings to children. Even though children are given freedom without adults they seek the structure of family and the happy ending of reuniting with their parents.

The thesis of this essay is that Wendy, as a girl, is given a much narrower scope than the boys to behave, that there are roles designated to her that she willingly takes due to her female identity development, and other roles that she does not play, parts seen as male or masculine. Wendy, being a child, is intrigued by the adventure of going to Neverland with mermaids, fairies and pirates, but what tips the scale making her agree to follow Peter Pan is that his Lost Boys are in need of a mother. Barrie takes a female child and makes it look like she is going on an adventure, but the adventure is actually giving her the part to act as an adult woman. In the novel Wendy acts the part of a hostess, a seamstress, a mother, housewife and a storyteller. All parts suited for

well-behaved female characters. Other actions as for example fighting pirates are not suitable and she does not take an active part in activities of that kind.

My essay will show that this novel helps to confirm patriarchal ideals and female oppression which will affect young boys and girls of today still reading this story introducing them to role-models and ideas that feminists have been trying to change for a long time.

Primary literature

J.M. Barrie originally wrote about Peter Pan in a play, titled *Peter Pan*, which premiered in London 1904. The script to the play is what the novel *Peter and Wendy* is based upon, but it was not published until 1911 (Lane 2004). Since the premiere of the play and publication of the novel about the boy who never grew up, they have been released in countless editions, for example: plays, movies, picture books among others. I have chosen to work with only the original novel *Peter and Wendy* for the benefit of a narrow scope.

The story *Peter and Wendy* is told by a narrator who tells the story about the middle-class Darling children, Wendy, John and Michael and the adventurous boy Peter Pan, his friends the Lost Boys, the fairy Tinkerbell and many other characters on the island called Neverland. The story begins when Peter Pan flies in to the Darling children's nursery looking for his shadow and continues with the children accompanying Peter Pan to Neverland, mainly to bring Wendy there to tell stories to and mother the Lost Boys. In the end one of Wendy's stories make the children long for home so much that they decide to go back home to their parents, which they do, bringing all the Lost Boys with them and eventually all grow up.

Peter and Wendy is regarded as a part of Edwardian fiction. The Edwardian era is seen as the time between the austere Victorian era and World War I and is described as "the Golden Age of Children's Literature" (Petzold 33) where many stories that were published revolved round the conflict between the progressive and static (Wilk 2012). *Peter and Wendy* works well within the theme with Peter Pan refusing to grow up and therefore remaining static. While the world around him, with Wendy in the front, evolves and moves progressively forward. In this era the child could be described as an adventurous imaginative individual as well as a well-bred

domesticated child within familial settings (Geer 145). At first glance the story *Peter and Wendy* revolves primarily around Peter Pan, and his adventures on the island called Neverland, but with a closer reading the reader finds that Wendy, the well-bred middle-class child, and a girl, plays a significant role in the story and is perhaps the character that develops the most, which makes her part in the novel an interesting part to analyze. The part Wendy plays is both domestic and adventurous fitting well to Geer's description of the child in the Edwardian era.

Secondary literature

To aid my analysis I have looked at other academic work written on Barrie's novel. Most academic work on Barrie's tale of Neverland focuses on the play and different editions of it. Furthermore I found that work written on *Peter and Wendy* also focuses on Peter Pan rather than Wendy and most often in a psychological point of view examining his unwillingness to grow up and his complex relations to adulthood.

I found one dissertation on the topic of gender norms that was valuable to my research, Avery Erratt Jones' "Boys need girls: Gender norms from nineteenth-century boys' periodicals to 'Peter and Wendy'" where his focus is mainly on boyhood and manliness but he argues that femininity is an essential part in creating manly boyhood. This femininity is Wendy's part and his descriptions of her and the domestic roles she takes on is of value to my research. I have also used Jennifer Lee Geer's dissertation "The Fantasy of Home: Victorian Children's Fantasy Fiction and the Domestic" where she discusses how home and domesticity play a considerable part in novels, despite the fact that the novels take place in fantasy worlds, which is convenient for my research analyzing the female character's actions.

I have also had great use of Ann Alston's *The Family in English Children's Literature* especially her description of families at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century seeing as the novel was written at the time. Alston dedicates the later part of chapter two to the Darling family and the children's adventure in Neverland. She describes how important family and home were in stories from the time period and it is clearly shown in Barrie's novel. Even though the children set off on an adventure, the sanctity and structure of home is of importance.

Some articles on Barrie's work and children's literature have been helpful to my research as well: Theresa J. Fitzpatrick's "Sacred Kisses and Profane Thimbles: Dual Feminine Identity in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*" in which she discusses Wendy's part as pretend wife to Peter Pan who in reality rather wants her to mother him as she does the Lost Boys. Also Dieter Pertzold's article "A Race Apart: Children in the Late Victorian and Edwardian Children's Books" where he discusses how children were described in the time period of Barrie's novel especially children's development into adulthood which I found helpful in describing Wendy.

Anthony Lane does in his "Lost Boys" give historical background to Barrie and his works which helped me in describing my primary literature. Even though some of these books and articles do not specifically address gender roles in *Peter and Wendy*, which is the main focus of my study, they are relevant as secondary sources for my study. Regarding my research on Wendy and Mrs. Darling I am not aware of any study mainly focusing on them at this point. In addition to literature on gender roles and children's literature I have read literature that provides theoretical tools for my analysis which will be examined in section 3.

Socialist feminism, gender and class

As a theoretical approach I have chosen to work with the concept of the nature of power in relationships, one of the theories of socialist feminism. According to Deborah Madsen "socialist feminism is concerned with the roles allocated to women that are independent of class status (mother, sister, housewife, mistress, consumer and reproducer)" (184), which makes it a useful tool when analyzing female characters in the novel. Both Wendy and her mother take on and act out several of these roles, mother being the most obvious role. Socialist feminism marks capitalism as a major fact in women's oppression since the labor women do, within and outside of the home, is not valued as high as the work of men, which leads to women being dependent of men. The labor women do within the home, such as cooking, cleaning and other forms of housework, as well as giving birth to and raising children, is supporting men and permitting them to work outside home. Even though women are not being paid for their work in the home, it is a form of production and contributes to society at large in the way that it lets men work, as well as raising new male citizens that will work in the

future (Madsen 185). There is an idealized picture of the family where the nurturing mother is socializing the children within the family away from the chaotic world, but this picture only camouflages the patriarchal system within the family. Family and home cannot be seen as an intimate secure domain excluded from and unaffected by society, especially since its patriarchal structure actually is a reflection of society. This ideology of family structure is shared by both men and women and will keep reinforcing women's oppression as long as it continues being as it is. The idealized picture of the family only camouflages the oppressive power it wields (Madsen 189).

When looking at family structure it is important to keep in mind that *Peter and Wendy* is set in both England and Neverland. The Darling family, living in England, is described as a middle-class family with a clear patriarchal structure with Mr. Darling as head of the family and Mrs. Darling as the devoted wife and caring mother standing by his side. Neverland on the other hand has a completely different power structure between the Lost Boys, the Indians, the pirates and the beasts and so on. Yet as soon as the Darling children arrive there is evidence of a patriarchal structure. When Wendy is introduced to the lost boys Peter Pan calls her their mother (Barrie 62) and he is their presumed father. Wendy, Peter Pan and the lost boys form a type of family, and according to Madsen, "family is an important instrument of socialization where we learn to adopt particular postures in relation to the patriarchal power structure" (185), meaning learning who has the dominant or male positions and who has subordinate or female positions. The family structure Wendy and her brothers have grown up with is applied by them when they arrive in Neverland and Wendy, as a good mother, teaches everyone to act accordingly.

Psychoanalytic feminism, gender and consciousness

In my analysis of *Peter and Wendy* I will look at Wendy acting like and perhaps becoming a woman and also Mrs. Darling, already being a woman, to try to explain how this female identity is formed. To aid my analysis I will use psychoanalytic feminist theory, mainly Carol Gilligan's idea of 'morality of responsibility'. In patriarchal binary logic there are always opposites complementing each other; man-woman, strength-weakness, masculine-feminine, one superior of the other. This causes difficulties when examining female identity formation since qualities describing female

values always are on the inferior side of the scale seeing as the masculine side is the norm (Madsen 96). This could lead to the conclusion that women fail to develop since they cannot follow the human (masculine) norm (100). Psychoanalytic feminist Carol Gilligan disagrees with this claim and, when talking about the development of identity and moral values she explains that “The development of male identity and moral values is represented as universal and objective rather than particular and masculine” (101). When representing the masculine values as universal the female experience will consequently be “presented as characterised by weakness, confusion, self-doubt” (101). Gilligan does not treat the idea of binary logic as wrong, but she seeks to ascribe more value to the female aspect. Gilligan argues that female qualities does not have to be interpreted as moral weakness. Women need to establish intimacy with a man for support and need thus to be mindful of his needs. A woman, when caring for and nurturing her children, also has to be aware of their needs. When listening to voices other than her own and minding the needs of others, female qualities can be seen as moral strength. Gilligan argues that female judgment, which earlier has been defined as confusion and hesitation to judge others, therefore should be described within “the context of feminine nurturance and care” (101). This leads to Gilligan suggesting a female approach to morality she names ‘morality of responsibility’. This is better fitting for female identity forming since female identity is “awakened in a relationship of identity with another person” (101). The priority of this female moral voice is on taking care of people and nurturing relationships, in contrast to the male moral voice concerned with justice being upheld. Applying Gilligan’s theory to the characters Wendy and her mother will give a more profound understanding of their actions and aid me in attaining a deeper analysis.

Family in the beginning of the twentieth century

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were many women campaigning for female emancipation and the women’s movement grew stronger. Still there was slow change in how the heroines in children’s tales were allowed to act at the time (Alston 44). The heroines in the books were allowed to perhaps temporarily have a touch of freedom or experience some adventure, but in the end they had to fall back on their domestic roles. The action of going back to domesticity ultimately lead to the stories’

happy endings (Alston 44). This according to Alston was to ensure that the ideal of family was not threatened and young girls, the future mothers, follow the path society needs them to follow, as she puts it “The child-heroine is destined to develop into a mother and in reiterating this pattern children’s literature naturalises families in which women adhere to traditional domestic archetypes” (44). This shows that family is the ideal happy ending for any child heroine. Whether it is the child’s biological family or substitute family is not important as long as the norms are followed and girls continue learning domestic values from their caring mothers. By picturing family in this conservative and traditional way the patriarchal family structure continues to influence children through literature.

In Neverland Peter and Wendy play make-believe home in which Wendy is the mother and Peter is the father. Wendy plays the part of the submissive wife well, as Barrie writes “she was far too loyal a housewife to listen to any complaints against father. ‘Father knows best,’ she always said, whatever her private opinion must be.” (94). Wendy knows that the mother has to listen to the father and keep her opinions to herself since the father is the breadwinner supporting the family. This structure is what she has been taught by her parents back in England and it is this structure she will teach her own children in both Neverland and in the future.

Being the mother also gives her strength since it is an elevated position in the family compared to the children. The children build her a house and Peter watches over her at night while she is sleeping to protect her and by this Barrie creates what Fitzpatrick calls “a picture of domestic bliss” (Fitzpatrick 14). The picture of the happy family gives an illusion that directs attention away from the patriarchal structure that is in play as well as supporting patriarchy through its structure.

All stories come to an end and so does *Peter and Wendy* as well, and the children leave their make-believe home in Neverland and return to their parents in England. The Darling children return to their biological parents and they bring the six Lost Boys with them that Mr. and Mrs. Darling gladly adopt as their own and raise them to be hard working responsible adults. A typical happy ending in an early twentieth century children’s tale.

Peter and Wendy from a socialist feminist perspective

In *Peter and Wendy* roles like mother, sister, and housewife are applied to Wendy and her mother Mrs. Darling. Mrs. Darling is the role model to Wendy, the woman she looks up to and mimics in her actions in Neverland but also in England when she plays with her brothers. This is of course is the proper pattern for female gender roles to be taught, from mother to daughter.

Mrs. Darling is described as a “lovely lady” (9) that many men fell in love with but luckily Mr. Darling was the one who “nipped in first” (10). She is a woman who both loves and respects her husband and when Wendy is born listens to him while he calculates whether they can keep her or not despite wanting to “risk it” (10). She has wanted a baby so dearly that she does not care about expenses and costs. She loves all her three children greatly and tucks them in at night, reading them bedtime stories or singing to them and leaving the night lights on if they have bad dreams as she sits by the fire sewing watching them sleep. Mrs. Darling is of course called mother by Mr. Darling and the children just as Mr. Darling is called father by both children and wife. This way of addressing each other Wendy takes after in Neverland where she becomes mother and Peter Pan father.

The description of Mrs. Darling displays many of the gender roles socialist feminism are concerned with. Since Mr. Darling is the provider of the family, Mrs. Darling has to wait his decision to keep or not keep Wendy and the other children when they are born. Her opinion does not seem to matter. Since she is dependent on him and the money his work brings to the family, she has to put up with his temper and his final word in every matter concerning the family. This is seen as a normal pattern of behavior in stories depicting relations between men and women, and within the relationship it is natural “for women to sacrifice themselves so that their men may benefit” (Madsen 187). Wendy and Mrs. Darling both take a step back letting the men be in charge and decide, whether they agree or not, thereby sacrificing their own voices of opinion in order to have a peaceful domestic life.

The family is an important place for teaching humans their role in society. Wendy needs her mother to teach her a woman’s place in the family so that she can teach the Lost Boys the roles in a family, when she acts as their mother in Neverland, as well as the place she will take in a family in England when she is a grown up woman.

In this way, the family becomes a powerful force of socialisation for both men and women. The family produces individuals who have internalised society's hierarchical relations by defining themselves, and being defined, according to the structure of patriarchal capitalist relations. So the role of the family is ideological as well as economic, under capitalism. (Madsen 189).

The Darling family is structured out of a patriarchal system and this family structure is passed on from Mrs. Darling to Wendy reassuring the patriarchal structure will be kept for future generations. Despite being on an adventure in Neverland Wendy still has a gender-specific role to play according to the hierarchical relations her mother and society has taught her during her childhood. This structure is what she continues to live by herself when she acts as a mother to the Lost Boys in Neverland.

Even before Peter Pan has entered the children's lives, Neverland is in their imagination. Wendy's fantasies of Neverland are described with domestic values compared to her brothers' with a house of leaves and an abandoned pet wolf to nurture (13). When Peter Pan eventually shows up it is because he has lost his shadow, which Mrs. Darling has put away in a drawer, and he is trying to glue it back with soap when Wendy wakes up. She thinks he is quite stupid trying to glue with soap "How exactly like a boy!" (28) since she, as a girl, obviously knows it has to be sown back to stick, but instead of scolding him for it she remembers that she is the hostess and lets it pass. By doing so Wendy teaches the reader that a good girl always shows good behavior when having visitors.

When Peter Pan begins to talk about Neverland, fairies and mermaids Wendy finds it very attracting. Peter also explains that the reason he was outside the Darling children's window was to hear the bedtime stories Mrs. Darling told. Wendy explains to Peter that she knows all these stories and he then wants her to come with him to tell the Lost Boys stories, tuck them in at night, darn their clothes and make them pockets since there are no girls or mothers in Neverland (35). Peter Pan lures her away on an adventure where there are mermaids and fairies but the main reason Peter Pan wants Wendy to go there is to mother the Lost Boys. In Neverland when Peter Pan

reunites with the Lost Boys he says “I have brought at last a mother for you all” (62) making clear his reason for Wendy being in Neverland. Wendy agrees to be their mother as soon as she sees the Lost Boys, even though she is “only a little girl” (68). This shows that she is aware of her age and that being a mother in reality requires a grown up woman but since she is on an adventure in Neverland mothering is a part she can play. She begins her motherly adventure by telling the Lost Boys the bedtime story of Cinderella before she tucks them in for the night (68).

Wendy settles in in the Lost Boys “home under the ground” (70) and begins her motherly chores. These chores involves washing clothes, cooking, sewing and darning worn down clothing and stockings. The boys give her so much to do that she sometimes does not even get out of the house. She even proclaims being envious of spinsters “Oh dear, I am sure I sometimes think spinsters are to be envied” (71) although with her face beaming showing that her envy is not sincere and that she enjoys her part as mother. When reading this we are taught that girls enjoy domestic chores even though it can be hard work from time to time. When the Lost Boys call upon Wendy they call her mother and she speaks to them as her children, Peter Pan is the father even though he is not quite satisfied with that role since his feelings for Wendy is more like feelings of “a devoted son” (97), this showing Wendy’s role as mother to all boys in Neverland including Peter Pan.

Since Wendy is caught up in domestic chores she does not have time to join Peter Pan and the boys on all the adventures they take on and when she does her motherly rules put them in danger, like when she insists on the Lost Boys resting for half an hour after their midday meal and they almost get blindsided by pirates (76-78). This tells the reader that girls are not suited for dangerous adventure and if they join in on an adventure things can go terribly wrong. When Wendy and the Lost Boys are captured by Captain Hook and his pirates Wendy’s part is as spectator tied to the mast and when Peter Pan releases her she hides not fighting any pirate.

Wendy, of course, had stood by taking no part in the fight, though watching Peter with glistening eyes; but now that all was over she became prominent again. She praised them equally, and shuddered delightfully when Michael showed her the place where he had killed one; and then

took them into Hook's cabin and pointed to his watch which was hanging on a nail. It said 'half-past-one'!

The lateness of the hour was almost the biggest thing of all. She got them to bed in the pirates' bunks pretty quickly, you may be sure; all but Peter, who strutted up and down the deck, until at last he fell asleep by the side of Long Tom. He had one of his dreams that night, and cried in his sleep for a long time, and Wendy held him tight. (138).

There is clearly difference in what parts a girl takes in adventure compared to boys and fighting pirates is not suitable for girls, since Wendy stands idle on the side while the boys are fighting. When the fight is over she reenters and takes her role as mother and praises each child the same amount, being impressed with what they did and quickly, seeing the lateness of the hour, putting them to bed. Later at night when Peter Pan finally falls asleep and has nightmares Wendy mothers him and holds him tight to give him comfort. This shows, yet again, that Wendy acts like a mother to all boys, including Peter Pan. It is evident that parts suitable for girls are those of nurturing and caring and more adventurous and dangerous parts are not suitable for girls.

In the beginning of *Peter and Wendy* it seems that Peter Pan and the Lost Boys are not familiar with the hierarchical structure of oppressing women and this difference is even more obvious in interaction with the Darling children. When Peter Pan first meet Wendy he says that "one girl is more use than twenty boys" (Barrie 30) and the reason there are no girls in Neverland is because "girls, you know, are much too clever to fall out of their prams" (33) which gives the impression of Peter Pan putting women above men in contrary to the patriarchal system in society. Peter Pan also claims that if Wendy were to follow him to Neverland and meet the Lost Boys "how we should all respect you" (35) since she is a girl and hence much better than a boy. Wendy finds this view amusing since she is used to the opposite which she also explains by telling Peter what her brother thinks of girls "John there just despises us" (33). When the Darling children land in Neverland and Wendy's brothers meet the Lost Boys the difference is also very evident. Michael says "let us wake her and get her to make supper for us" (64) since she is their sister and a girl it is her role to make food for them. John and Michael get really confused by the Lost Boys swarming round Wendy

building her a house and they are sincerely surprised to hear Curly explain to them that “we are her servants” (65) whereby they ask “Why, she is only a girl” (65). In their world they are boys, future men, and Wendy as a girl should be the one who is the servant making them supper. This could lead to the impression that Neverland is a society without any clear structure but the continuing story shows that it is not the case. The Lost Boys quickly adapt to the order of relationships introduced by the Darling children. This teaches the reader that the natural order of relationships is the patriarchal structure and places and people lacking this structure can easily adapt when exposed to it. Peter Pan is the patriarch in Neverland setting up the rules which everyone in his family follow and Wendy’s part is, as I have shown earlier, as housewife and caring mother exactly like the gender roles for a female character are set up back in England. This means that Barrie’s story only misleads the reader to think that patriarchal gender structure does not apply in Neverland. Peter Pan needs a mother, a woman in Neverland and when Wendy returns to her mother in England Mrs. Darling and Peter Pan come to an agreement that Wendy will go to Neverland “every year to do his spring cleaning” (151). When Wendy grows up, gets married and has a daughter of her own it is she that follows Peter Pan to Neverland for spring cleaning, hence continuing the patriarchal structure and female role created when Wendy first went to Neverland.

Peter and Wendy from a psychoanalytic feminist perspective

The first thing we are told in the novel *Peter and Wendy* is that Wendy knows she has to grow up and has known since she was two years old (Barrie 9). This gives the reader the indication that parts of the story will reflect on Wendy’s evolving from child to adult., foretelling that the book is not only going to deal with childhood but also “about the necessity, and the difficulty, of growing up” (Petzold 36). As we follow Wendy through the story and the adventures she takes on, we also follow her development towards becoming a woman. She leaves her home in England as a young girl on her way to an adventure in Neverland where much of her adventure consists of domestic chores and raising children.

Mrs. Darling is in the beginning described as the most charming and joyous in the Darling family filled with childish joy, until Peter Pan comes and takes her children to Neverland, then her joyous character fades as she sits night after night

hoping that he will bring them back to her. When the children disappear from home, Mrs. Darling is devastated, but she still keeps their beds aired and the window open for when they come back (141) a symbol of a mother's devoted love for her children. As she sleeps every night in an armchair in the children's room moving her hand "restlessly on her breast as if she had a pain there" (142) demonstrating the pain she feels for losing her children. She becomes a mother in a childless home bereaved of her dear children. This makes the Darling home a cheerless place until the children, thankfully, return and Mrs. Darling revives to a cheerful woman again (Fitzpatrick 21).

It is Mrs. Darling that teaches Wendy, using Gilligan's term, 'morality of responsibility' (Madsen 101), how to put the care for one self to the side in favor for care for others, and also learn to compromise and find solutions for the benefit of relations. This is not described in the text by Mrs. Darling telling Wendy what to do and not to do. Mrs. Darling shows female actions by being for example a good wife, mother and housewife, actions that Wendy later imitates when she is a mother. Mrs. Darling's motherly love is a certainty to Wendy in Neverland when she tells the Lost Boys the story of her mother "there is the window still standing open. Ah, now we are rewarded for our sublime faith in a mother's love [...] So great indeed was their faith in a mother's love" (Barrie 101) and of course the window is open when they return home and Mrs. Darling welcomes all children with love.

Becoming a woman or identifying as a woman in a psychoanalytic feminist point of view is something a female does in relations with other persons (Madsen 101). Wendy's development into a woman after leaving her mother's care is in relationship primarily with Peter Pan but also the Lost Boys. Wendy cares for and nurtures the boys domestically by feeding them and giving them clean clothes but she also nurtures Peter Pan when he has nightmares and holds him through the night. When the Lost Boys are captured by pirates and the pirates ask the boys to join them Wendy's education is shone through "I don't think my mother would like me to be a pirate" (Barrie 125) and it is evident that Wendy in relation with the boys have developed into a good mother teaching them good moral values. The Lost Boys are aware of Wendy's female judgment and 'morality of responsibility' and use it when speaking to the pirates, as Barrie writes "he [a Lost Boy] knew that mothers alone are always willing to be the buffer. All children know this about mothers" (125) meaning it is acceptable to

use the mother and her opinions as an excuse not to behave badly. A mother can accept being the scapegoat for the good of the family. The boys have also been taught the value of responsibility and behaving well for the sake of their relation with Wendy, their mother.

When Wendy leaves for Neverland she is a young girl and even though she takes on domestic responsibilities she is also a girl wanting to have an adventure which she actively decides to take part in when she decides to follow Peter Pan. Every day in Neverland is not filled with cooking and cleaning. There are also adventures which she takes part in. In his dissertation Jones presents an adequate description of this duality;

Wendy does indeed participate in the boys' adventures outside the domestic sphere. She also makes decisions on her own, as when she chooses to go to Neverland and takes the lead in bringing her brothers with her. Although Wendy purposefully follows many nineteenth-century middle-class gender norms, especially concerning motherhood, she also has agency (60).

Wendy is not a passive character that is forced into domestic chores by patriarchal values, she makes the decision to leave England and follow Peter Pan. When she does her domestic chores and complains about them she does it in a glow showing she actually does not mind doing them. But the fact that Wendy likes her gendered tasks does not change the obvious, that the novel displays conservative and traditional views on roles suitable for girls. Wendy is taught these tasks by her mother and does not know anything else. Therefore she is obviously happy doing them as they make her like her mother, which is the path of developing in to a woman. The description of Wendy as a heroine joining the adventure but also holding on to gender specific roles also fits well with how Alston describes young heroines in children's literature round the turn of the century. The heroine is allowed to have adventure and freedom as long as she in the end comes back to domesticity (Alston 44).

Eventually Wendy grows out of Neverland. In the end she has had enough adventure and begins to miss her mother as well as realize that the game has to end. She

does not want her mother to forget about her and her brothers and she also realizes that she and her brothers are beginning to forget about their parents which she wants to prevent. To become a woman Wendy needs to be with her family. In the end of the novel Wendy shows awareness of that when she decides it is time to go back home. This development is not described as something negative, Barrie writes “You need not be sorry for her. She was one of the kind that likes to grow up. In the end she grew up of her own free will a day quicker than other girls” (152). Growing up is part of life and a journey every child has to make eventually. Petzold presents a striking explanation to Wendy’s growth;

It is she who rescues the boys from the never-never-world of selfishness and irresponsibility. She is able to do this not because she is the oldest of the three Darling children, but because she is a girl, programmed by nature to be a mother, she may be as gay and innocent as the others, but is never heartless. The idea of adult responsibility, of man as a moral being, wins in the end, if only by a narrow margin. Wendy takes a leave of childhood (36)

Wendy, a girl with a sense of ‘morality of responsibility’ understands when it is time to return home. She takes responsibility for the well-being of the boys and herself as well as the relationship between them and their parents, that they are about to lose. She makes sure all the boys return with her on the journey home. By doing so she begins her own journey developing into and becoming a woman.

In the last chapter of the novel the reader meets Wendy as a grown-up woman with a child, daughter, of her own, quite like Mrs. Darling at the beginning of the story. One night when she sits in the nursery watching her daughter sleep Peter Pan comes through the window to call for her to come to spring cleaning. It is clear that there is still a part of the girl Wendy inside her “Something inside her was crying ‘Woman, woman, let go of me’” (Barrie 155) and this part still wishes she could fly away with him back to Neverland. During their conversation she explains to Peter that she has grown up and is a married woman even though she promised him not to and the reader understands that she is content with being adult “She was not a little girl heart-

broken about him; she was a grown woman smiling at it all, but they were wet smiles” (156). She sheds some tears over the fact that she no longer is a girl but she is satisfied. Instead of Wendy flying away to spring cleaning her daughter takes her place since Peter Pan still needs a mother. Thus, in the final lines of the novel the reader understands that this continues through generations of Wendy’s descendants flying away to be Peter Pans’ mother, helping him with spring cleaning, continuing to teach the daughters to become good mothers. By this the novel underscores that it is a woman’s job to take care of Peter Pan. It further shows the boys and girls reading the book conservative gender roles.

Conclusion

Analyzing how Wendy and Mrs. Darling are portrayed in the novel my research has shown that there are actions and behavior described as more suitable for women and other actions not suitable, following patriarchal gender norms in society. The novel displays conservative gender roles for women that mostly contain domestic chores, like cooking, cleaning, mending clothes and raising children. Wendy is also portrayed with more restrictive ways of behaving. She has to be aware of her behavior so that she, for example, acts as a perfect hostess. She also has the duty to make sure that the other children does not neglect important things, like eating and sleeping at the proper time. This responsibility makes Wendy’s role more restricted and she is not allowed to be a careless child just playing around with her friends not minding any adult responsibilities.

My secondary sources have also aided me in finding and describing the gender roles in Barrie’s novel. Firstly, using Ann Alston’s description of how heroines was illustrated in the early twentieth century, it shows that Wendy clearly fits the mold since she, as a heroine, decides to go on an adventure, albeit with pretense of mothering, to temporarily experience the freedom boys can have, as long as she falls back on her domestic role in the end. I found that Barrie makes it look like Wendy is going on an adventure with Peter Pan and her brothers, but the adventure is actually giving her the part to act as an adult woman.

Secondly, analyzing power structures using socialist feminist theory, it is clear that the patriarchal structure with a male head of the family whose rules the wife

and children follow is evident in England when the Darling family is described, Mr. Darling the breadwinner and Mrs. Darling the devoted wife and loving mother. I found that this power structure also is applied in Neverland, even though it is a place of make-believe. There Wendy is the mother occupied with domestic chores while Peter Pan takes the boys out on dangerous adventures improper for girls. If Wendy is accompanying the boys on an adventure she does not take part in rough masculine behavior, like for instance killing pirates.

Thirdly, the novel shows Wendy growth into becoming a woman. This she does by watching and mimicking her mother. Wendy displays the female moral development described by Gilligan as 'morality of responsibility'. This morality is developed in relation with others while listening and being mindful of their needs, often in the context of female nurturing and care. Wendy cares for and fosters morality in the Lost Boys and Peter Pan just as her mother cared for and nurtured her and in the end her involvement is what makes her understand that she has to leave Neverland and go back to England and grow up.

The novel thereby ends with the children going back to England to their parents and adulthood. Peter Pan strikes a deal with Mrs. Darling assuring him a mother's help with spring-cleaning one week every spring. This mother is at first Wendy but as she grows up and becomes a married woman with a daughter of her own, this child becomes the mother. This arrangement continues on for generations reassuring the survival of patriarchal gender-norms in Neverland and making sure there is always a girl ready to become a mother to Peter Pan.

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