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# Leaving Neverland for Narnia: Childhood and Gender in Peter Pan, The Secret Garden, and The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe

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Leaving Neverland for Narnia: Childhood and Gender in

*Peter Pan, The Secret Garden, and*

*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*

Calabria Turner

A thesis submitted to the Georgia College and State University Department of English

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English

Georgia College and State University

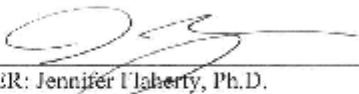
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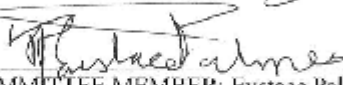
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HAVE APPROVED THIS THESIS

**EXPLORATIONS OF CHILDHOOD AND GENDER IN  
VICTORIAN AND POST-WAR BRITISH  
CHILDREN'S NOVELS**

By

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## Introduction:

## Aspects of Childhood – The Little Grownups of England

British gender expectations are often epitomized in mature adults, either in society or within novels, but in *Peter Pan*, *The Secret Garden*, and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* gender roles are interpreted by the child protagonists. J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* inhabits the world of the Neverland, but the gender roles of Victorian England follow them from London to the home below the tree where Peter, Wendy, her brothers, and the Lost Boys reside in a pseudo-domestic sphere. Peter often engages in literal discussion of what it means to become an English man, while Wendy lives out a woman's motherly responsibilities happily to perfection. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* also engages with these Victorian roles in combination with the influence of the Romantic ideals of children, set up and furthered in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the Edwardian period. Her novel reveals the interplay between experiencing the best of Romantic ideals as a child and how those ideals come to influence affectively living out the era's domestic gender requirements as adults. C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* propels the conversation forward into the World Wars. Through a broadened sense of morality and nationalism, the children's interplay with gender roles encompasses values more prominent in the British society of the wartime periods. Barrie, Burnett, and Lewis' novels identify the gender roles expected of men and women's distinctly differing spheres in the times of Victorian to Wartime England through the application of these evolving concepts onto the boy and girl protagonists.

Utilizing the literature of the period, the Victorians perfected an image of the ideal child and what it means to grow-up. Many scholars have discussed the prevalence of adult nostalgia present in children's novels, but this paper will take those ideas further by looking into what

ideas form a child in the literature of an era, specifically the societal beliefs driving the placement of gender norms on the protagonists ranging from Victorian to Wartime England. By discussing the application of societal gender roles onto young children and the expected or realized effects of those roles in their lives, the potential confinement or freedom of the roles is given new realization within the novels. According to prominent Romantic ideals, once the child began to enter into society which coincided with entering into adolescence and adulthood, societal corruption began to set in. These beliefs are upheld in each novel. Societal corruption could come to mean many things: the erosion of imagination by logic, becoming ensnared in the spending and getting of commerce, the encroachment of industrialization on the ideal countryside, embitterment due to life's natural hardships, or the seemingly necessary immersion of self into the immorality of society to fulfill the needs for home and family. Due to the degeneration of self and society, childhood became the nostalgic means of ruminating on one's previous state of purity, a time before the corrupting things were known. These Romantic concepts of the perfected child were carried well into the semi-overlapping Victorian Era, 1837-1901, and forward to the proceeding Edwardian Era, 1901-1910. For example, J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* fights against the antagonizing aspects of adulthood, such as its obligation to conformity and social scrutiny.

Of course, children were not the ones who created the terms and definitions of their idealization. Adults, specifically beginning with the Romantics in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, propagated what many know about Victorian concepts of childhood. The Romantics, such as Wordsworth and Blake, discussed two aspects of life that were exceedingly different: childhood and adulthood. William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, published in 1789, perhaps best exemplify the Romantics' two parts of life, embodied in Blake's "Nurse's Song"

from the *Songs of Innocence*. In childhood there was purity, an inherent innocence only children could possess:

When the voices of the children are heard on the green

And laughing is heard on the hill,

My heart is at rest within my breast

And every thing else is still (1-4).

The poem reflects an adult's nostalgia for the innocence the children's laughter represents. Blake's poem implies the nurse no longer has such an innocent cause for laughing. Simply put, the speaker is incapable of their laughter, because she is an adult. Yet, hearing their joyous laughter, in combination with the natural environment the subjects and speaker are in, temporarily restores the peace the speaker once held when she was a child.

It is important to note fully matured adults were those idealizing childhood, because adults were also the ones creating children's literature, the place where many adult concepts of adulthood and gender expectations were being discussed by the child protagonists of their novels. For the works discussed in this thesis, childhood is where children form the needed skills for their expected gender roles. In each case, the children adopt the gender roles expected of them by society, but only temporarily for Peter Pan. By the end of each novel, the children, whether this is realized by them or not, come to a point where they have to choose whether they will accept their directed role or abdicate the role for perpetual childhood, also known as an unsuccessful form of adulthood. The one who chooses to ignore his or her societal expectations, if not living in the Neverland, will still grow up physically, but will not carry into adulthood the learned societal norms that will ensure their safe conduct into the world about them. For

example, were Colin and Mary from *The Secret Garden* to never throw off their aberrant forms of childhood, they would not find themselves on their ways to successful adulthood. Their aberrant ways are not conducive for either of them to fulfill their roles, and had they not chosen to enter into nature and become positive people, they would become the soured adults the Romantics abhorred.

Through these novels, adults conduct discussions of what it means to be a boy or girl in the early to mid-1900s and what it could mean to ignore societal demands of gender. Yet, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* takes the discussion further. The Pevensie children do have grave decisions ahead of them, but they go further than accepting their domestic gender roles to pondering the moral line their lives will fall within. This does not imply the influence of British society falls away from C. S. Lewis' novel, but actually becomes increasingly prominent due to the influence of World War I and World War II. Through the children's novels, an evolution of gender roles and the place of childhood on the path to maturation is highly noticeable. Childhood in the Neverland is either all or nothing, but in the Garden, nature takes an adoptive role in the evolution of child to adult where its Romantic ideals are needed in order to fulfill one's gender role successfully. In Narnia the lessons and values adopted at that young age are imperatively kept as the child matures into an adult in order to refrain from falling to the corruption society perpetually presents. In both *Peter Pan* and *The Secret Garden*, adulthood inevitably carries adults into the corruption of society, but *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* brings a fuller, more cohesive concept of childhood to the forefront. The discussions in each of these novels convey adapting philosophies on growing up in their corresponding settings with each reflecting the burgeoning awareness children hold about the power of choice in their own lives. Each book



bridges decades of childhood to reflect not only the adapting concepts of maturation but also to inform the readers of the best concepts of childhood are meant to endure into adulthood.

## Chapter, The First

The (Dis)ease of Maturation: J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*

J.M. Barrie simultaneously endorses and flouts the male and female gender roles of Victorian society through his children's novel *Peter Pan*, published in 1911. Peter Pan, Wendy Darling, Captain Hook, and the Lost Boys, John and Michael Darling included, all question the inevitability of growing up, of accepting the gender roles and paths society has dictated each boy and girl should follow. J.M. Barrie takes into consideration the male and female role by placing the expectations of Victorian society onto the children. Whether through play-acting or battling, Peter and Wendy try on their expected roles. In play-acting domesticity, they are able to decide whether their designated function suits their tastes. In battle, the children inherently achieve their expected positions, but the moments of play and make-believe domesticity prior to the battle draw a line between what aspects of the gender roles are to be accepted. The novel analyzes the two differing expectations of femininity and masculinity. Ultimately, the novel rejects the male role and accepts, even exuberantly celebrates, the female role. As Barrie's novel progresses, British gender expectations are explicated on and analyzed through the permanent and temporary inhabitants of the Neverland through concepts of war, Victorian and Edwardian school teachings, and children's literature, all revealing the accuracy of Barrie's insight into English society.

By the time Queen Victoria took the throne in 1819 childhood was an acknowledged and treasured stage of life, making the adolescent protagonists of *Peter Pan* the reasonable characters to question the adult world of Victorian society. The Romantic movement of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century idealized the concept of innocent youthfulness, believing only as children could true innocence be obtained. Such an innate possession of innocence coincides

with Barrie's definition of all little boys and girls as "gay and innocent and heartless" (Barrie 192). According to Jennifer Sattaur, author of *Perceptions of Childhood in the Victorian Fin-de-Sielce*, "it was widely accepted that a shift in the perception of childhood roughly coincided, and was a part of, the Romantic movement," proliferated by such authors as Wordsworth and Blake, who believed "the child [to be] the emblem of innocence and purity, naturally perfect and in need of protection from the corruption of growing up" (4-5). Through this belief childhood was romanticized and idolized by J. M. Barrie. Peter Pan is following exactly the path the Romantics called for; he is retaining his innocence by avoiding the "corruption of growing up." Reminiscing childhood, people are able to recall self before it was tainted by fears, worries, and knowledge of the world at large.

The public's reception of the 1904 play *Peter and Wendy*, later renamed *Peter Pan*, the basis of Barrie's novel, speaks to the restrictions and fears of the Victorian and Edwardian period, respectively ending and beginning with the ascension of King Edward VII to the British throne in 1901. With children interspersed amongst the high-end adult audience, the adults fled maturation as Peter, Wendy, John, and Michael flew to Neverland, thus returning to their childhoods. During the premier of *Peter Pan*, as Peter asked the audience to save Tinker Bell's life by waving their "handkerchiefs and clap[ping] your hands' . . . they were only too willing to throw off their adult guise, recapture childhood," and replied with "such a joyful roar of assent that Nina Boucicault, playing Peter Pan, was temporarily moved to tears" (Chaney 230). Barrie's novel provides the same imaginative avenue for escape, all the while capturing an image of the lifestyle the Victorian and Edwardian people inhabited. Concepts of the restrictive male role are discarded by Peter in relation to the role Barrie and others were reluctant to inhabit, while the female role is accepted and celebrated through Wendy.

The children's novel is also a great avenue for cultural and literary analysis due the simultaneity of the rise of the middle class and the production of children's literature. The increased consumption of the children's novel, its shift from purely didactic themes to fantasy exploration, made the children's novel a new avenue for exploring cultural mores of the era. The Industrial Revolution, corresponding to the Romantic movement and Victorian era, was at full steam by the early 1800s, and subsequently brought on the rise of the middle class. Barrie's personal life was also distinctly touched in the rise of mechanized work. Due to the industrialization of their town, David Barrie's, J. M. Barrie's father, profession as a weaver became obsolete and so he became an accountant, allowing his family's wealth to increase dramatically. The rise of the children's novel also occurred during the time of the Industrial Revolution. Middle class parents were not only able to afford to keep their children from the factories, but they were also able to afford schooling, knick-knacks to decorate the house, and children's novels. Grenby records, "The consumption of non-essential commodities increased hugely in the eighteenth century, and children's books were at the center of this 'consumer revolution'" (9). Other scholars, such as Lisa Chaney, writer of *Hide-and-Seek with Angels, a Life of J.M. Barrie*, and Sattaur note the increase of children protagonists in the novels of the time, the increase in didacticism directed specifically for children in literature, and the increase in the use of fantasy, also specifically noting the Victorian era as the "golden age of literature . . . [when] virtually all the books we think of as a classic of children's literature were written" (Chaney 207 & Sattaur 6). Though many of the lower classes were still unable to receive the needed education to read such children's books, literacy increased during this time, which expanded the market for these books. Perhaps exploiting the middle and upper classes' perceptions of childhood, publishers saw the opportunity to expand the literary market and

increase profits, which lead to the height of children's books. These circumstances combined create the perfect niche for Barrie's *Peter Pan*.

The male role Peter so exuberantly flouts is defined by Mr. Darling and Wendy's interactions with Peter on the Neverland, making Peter the antithesis of the adult Victorian male role. The Victorian male is a logical man with little imagination meant to work in business, suited for the social world, and confined by the need to maintain society's good opinion. As if the following contemplation was the most common thought, soon after Wendy was born "it was doubtful whether they would be able to keep her, as she was another mouth to feed," at least in the opinion of Mr. Darling (Barrie 2). Such hyperbolic logic from Mr. Darling denotes the supercilious amount of logic expected of men. Mr. Darling's feeling for his first child succumbs to the reasoning involved in successfully managing the funds of the household. In regard to earning money, in both the Darling and the Neverland domestic scenes, only the men leave the house for purposes of work. Mrs. Darling and Wendy remain home to attend to children; "Really there were whole weeks when, except perhaps with a stocking [to darn] in the evening, [Wendy] was never above ground" (Barrie 79). Work is household and childrearing duties meant for indoors, unless there is a social outing where a wife would be expected, such as the dinner the Darlings attend on the night of the children's departure. Barrie recreates the functioning male sphere of work and provision. Through Mr. Darling, Barrie also humorously draws attention to the social pressure men endure, example: "Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbors. . . . he sometimes wondered uneasily whether the neighbors talked. He had his position in the city to consider" (Barrie 4-5). Mr. Darling's concern with society's opinion is wrapped around the potential of losing his job. Therefore, should he lose society's esteem, he would lose his job and begin to fail the role he is meant to fill, because he would no longer be

able to provide for his family. According to Simmons, from a young age, children were given materials and lessons “meant to prepare youthful readers to enter a society where strict, even unforgiving, codes governed male and female conduct, and to influence their outlooks” (146). These codes, while instructing the children of the roles they were meant to fill, also ensured the boys and girls novels inhabited “separate fictional worlds [that] were being demarcated with great clarity, each with its own internal laws and its own territory” (Simons 144). The differing spheres are upheld in Wendy’s England and in Peter’s Neverland. Yet, on the Neverland, boys and men alike are able to live at their leisure without society’s constraints.

The demarcations of the male and female sphere, evident even in children’s literature, were authentic to the clearly separate spheres men and women lived within. Maureen Moran, in her book *Victorian Literature and Culture*, states, men “were [believed to be] naturally suited to the active, aggressive, and intellectual domains of public life, including commerce, government and the professions” (35). This predestined role for the male sphere is precisely why Peter ran away as an infant in his pram: “I ran away that day I was born. . . . because I heard father and mother . . . talking about what I was to be when I became a man” (Barrie 28). Free will is immediately taken from him, and what was likely meant to be a harmless discussion between parents, became, to Peter, the tightening of a noose. Manhood, then, is not the epitome of a little boy’s goals, but the fear of losing choice through parental and societal predestination. Linda Robertson, in “Peter Pan in World War One,” writes of Peter,

“His rebellion against modernity, urbanity, and domesticity reflected a dominant strain in both American and British cultural criticism; he offered a fantasy that allowed adults a release from lives constrained by ‘getting and spending’ and into an imaginary world of adventure” (61).

Peter encapsulates British male concerns, and is capable of being such an outlet for those entrapped in society's strictures because he is the embodiment of lightheartedness. Peter is able to fly only because he does not allow himself to become weighed by the concerns of adulthood, going so far as to be unconcerned about how food will be provided for himself and the Lost Boys. Peter is capable of providing sufficient food for Wendy and the Lost Boys, but as he does not like to "stodge just to feel stodgy," to overeat for the sake of eating, he lives on make-believe food. In fact, "Make-believe was so real to him that during a meal you could see him getting rounder," and although "it was trying[,] you simply had to follow his lead" (Barrie 80). Peter lives from his imagination, and does not realize others are incapable of doing so, which leads him to disregard the practicality of nourishment. Such faithfulness to imagination is Peter's method of remaining a young boy.

Without his concerns, without adulthood, Peter is able to retain his imagination, a key component of childhood inevitably lost once maturation sets in. Barrie defines children as "gay and innocent and heartless" (192). Their innocence allows them to take flight, but once the Lost Boys return with Wendy and her brothers to London, they all begin to lose their ability to fly, no longer needing to be tied to their bedposts at night for fear of accidentally flying away. Peter never has to "go to school and learn solemn things," so he is able to remain self-centered and unconcerned with any affair not directly affecting him (Barrie 180). As if to prove Peter's theories of life, the boys, after beginning to attend school and learn the world's solemn things, "could not even fly after their hats," because "they no longer believed" (Barrie 182). Adulthood, manhood, means accepting reality and leaving behind the fun adventures of childish play enabled by creativity and imagination only innocence is capable of stimulating. J. M. Barrie, who was sent away to school, eventually completing a Masters of Arts in Edinburgh, became introduced

to the reality and mechanizations of the world more intimately during his time as a journalist in London (Chaney 50-53). Within a society dictating facts and logic should overlay the forces of imagination and emotion, such as seen with Mr. Darling, there exists a boy, through the imagination of a man in tune with Victorian expectations, who defies enlightened thinking – Peter.

Should Peter be retained inside the hearts of adult men, symbolic of retaining youthfulness of heart, perhaps the masculine role would be less confining, but in *Peter Pan*, the youthful man is nonexistent. Andrew Dowling, in his book *Manliness and the Male Novelist in Victorian Literature*, states, manliness was often drawn in “metaphors of control, reserve, and discipline” (13). As the boys begin to learn the concepts of constraint and reality, their imagination is hampered by society, by the jobs they enter and the responsibilities thereof. Through narration we learn “all the boys were grown up and done for by this time, so it was scarcely worth saying anything more about them” (Barrie 184). As the story only concerns children and the matters of their potential while on the Neverland, the boys are no longer important after allowing themselves to grow up and enter jobs: “that judge in the wig . . . used to be Tootles. The bearded man who doesn’t know any story to tell his children was once John<sup>1</sup>” (Barrie 184). The narration leaves a clear line between the completely different person children turn into once they enter society’s path. The use of “used to be” and “once” ensure readers are aware of the distance and finality between who the boys once were, highlighting the boys’ inability to return to their boyish states. Peter flies because “it is only the gay and innocent and heartless who can fly,” and only Wendy can remember in adulthood the truth of Peter and their

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<sup>1</sup> Emphasis is added to the reader’s sadness when one considers the many stories John should have from his time on the Neverland.



adventures in the Neverland (Barrie 186). Such a difference in the male and female ability to remember into childhood's larks is indicative of the differing spheres and their importance, allowing for concepts of maturation to differ in gender. Masculine maturation, explored through Peter and Capt. Hook, brings forth the possibilities of extracting the boy or man from Victorian expectations.

As if in a literal fight betwixt manhood and boyhood, *Peter Pan's* climax is the battle between Capt. James Hook with his crew, and Peter Pan with the Lost Boys. Capt. Hook variously and in depth contemplates his worth, possession of good form, all the while outrunning a crocodile who ticks as a clock does. Unlike Peter, Capt. Hook is weighed by the decisions of his past and his character, the opposite of narration's definition of children: heartless and gay. Capt. Hook's inner turmoil and ponderings of good form often center around Peter's potential possession of good form, which he indicates on multiple occasions that Peter does have. To be lovable, unaware, and good were the ways to have good form, such as Capt. Hook defines them, for he despises Smee for potentially being lovable without being aware of it (Barrie 147). The worst of Capt. Hook's fight with Peter does not come from a mortal wound, but from the realization that Peter is "the very pinnacle of good form," (164). As if good form can only exist in goodness, indicating Smee would not be a likely candidate or that Smee is truly a better man or more childlike than he believes he is, Peter has good form and Capt. Hook does not. Peter's good form is on best display when he allows Capt. Hook to take equal ground during their fight at the Lagoon. Peter's cry of dismay and unfairness at Hook's ungentlemanlike display after Peter's honourable conduct, indicates Peter's belief in fair fighting amongst enemies, an example of good form. Hook's lack of innocence and joy, his full internment in society, have cleared

away his ability to remain youthful, and thus is fighting the clock of age, a clock Peter is responsible for placing in the crocodile that has a hunger for Capt. Hook.

The parallels of Capt. Hook and Peter extend to their equal decision to abandon Victorian society by living on the Neverland, but Capt. Hook retains bits of England and leads a pirate crew of men. No other females are mentioned having left England in preference of life on the Neverland. Such women who do reside of on the Neverland are mermaids, images of open sexuality and flirtation, and the Indians, readily led by Tiger Lily, a woman of non-English agency and action. These two forms of femininity do not conform to Wendy's representation of ideal British womanhood. The male adults also refuse conformity to masculine gender expectations. Though never given a reason for departure from Victorian society, it is evident the men's lives previous to the Neverland were brutal and immoral: "A more villainous-looking lot never hung in a row on Execution dock" (Barrie 54). Their leader complies with the pirates' non-conformity, but "he had been at a famous public school; and its traditions still clung to him like garments" (Barrie 145). Capt. Hook declares to the Lost Boys that to join his crew "You would have to swear 'Down with the King,'" to which the boys reply with variations of "Rule Britannia" (Barrie 149). Hook's repulsion of the male role extends beyond Peter's and the Lost Boys, for the duration of their stay on the Neverland, extending to complete disavowal of British rule.

Peter and Capt. Hook repulse the British male role, but Hook's divergence has taken the form of immorality, while Peter embraces adventure for goodness. Hook has abdicated British masculinity, but he still retains the social anxieties placed on him during adolescence, i.e. the obsession with good form and cleanliness. The Capt.'s fight with Peter is akin to Hook fighting the life he would rather inhabit. Yet, a similar mirroring occurs with Peter of Hook once the

Capt. has been defeated. Peter contemplates the life of Capt. Hook as a potential path for his own: “The general feeling was that Peter was honest [as captain of the Jolly Roger] just now to lull Wendy’s suspicions” (Barrie 168). Peter further emulates Capt. Hook through a change in clothing, commissioning Wendy to make a “new suit . . . out of some of Hook’s wickedest garments,” which continues to a night “with Hook’s cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which he bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook” (Barrie 149) Peter contemplates Hook’s nefarious life, but likely quickly forgets such a path once he returns the Darling children and the Lost Boys to England, as he often forgets his adventures within days. Peter is given an alternate image of masculinity by Capt. Hook, and just as he mimics domesticity with Wendy, he play-acts the role Capt. Hook represents. Trying on adulthood is as far as Peter is willing to go, and his villainous contemplations are not mentioned further. The assumption is Peter frolics and fights with his usual enthusiasm as he in turn takes Wendy’s daughter and granddaughter to the Neverland. Ultimately, Peter refuses to inhabit any masculine role, nefarious or otherwise, preferring childhood above all else.

Childhood is inevitably linked to mothers, the protectors of their innocence and path to maturation. Motherhood receives a special focus in Barrie’s *Peter Pan* and in the Victorian era. Corresponding to the new valuation of childhood and children’s literature, according to M.O. Grenby in *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*, “is the new understanding of parenthood that emerged in Britain in the eighteenth century” (9). Mothers were encouraged to breastfeed their children personally, versus using a wet nurse and to oversee their education personally, versus educating one’s children via governess (10). The new emphasis on parenting appears to be solely focused on the mother’s abilities to nurture and oversee her children, revealing the lack of instruction flowing to fathers. The specific gender instruction also supplies

cause for the reverence mothers in *Peter Pan* receive by those of all ages and all morals. For example, not only do Peter and the Lost Boys claim Wendy as their mother, but the pirates attempt to as well. Smee, Capt. Hook's bosun, says as he's tying Wendy to the mast, "See here honey . . . I'll save you if you promise to be my mother" (Barrie 151). Wendy refuses as protest against the pirates' maliciousness in kidnapping herself and the Lost Boys, perhaps even preemptively disengaging herself from adults who have already strayed from the proper way of maturing – adults who have chosen a villainous life. Furthering the explanation of the novel's distinct call for nurturing mothers is J. M. Barrie's personal experiences with Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, mother of the children who inspired *Peter Pan*. Barrie developed a great admiration for Sylvia as a mother, which furthered his fervent respect of the woman as a mother figure. His love of the mother figure transfers into the great estimation Wendy receives for her motherly tendencies in the novel. Though never having an affair with Sylvia, he was much in love with Arthur Llewelyn Davies' wife, and even designated himself godfather of their sons, who became monumental influences for *Peter Pan*. When both parents passed, Barrie took unofficial guardianship of the boys. Such cultural and personal valuation easily explains Barrie's obsession with ideal motherhood.

Wendy and Mrs. Darling possess a unique ability to remember their times with Peter. Their remembrance indicates that a woman's role has less pressure and responsibility than a man's, since only those who retain some of their imagination recall Peter, and those able to do so are mothers. The responsibility of "tidying up her children's minds" falls squarely on the shoulders of a mother, which implicates the responsibility of instruction falls to mothers, supported by Grenby's historically cultural observations of Victorian society (Barrie 6). Mrs. Darling's explorations into Wendy, John, and Michael's minds reveals the feminine adult ability

to recall Peter Pan and the Neverland, or the imagination of childhood, though “now that she was married and full of sense she quite doubted whether there was any such person” (Barrie 9).

Wendy, once she becomes a mother, is similarly able to remember her adventures with Peter, and the same falls to her daughter Jane, and Jane’s daughter, Margaret. Only once does narration mention that “we too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf,” but never does narration give say for adult men to recall the Neverland and Peter (Barrie 7). The line drawn between a man and woman’s ability to recall their childhood larks gives a distinction between the sense of men and women as well. Imagination is lost, according to the rules of *Peter Pan*, upon entrance into society with the learning of rules and solemn things, the responsibilities of adulthood. Since women are able to remember their imaginative larks, and men are not, the implication falls that women’s duties and responsibilities require less sense and solemnity, therefore enabling women to retain more of their imaginative abilities. Mrs. Darling is a prime example of a woman’s seemingly lighter responsibilities, best seen in chapter one: “at first she kept the books perfectly, almost gleefully, as if it were a game,” which evolves into distraction as she counts “babies without faces” instead of the house’s vegetables (Barrie 2). Narration mentions she handled the household as “if it were a game,” a playful lark, which would not result in negative consequences should calculations go amiss. Narration would have readers believe the housekeeping role of the wife is held with levity, filling the role until the act of child raising takes up other aspects of her time. Mrs. Darling immediately indicates women’s more inherent ability at tending children. She quickly contrasts with Mr. Darling’s doubt of their being able to keep each child once it is born. Her lightheartedness comes from her desire for children, making her naturally closer to them, while drawing attention to the biased belief in the less serious nature of women’s roles.

Wendy is the ideal woman of the Victorian and Edwardian age through her motherly domesticity, feminine delicacy, and physical passivity. Her path in the Neverland marks the trail for future little Victorian mothers to follow, as she instantly becomes the mother the Lost Boys yearned for. British society's perception of a woman's role was influenced by "gender ideology, [and] biological difference [that], together with assumptions about the contrasting psychological make-up of women and men, [which] fixed social expectations" (Moran 35). An upper or middleclass woman was considered the Angel in the House, and any active roles outside of the home she could take were charitable or evangelical as women's "temperament and maternal, self-sacrificing instincts" suited her for these roles, a belief "underpin[ning] the concept of the Victorian woman as spiritually inspiring" (Moran 36-7). In the age where the New Woman is developing in the cultural and literary world, through advertising images to popular children's literature, Wendy reflects the mainstream ideal of a woman's place in the home. Wendy is developed perhaps even in reaction to the New Woman who could smoke, live in an apartment with other girls, and provide for herself outside of matrimony, according to Charles Ferrall and Anna Jackson, authors of *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850-1950*. Though this image of life for women was possible, the happy ending of the books generally went with "one [woman] always mar[rying] happily, and of the rest" there are variations of "unwise decisions," and images "highlighting the sacrifice in living independently of marriage" (Ferrall and Jackson 82-3). Ferrall and Jackson's work also coincides with the work of Arlene Young in *Culture, Class and Gender in the Victorian Novel*. Though there were images people of today would approve of in the New Woman, more often than not "restrictive Victorian novelistic conventions of femininity remain, even in the last decade of the century" (146). Such a lifestyle is refuted by the dominating image of the passive Victorian woman Wendy is naturally inclined to become.

Wendy's delicacy and physical passivity are seen prominently during sparring on Neverland. When crisis arises, Wendy is most often desiring the aid of men, relegating herself to an inner prison of immobility and helplessness. Heather Shiply writes of Disney's portrayal of Wendy in their 1953 *Peter Pan*, "In Neverland, females are allowed in to the world in socially acceptable roles," such as mother, daughter, and caretaker, arguing further that women "are not active or with agency; they do not participate in the adventures of the island and only maintain their status in relation to Peter Pan" (156). Such a statement is easily transplanted to Barrie's novelization. While the women do not actively engage in the adventures, Tinker Bell and Tiger Lily perhaps being an ever so small exception, Wendy is by no means complacent or emotionally uninvolved in the action occurring, though her physicality diminishes the moment a call to arms occurs. For example, as the Neverland lagoon's atmosphere sets for the skirmish to save Tiger Lily, Wendy "longed to hear male voices," (Barrie 89). Her instinctual longing implicates the innate belief of her physical inferiority and mental incapability for handling a situation outside of the domestic sphere Wendy feels most comfortable in. Instead of waking the boys to warn them of the shifting atmosphere, she leaves them sleeping, as if restricted to her routine and customs. Narration dictates, "Wendy stood over them to let them have their sleep out. Was that not brave of Wendy?" (Barrie 89). The tone is not ironic, and undoubtedly sincere in its admiration, but Wendy is entrapped in the routine she feels obligated to maintain as a good mother. Her unwillingness to deviate confines her to the sphere of motherhood, where she almost fails her role by allowing the children to remain in a dangerous situation.

Wendy must remain in her socially acceptable role of mother, where the moral and patriotic upbringing of the children falls to her realm. Grenby states, "the personal supervision [by mothers] of all aspects of infancy were presented as . . . the surest defense against foreign

foes and the best foundation of empire,” also citing the work of Reverend John Bennett’s *Strictures on Female Education*, 1787, in affirmation (10). In the final battle between Captain Hook, Peter, and the Lost Boys, Wendy portrays her highest moment of physical passivity by nearly evaporating into the sea surrounding them, using only her words to fight, leaving any physical transactions to the men and boys. Wendy’s verbosity is meant to invigorate the children before the battle: “Wendy, of course, had stood by taking no part in the fight,” but did send a “message to you from your real mothers, and it is this, ‘We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen’” (Barrie 150). For Wendy, a woman’s place is not in the realm of men, i.e. the battle, but solely along its outskirts. In accordance with the research of Ferrall and Jackson, “Two themes emphasized in the classical teaching of Victorian England – blind patriotism and the glorification of death in battle” (37). Many boys’ magazines and children’s literature, such as *Chums* and *For the Colours*, along with young boys schooling, provided romanticized notions of glorified war and sacrificial death (Ferrall and Jackson 35-6). By increasing the moral of the boys, Wendy ensures that her duty is fulfilled. She reinforces and carries through on the teachings her young boys would receive through the consumption of their literature and school lessons. She is a successful mother for England; her physical passivity and patriotic words of inspiration are perfectly within the rights of the Victorian and Edwardian woman.

Furthermore, Wendy’s ideal Victorian traits are represented through the domestic sphere she creates, revealed in chapter 10: The Happy Home, but her domestic sphere ultimately fails due to Peter’s inability to commit himself to ideals of domesticity beyond make believe. As Wendy darns socks, listens to the children’s complaints, and reads bedtime stories, Wendy, all the while anxiously attuned to Peter’s goings-on, mirrors the scenes she has experienced with her mother. Wendy’s contentedness in the home is evident by the displeasure she is filled with



during the moments of Peter's wavering domesticity. Though Wendy is "far too loyal of a housewife to listen to any complaints against father," she does hold "her private opinion," (Barrie 108). Wendy's easy acceptance of motherhood is congruent with the presumed ease of her role, as previously discussed. Further congruence lies in Peter's confusion in *The Happy Home*. When discussing with Wendy their 'marriage,' Peter looks "like one not sure whether he was awake or asleep," shortly after asking Wendy for reassurance that he is not truly the Lost Boys' father (Barrie 113). Her response in the positive elicits a distinct sigh of relief. Wendy's instant irritation at Peter's unwillingness to be a father reveals her deep desire for the situation to be reality. Peter is unable to see why Tinker Bell, Tiger Lily, and Wendy each become upset with Peter, confused by the "something she [Tiger Lily] wants to be to me, and she says it is not my mother," (Barrie 113). Peter's inability to recognize the desire for intimacy beyond play pals is another indication of his innate youthfulness. His incomprehension of Wendy's anger, causes Peter to remain in the house, instead of following his nightly routine of skipping Wendy's domestic bedtime story. Ultimately, Peter's presence, in defiance of Wendy and her domestic yearnings, causes the children to all leave the island. Just as if one parent decided to abandon the Victorian household, the children's make-believe family on the Neverland disintegrates. Such crumbling reveals the Victorian ideals of a household, that if the male does not willingly accept his role, the family cannot exist, and thus the children must return to a home where father and mother believe in the roles they are born for, i.e. the Darling home.

The adult Victorian gender roles placed on the children, Peter and Wendy, indicates two disparate views of maturity. *Peter Pan* portrays the ease in which women enter into adulthood and the struggles and reluctance men encounter at setting aside childhood. Neither role allows for ideas of childhood to be carried over into adulthood, the roles leaving a clear line drawn

between the different stages. Each gender role is strictly prescribed for children at a young age, evidenced by inspirational, educational, and fictional literature for adults and children. As if the role for women is natural and innately carries less obligation and pressure of responsibility, Wendy steps into motherhood with pleasure, going from playacting in the nursery to reality in the Neverland. For Peter, even playacting is too much of a burden because it represents a potential reality he quickly abandoned at birth when his prescribed role was being discussed over his pram. His reluctance represents the burden of manhood and how confined manhood had become. Childhood in *Peter Pan* is the state of innocence, selfishness, and adventure. As Peter's forgetfulness shows, a child is able to think only of his/herself, because their inner focus has not yet gone further than themselves, almost specific to the male child, as Wendy frequently feels compassion for Peter and the Lost Boys. Altogether, *Peter Pan* reveals further gender bias in the Victorian culture through Wendy's readiness to accept adulthood and Peter's unwillingness to accept adulthood, promoting women's natural ability to become great and caring mothers and men's natural repulsion and fear at leaving behind innocence and adventure.

## Chapter, The Second

The (Mal)Functioning Child: Burnett's *The Secret Garden*

Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, published in 1911, simultaneously offers a supporting and contrasting view of Victorian and Edwardian childhood and gender roles to those presented in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, published in the same year. Children in *The Secret Garden* are not inherently good when left untended and unprotected by their parents. Neither can their innocence remain when they are removed from nature. Much like the Romantic ideals of childhood set up by Wordsworth and Blake and held by those in the Victorian and later Edwardian Era, nature is, in Burnett's novel, the restorative to peace and innocence when the mind has become tainted by the perceived ills of society and adulthood. According to the ideals of many 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century people, childhood should be the retainer of innocence until maturation sets in, but for Mary Lennox and Colin Craven, two children who have been withheld from nature the entirety of their ten years and have never received parental guidance, inherent goodness is consumed by selfishness, fear, and the inability to draw on their imaginative abilities. The two children are far from achieving success in the English society's expectations for male and female gender roles, that is until each child is restored to nature and discovers opposition that sparks creativity and perspective. By spending time in the Secret Garden, Colin and Mary discover the path to their natural, according to the novel, Victorian gender roles. Colin grows into the logical, strong master, and Mary blooms into the nurturing, demure young woman.

Childhood in *The Secret Garden* is not so inherently happy, innocent, and pure as has been represented by the Romantics. As discussed in the *Peter Pan* chapter, childhood was widely romanticized during the 19<sup>th</sup> century leading into the early 20<sup>th</sup> by the Victorians. The goal was

to protect the innocence of children by separating them from the adult world (Mitchell 148). Sally Mitchell's research shows

“the sentimental idealization of childhood is a striking characteristic of Victorianism. In books by Charles Dickens and in thousands of other novels, poems, magazines, and illustrations, children are often depicted as innocent, spontaneous, appealing and naturally good” (148).

Of course, Mitchell's research cannot ignore the many nannies, nurse-maids, and governesses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century upper-classes, but she argues such separation from adults was “partly to protect – or create – this innocence . . . Many of the facts of life (economic facts as well as moral and sexual information) for the first time were considered unsuitable for children” (Mitchell 148). When first introduced to Mary and Colin, the two are distinctly apart from the adult world, but such has stemmed from neglect, and not the sentimental protection of their innocence. As seen in Burnett's novel, the children will need a reintroduction to an environment hospitable enough to restore the purity the Victorian ideal of children are meant to possess. Such a restorative is nature. Drawing from the ideals of Romanticism, nature is a restorative to people of all ages. According to Norton, nature is the stimulating force of imagination (7). Much of the prominent poetry of Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth “begin with an aspect or change of aspect in the natural scene, this [*sic*] serves only as stimulus to the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking” (Norton 7). Time in nature was important as “The emphasis in this period on the free activity of the imagination” was very significant (Norton 7). These ideals are readily held within the culture surrounding the publication of *The Secret Garden*.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Friedrich Froebel developed a new system of child education set in open-air nurseries, spaces for children to interact with nature, believing children would thrive

best with “space, clean air, brightness, and movement,” which Ann Thwaite’s biography of Burnett claims the author “was aware of contemporary psychological and educational theories” (Davies 49). Mary and Colin discover true childhood when they are able to leave the adult-dominated house and seclude themselves with their friend Dickon in the Garden where they are rulers. Once removed from the confines of indoor spaces, the children are able to reunite with nature. In cultivating the land, the children cultivate their innocence and eventually their gender roles. Without parents to emulate, the children are left to discover for themselves which roles they are meant to inhabit. Prior to their discovery of the separate male and female gender roles, the children, “Being selfish and alienated from nature . . . initially deviate from both the Romantic ideal of childhood and preconceived ideals of Englishness” (Dinter 222). According to Sandra Dinter, “the garden serves as a space in which the children appropriate heteronormative gender roles” (222-23). Victorian ideals of childhood support the need for, and does not by affect supply in the novel, guidance by nature and by mothers. Childhood is meant to lead into the stage where gender norms are taught, tried on, and accepted. Only once Mary and Colin are able to perform in the Garden, do they naturally fall into the male and female roles desired of them. The Garden then acts as a sphere removed from the broken concepts of parenthood and the ills of adulthood, a benefit for Colin as the ills of adulthood are the partial cause for Colin’s corrupted physical and personal growth.

Dickon, a young country boy, is the prime example of perfected childhood, youth’s purest form, and yet he is uncategorizable as he does not fit into the standard ideal of Victorian manhood. Dickon is innocent and caring, an extension of nature in human form. Dickon gives this description of himself: “Sometimes I think p’raps I’m a bird, or a fox, or a rabbit, or a squirrel, or even a beetle, an’ I don’t know it” (Burnett 92). Like origin stories of the child in J.

M. Barrie's early work, Dickon believes he, too, may have sprung from an egg. He is intrinsically tied with nature. In excellent health, Dickon "never ketched cold since I was born. . . . Mother says I've sniffed up too much fresh air for twelve year' to ever get to sniffin'" (Burnett 99). Even Dickon's health, not to mention his personality, is in stark contrast to Mary and Colin's, whose health only begins to mirror Dickon's once the two spend ample time in nature. Like the snake charmers of India, as Mary points out, Dickon garners the trust of all animals, and this ability to gain the confidence of animals extends to adults of all professions and classes, even to Mary and Colin, who are wounded animals that need the attention of Dickon and the natural world. Dickon's ability to gain the trust of such a wide variety of life proves he is another extension of nature, as only nature can bring such peace and assurance of goodness.

Childhood, for Mary, is initially difficult as she is unchallenged in all her desires and unacknowledged by her parents. Her existence is only a rumor to family friends. Therefore, the gender role of mother is not presented to her successfully by any women in her life during her time in India. According to Sarah Stickney Ellis (1799-1872), author of the 19<sup>th</sup> century conduct book, *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character and Responsibilities*, "a bad temper, if long encouraged, and thoroughly rooted in the constitution, becomes in time impossible to be eradicated" (207). With an acquiescing nanny or Ayah, and a mother "who had not wanted a little girl at all," Mary is given no opposition in wants or temper, and so "by the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig<sup>2</sup> as ever lived" (Burnett 1-2). According to Victorian standards, should Mary continue on this way unchecked, she would fail her future role as wife and mother.

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<sup>2</sup> When narration calls Mary a pig, she is being titled with the biggest insult in Mary's vocabulary.

Continuing selfishly, Mary would be unable to conceive a world outside of her own wants and wounds. Incapable of perceiving the needs of others, by Victorian ideals of womanhood, Mary would fail as a wife who would be expected to provide peace and comfort to her husband, whose life, according to Victorian thought, is naturally more difficult and decisively more tainted by his interactions in society than her own. In John Ruskin's 1865 address "Of Queen's Gardens," he notes "The man, in his rough work in the open world, must encounter all peril and trial," which allows him error, and the woman none, since she does not enter into the man's world, i.e. the world outside of the domestic sphere (Mitchell 266). The natural antidote for man's perils and temptations is "the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter . . . from all terror, doubt, division" (Mitchell 266). Evidently, the Victorian woman is the holder and provider of innocence within the home, with the man as the home and wife's protector. As Ellis notes, a woman with a bad temper will make "desolate her household hearth" (207). According to Price's recent research on David Sedding's Victorian garden manual from 1891, women should be similar to Victorian gardens: "a balm . . . to the man who must toil away and hence soil himself in the mercantile world of the city. . . . Like the perfect hearth and its accompanying angelic female influence, the garden calls forth man's best characteristics" (Price 6). In such a sense, with no mother to guide her in India, Mary is left to become an improper lady. The garden becomes Mary's only chance for discovering what it means to nurture, what it means to become a proper woman as the garden stands for women and her accomplished goal. In Mary's case, the Garden is not only a balm to men, but is also used to call forth her best characteristics.

Mary's mother is described mostly in physical terms, which allows the understanding that she is ephemeral, having no lasting characteristic qualities of importance. Without lasting

qualities valued in Victorian mothers, such as care, selflessness, and domestic wisdom, Mrs. Lennox has nothing to teach Mary. The Victorian woman was meant to be the ruler of her sphere. The domesticat space, marriage, and motherhood were places for her “natural and expected role: it satisfied her instinctual needs . . . and protected her from the shocks and dangers of the rude, competitive world” (Mitchell 266). In fact, the domestic sphere was meant for a woman’s “finer instincts – sensitivity, self-sacrifice, [and] innate purity” (Mitchell 266). Mary’s Ayah stands as a second potential mother figure for Mary, but as she allows Mary’s temper to flare and meets her with no opposition, she, too, fails Mary. Ultimately her Ayah’s exceeding tolerance sends Mary on the path of failed Victorian womanhood, just as Mrs. Lennox fails as a mother. Mrs. Lennox proves her selfishness as her direct orders to the Ayah are “to keep the child out of sight at all times,” and to always appease Mary “because the Mem Sahib [Mrs. Lennox] would be angry if she was disturbed by her [Mary’s] crying” (Burnett 1-2). Mrs. Lennox “cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people” (Burnett 1). In her descriptions she is nothing other than “a great beauty . . . a tall, slim, pretty person [with] lovely clothes,” hair “like curly silk . . . [with] a delicate nose which seemed to be disdainful things” (Burnett 3). If there are deeper realities to Mrs. Lennox’s personality, they are completely unknown to Mary.

Through distancing and Mrs. Lennox’s priorities, Mary’s mother, always called the Mem Sahib by Mary, is unwilling to bring Mary up to womanhood. She has nothing to teach her, and only the ephemeral phenotypic traits are left for Mary to discover. While looks may begin attraction, they are not the lasting qualities lingered on in descriptions of the ideal Victorian woman. As Ellis and Ruskin mention, a good temper or a good character, is the only way to keep home a welcome place for family. Ultimately, it is not the disease that brings down the Lennox



family, but Mrs. Lennox's pleasure in parties. When told she should have left two weeks ago, she admits, "Oh, I know I ought! . . . I only stayed to go to that silly dinner party" (Burnett 3). Mrs. Lennox allows her personal desires to take importance over the practicality of leaving for the sake of even her own health, not to mention the health of her family and servants. As if a warning to mothers who fail their duties, the Lennox family falls when the wife and mother fails in her responsibilities to uphold peace and morality.

With Mrs. Lennox as a mother, there is little wonder why Mary's childlike nature, as imagined by the Romantics, is nonexistent. As discussed in the previous chapter on *Peter Pan*, childhood is often related in terms of Romanticism, "the emblem of innocence and purity, naturally perfect and in need of protection from the corruption of growing up" (Sattaur 4-5). According to Ellis, a woman's power lies in her influence, which requires tending of the natural abilities of "quickness of perception, facility of adaptation, and acuteness of feeling" (11-12). The novel supports a woman's ability to influence. Before Mary is able to persuade with gentleness, without offending or presuming to usurp, her temper flares often amongst many she encounters. Mary's determination is what leads her to discover the Garden, and her temper is what breaks Colin from his inability to grow into Victorian expectations for men. But if left unchecked, her determination and temper will ill-suit her adult Victorian role. As no parents have put forth effort to protect Mary's childhood, she is already corrupted. Narration notes Mary has no "quickness of perception" or "acuteness of feeling." The first example occurs when Martha, the young maid, and Mary first meet. Martha's expectations for Mary's appearance are not met; Mary is not a beautiful child but is too thin with limp hair. When Martha makes this expectation known to Mary upon her arrival to Misselthwaite, "Mary did not even try to control her rage and humiliation" (Burnett 25). Mary cannot see Martha's mistake is an innocent one

from a young woman who does not know British customs of the upper-class. Instead, Martha proves Mary's better in temperament, as Martha remains friendly despite the young girl's insults and rage. When Martha pleads with Mary to calm down from fear of losing her job, Mary does not cease from empathy, but because she is distracted by Martha's dialect. As a daughter of England, Mary, through Ellis's potential perspective, is not doing too well. Mary has all the self-absorbance of a young child Barrie mentions of children in *Peter Pan*, but none of the innocence or purity of imagination.

Mental opposition is a great stimulus for "blow[ing] the cobwebs" from Mary's mind (Burnett 44). Such a break in her current line of thinking is needed before she can take on her prescribed gender role, as she has to leave one track before living on another. Mary discovers the first idea of opposition when she thinks Martha is "a good-natured-looking creature, but she had a sturdy way which made Mistress Mary wonder if she [Martha] might not even slap back" were Mary to slap Martha in anger (Burnett 23). In this instance Mary is, perhaps for the first time, considering what negative reactions her actions may elicit. Martha brings constant stimulus to Mary, either by urging her to play outdoors, teaching her to clothe herself, or making her ponder the lives of people of a different class, as when Martha scolds Mary for not eating when the maid's siblings would have marveled at having so much food. Mary finds "Yorkshire people seemed strange, and Martha was always rather a puzzle to her" (Burnett 68). Mary, for the first time, is discovering people who treat her existence as equal to her own, versus her parents practically disowning her existence and her Indian servants fearing it. When Mary is acknowledged, she learns to recognize others' worth and value. Martha and her brother Dickon, being English country residents on a much simpler scale than Master Craven, Mary's wealthy uncle, are inherently closer to nature, not having much involvement in British colonialism. Once

following Martha's lead to discover the gardens, Mary discovers the robin and Ben Weatherstaff. In line with the Romantic thought lingering in the Edwardian period, Norton notes, Romanticism "had achieved great poetic success in the serious representation of humble life in a language really spoken by the rustics," often "arous[ing] in the sophisticated mind that sense of wonder presumed to be felt by the ignorant and the innocent . . . a primary power of imagination" (8-9). While these judgements of the rustic life potentially are overly idealized, they represent popular beliefs of Romanticism. As Mary begins to associate with and befriend those greatly removed from British imperialism, she is able to resume a proper course for girlhood that will lead to proper Victorian womanhood.

Misselthwaite Manor's surrounding moors and the Secret Garden thus become the method for Mary's redemption. As discussed in *Peter Pan*, childhood is buoyed by imagination, which is only retained through youthful innocence. Such imagination is important for *The Secret Garden*, but unlike *Peter Pan*, nature is needed to aid the imagination, and for Mary, nature is the restorative needed to recreate her youthful character since it has been neglected and untended for so long. Nature therefore is key to rehabilitate any sense of the Romantic form of childhood. Mary often becomes mentally stimulated or feels her "queer feeling[s]" – those feelings and thoughts new to her, when interacting with or through introductions to nature. Through her time in the Garden Mary discovers connections with people, animals, and plants like she never did before leaving India. The first time an idea sparks Mary's imagination, a key component to childhood, Mary is told by Martha of Dickon and the Secret Garden. As if transmitting the thoughts of her mother, Mrs. Sowerby, Martha gives just enough surface information regarding her brother and the Garden to tease Mary's mind into pondering each enigma: "It was really this mention of Dickon that made Mary decide to go out, though she did not realize it at the time"

(Burnett 30). Shortly after, Martha mentions the Garden, which provokes Mary's curiosity, all leading her to her first interactions with nature. Emphasizing nature's impact on mental thought, even human concern, is "The fact [t]hat the fresh wind from the moor had begun to blow the cobwebs out of her young brain" (Burnett 44). Though Mary cannot yet perceive why she begins to wander, does not have the perception mentioned by Ellis, she does go exploring, and such leads to not only new physical paths, but new mental paths of perception, empathy, understanding, and ultimately, her expected gender role.

In a bit of a reversal, nature begins to tend Mary, as seen when the robin makes friends with her. In tending Mary, nature via the robin, also allows Mary to enter into further human connections and brings her closer to her own innocently childlike qualities. Narration admits Mary's faults lie in the neglect she receives in India: "If she had been an affectionate child who had been used to being loved, she would have broken her heart" at hearing the red robin sing his winter song (Burnett 33). Often in the novel's early chapters of Mary, paragraphs begin with "If she had;" these openings are always introducing the cause of Mary's poor personality and stem from loneliness and her parents' lack of affection or love for their daughter. The only remedy, when those who should provide affection do not, is to have nature take an active role in restoring what should be a child's innocence, which should be tended and protected by guardians or parents. Once the robin does interfere, Mary realizes one cause of her extreme rudeness is loneliness, and when approached by the robin for friendship Mary begins to sound "as if tha' was a real child instead of a sharp old woman," because Mary did not ask the robin to be her friend "in her hard little voice or in her imperious Indian voice, but in a tone so soft and eager and coaxing" that she surprises the gardener Ben Weatherstaff (Burnett 38). The lack of affection in Mary's life causes her to advance into a stage of bitterness only allowable to adults who have

been fully immersed into the world's or society's harmful effects, hence the "old woman" comment. When shown the potential for connection, revealing how close childhood is to nature inherently, Mary quickly alters herself to a more appropriate form of childhood in her speech and affection. The first step towards childhood and her gender role begin when Mary softens. Mary's time in the garden allows for the full germination of her girlhood, with winter allowing the seed to crack and spring pulling the flower into full bloom. Mary's own belief, possibly indicative of her more active imagination, is as follows: "You [the robin] showed me where the key was yesterday" (Burnett 69). She then teases the robin about leading her to the door, and just a few lines down "One of the nice little gusts of wind rushed down the walk . . . and suddenly the gust of wind swung aside some loose ivy trails" to reveal "the knob of a door" (Burnett 69-70). The robin, who brings out smiles on both Mary and Ben's face, two of the crankiest people of the novel, takes an active part in the renewal of Misselthwaite's people.

Furthermore, at Mary's behest to the robin, the wind blows to allow Mary to return to the place where love was once nurtured by Mr. and Mrs. Craven, the wife now deceased. For the first time in the novel, Mary is concerned for something other than herself: the garden's roses. Mary was "troubled . . . She did not want it to be a quite dead garden" (Burnett 73). Mary immediately begins to make room for the new sprouts to grow, removing weeds and digging in the earth. Like a mother concerned for her children, Mary quickly responds out of concern for the newborn flowers. Price points out in her research, "The garden's association with the domestic is most clearly illustrated by its association with motherhood" (7). As Dickon later affirms, Mary's actions were the proper ones, but she has never before been taught gardening. Innately, Mary protects and nurtures the flowers. Thus, the garden's success begins; Mary's inborn qualities of womanhood, as expected by society, become present for the first time. Anna

Silver points to Mary's time with Dickon in the garden as an example of "activities that connote broad conceptions of mothering not limited by gender or restricted to the home and nuclear family" (199). Silver also notes in her analysis what she perceives as Mary's "indifference" towards the present of a doll, "indicat[ing] that Mary does not conform to traditional images of the Victorian girl" (199). While Mary does not conform to traditional representations of early childhood, as noted in how she uses her tantrums to initially break Colin, her cousin and fellow ward at Misselthwaite, from his hysterics, she does by the novel's end show signs of the traditional adult Victorian woman. Her indifference cannot be unexpected in that she is never given motherly affection or shown motherly actions in her nine years before Misselthwaite. What Silver deems "broad conceptions of mothering" are only the Romantic lingering attitudes of childhood, interspersed with concepts of the women's sphere in the garden.

From the onset, Mr. Craven is a man who rejects his masculine duties, which results in Colin's ill-behavior and corrupted childhood. Mr. Craven, at the novel's beginning, is ten years into mourning his wife's death. He is a wealthy man, and it is this wealth and his ability to maintain it, that asserts Mr. Craven's familiarity with 19<sup>th</sup> century modern society, its materialism and confines. Mr. Craven's physical anomaly, a "hunchback," "set him wrong. He was a sour young man and got no good of all his money and his big place till he was married" (Burnett 14). As if Mr. Craven's physical deformity is representational of the crookedness that enters manhood, he cannot find peace or enjoyment until he finds a wife. Mrs. Craven becomes the embodiment of domesticity and the peace matrimony brings manhood. Kingsley writes of a man's love for a single woman, "to give himself up to his love in child-like simplicity and self-abandonment" is like "being thus readmitted into the very garden of the Lord" (Rosen 24). Such terms as "child-like" and "garden" bring Kingsley's estimation of marriage in line with *The*

*Secret Garden* in that a woman's closeness with childhood and its peace are the qualities that are meant to make marriage so appealing to men. Her ability to bring him closer to morality is another.

As if building a hideaway from society's judgements and pressures, Mr. Craven builds a habitation of beauty and innocence with Mrs. Craven. She and their work in nature are Mr. Craven's natural restorative to peace. As if she only is able to restore and create such peace and domesticity, Mr. Craven is "made queerer than ever" after her death (Burnett 15). Narration acknowledges his ten-year stint of mourning is his own doing; after so much time: "he had *let* his soul fill itself with blackness and had *refused obstinately* to allow any rift of light pierce through," emphasis added (Burnett 264). Directly following is: "He had forgotten and deserted his home and his duties" (Burnett 264). By locking away the garden, Mr. Craven has barred the natural restorative he and his wife built. In leaving his son to die, he has not only refuted his fatherly domestic duties, but also shut away another potential avenue for mental restoration. As childhood is thought to be the closest state to purity, because the child has not been taught society's ways, Colin is Mr. Craven's avenue for continued peace after the death of his wife. Mr. Craven's refutation of fatherhood is acknowledged by himself: "I am a poor one [guardian]. I cannot give you time or attention. . . . I don't know anything about children" (Burnett 108). By choice Mr. Craven knows nothing of children. In choosing to remain in his grief, he chooses to fail his duties, and chooses to remain tainted by the world. His choices directly affect his son, and creates the circumstances Colin is introduced in, circumstances leading him to life as an invalid and on a path to failed Victorian masculinity.

Colin's health, manner, and outlook are all malnourished because he has not received any parental instruction or played outdoors. At the beginning of the novel, Colin is not on track to

become the typical upper-middleclass Victorian man. As with Mary, Colin does not have an active male role model to mirror since Mr. Craven wanders Europe. Between Andrew Dowling, J. M. Barrie, Norton's research on the Romantics, and the essays compiled in *Muscular Christianity* there is a clear baseline defining the Victorian man. From Dowling's work the Victorian man's life is presented with "control, reserve, and discipline" (13). Through Barrie the man is seen as hyperbolically logical, confined by society's judgement for his prosperity, and devoid of imagination caused by corruption and knowledge of the world. Norton supports the idea in the call for nature as stimulus for the creative mind. *Muscular Christianity's* essay "The Volcano and the Cathedral" by David Rosen draws attention to Charles Kingsley's work in the mid-1800s, at one point defining "man as spirit-animal with divinity conferred on his bestiality" (24). Even the gardening handbook written by John D. Sedding, *Garden-Craft Old and New*, published in 1891, states the garden serves as man's "artifice to escape the materialism of a world that is too actual and too much with him," which is further discussed in Price's article (18). Man is corrupted and in need of nature. Each of these apply to masculinity in *The Secret Garden*, specifically when discussing Mr. Craven and the expectations that would be placed on Colin were he perceived as a healthy, potential young man.

Colin experiences an aberrant form of childhood until he encounters Mary, whose own ill humour and selfishness provides the needed mental stimulus for the beginning of Colin's behavioral, emotional, and physical recovery. As with Mary, Colin is indulged in all his wants, is "never made to do anything he would not like to do," and "He too had had nothing to think about" (Burnett 120-21). In such, his guardians and father fail him, never forcing him to go outdoors and concurrently never making efforts to teach Colin to control his temper. His thoughts center around himself and his illness. With no mental stimulation, though he has been



given many books, Colin is left to dwell on what he and others believe is his encroaching death. Deemed the “young rajah” by Mary, Colin’s selfishness and self-importance are combined in his manner of conduct regarding the people around him. His overbearing manner is the direct result of his servants and father’s unwillingness to upset Colin from fear of igniting a tantrum in him that could worsen his physical state. Yet his actions go far beyond a slight indulgence, to deep rooted superiority and selfishness. In jealousy and a presumed desire “to make others ill and nervous,” Colin demands “They shall drag you in here,” meaning he will force the servants to drag Mary in to visit Colin (Burnett 156-57). In response to Colin’s demands, Mary “flew into a fine passion . . . and did not care what happened;” Mary has not reached her full potential as the Victorian girl on the path to womanhood (Burnett 157). Yet, such proves the perfect solution for breaking the cycle of Colin’s crippling mindset. As his books and father have been unsuccessful in teaching him Victorian manhood, it is left to Mary to initially breach the surrounding barriers of his mind caused by a lack of affection and the overindulgence of adults.

One fault of Colin’s lies in the tyrannous selfishness that stimulates his rule. His ability to command is never a fault, as Victorian men should be capable of leading a manor such as Misselthwaite. Leadership, though, should not be self-centered. Since the Victorian man is the provider of his family, he is meant to be aware of the needs of his family. Yet, before Colin can become the Victorian man he must learn to be the Victorian child. As his father and guardians are unable to instruct him, nature, Dickon, and Mary are left responsible. Mary, as the first to immerse herself in nature via the Garden and moors, is already progressing towards her expected gender role. Mary therefore combines the nurturing aspects of femininity she is gaining with her own prominent, but quickly fading, temper that is much the rival of Colin’s, to counteract his self-indulgent behavior.

While mental stimulation is needed to heal Colin, physical stimulation is needed as well. As Mary yells at Colin, a boy who never leaves his bed or even moves in it from fear of illness, “In spite of his invalid back [only invalid from lack of use], Colin sat up in bed in quite a healthy rage” (158). Not only has Mary created opposition to Colin by yelling “‘You’re not!’ . . . unsympathetically” when Colin declares he is dying, she has also inspired him to move, even if the movement is a slight one (Burnett 158). The movement is a continuation from when “he leaned still farther forward” when Mary first mentioned the Garden (Burnett 123). Mary brings intrigue in the form of life. Mary first mentions the varying forms of life in the garden and continues to speak of life by vehemently denying Colin’s claims to death, even if her denial is heartlessly delivered. After Colin’s tantrum and their heated dispute later the same night, Mary combines her aggressive denial of his death with tenderness as she holds his hand, sings him a song, and speaks to him of the Garden until he falls asleep (Burnett 168-69). As a wife would soothe the husband submerged into society’s ills, Mary restores peace to Colin. Mary discovers the source of Colin’s tantrums, an achievement none of his ten-year-long guardians can claim. Mary literally speaks of life, and aids Colin in being occupied in living instead of occupied with dying. Within three encounters, Mary is achieving her potential as a Victorian woman, which aids Colin on his journey to becoming a Victorian man.

Colin’s restoration to physical health coincides with his steps into Victorian manhood. These occurrences affirm the gender expectations for Colin, since his actions once he is in the Garden represent a boy healed physically and characteristically. On Colin’s first day in the Garden “I’ve [Colin] walked—an’ here I am diggin’” (Burnett 215). His physical health is on the rise, and so is his positivity. His positive attitude is an aspect of Colin’s focus on life instead of illness and limitations. Furthermore, just moments after his excitement regarding his progress,

Colin takes a positive step towards becoming a Victorian man. Colin ceremonially “set the rose [a symbol of the British monarchy] in the mold,” and “there he actually stood on his own two feet—laughing” (Burnett 215-16). Though discovered by Mary, Colin has now symbolically taken ownership and guardianship over the Garden as a monarch does with his subjects. As if Colin is accepting the inheritance of his mother, Colin becomes another member of the force determined to imbibe the Garden’s goodness. Colin refutes his father’s determined abandonment of the property by reclaiming his rights through planting the rose.

Colin’s manhood does not only assert itself by his claim of inheritance and claim to land, but through his authoritative lectures. Colin takes Mary’s initial ideas of magic, positivity and determination, and decides to turn them into scientific experiments. Colin charts a course of profession for himself that will make, at least in his estimation, considerable steps towards progress. Margrete Lamond’s research shows “Reviewers [of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century] acknowledged – if not consistently applauded – Burnett’s idea that the path to physical recovery must begin with mental health” (129). Mary and Colin see, if only through the limited educational lenses of children, the interconnection between mental stimulation, joy, and physical health. Colin declares he will learn the Magic that, as he says, “is always pushing and drawing and making things out of nothing. Everything is made out of Magic, leaves and trees” (Burnett 223). Colin’s curiosity is fully active; his imagination is roaring, just as Mary planned. With Colin’s mind being restored to the healthy child-like quality Mary has also reached, Colin is capable of striding towards Victorian expectations of manhood. His lectures are the penultimate example, as he forms, informs, and commands his audience’s attention, respect, and good cheer. Colin asserts in a step towards logic expected of Victorian men, he will learn about magic “to make it do things for us—like electricity and horses and steam. . . . I am going to make a

scientific experiment,” (Burnett 222-23). In continuation, he also declares “And you all must do it, too,” after which he continues lecturing, which results in Ben Weatherstaff’s “admiration in his little old eyes,” Dickon’s “round eyes shining with curious delight,” and with Mary thinking, “Colin really looked quite beautiful” (Burnett 223-25). Not only do the children near him listen raptly, but one of the hardest adults of the tale is also won by Colin’s “clever[ness]” and tenacity (Burnett 224). Colin now proves he is capable of logic and leadership versus his former self who often acted from fear and in tyranny.

In discord with the themes of childhood, innocence, and nature’s restorative abilities are those arguments discussing sexuality in *The Secret Garden*. Any sexual innuendos and themes scholars believe appear in the novel are incongruent with Burnett’s work. *The Secret Garden* serves to bring the children closer to the purity and innocence children are meant to naturally possess in the Edwardian period, not to stimulate sexual desires or those of their guardians. Davies argues, “It is Colin’s likeness to his mother, the reminder of female sexuality and its fatal outcome, that led his father to shun him” (54). Burnett’s work is far from implying Craven rejects his son because Colin reminds his father of his mother’s sexuality. While evident that Colin’s eyes are significant reminders of his mother, they only remind Craven of the peace and love he once held dearly. Narration in the novel notes, “The first time after a year’s absence [since Mrs. Craven’s death] he returned to Misselthwaite and the small miserable-looking thing languidly and indifferently lifted his eyes so like and yet so horribly unlike the happy eyes he had adored” (Burnett 270). Mr. Craven rejects Colin at the sight of the boy’s eyes because they lack the joy and love that were so often reflected in Mrs. Craven’s. As previously discussed, Mrs. Craven was her husband’s means to peace and contentment. She was his restorative, but after her death, he feels he can no longer reach the peace she brought him. Further exemplifying this

argument is the fact that not until Colin is able to have positivity, life, and joy in his own eyes is his father capable of returning to and remaining at Misselthwaite. Colin has reached the natural state of childhood he was meant to inhabit from the beginning but could not because of Mr. Craven's rejection. Now that Colin is restored to nature, innocence, and peace he can serve the same function as his mother once did, but through his childlike innocence.

Another analysis of *The Secret Garden* discusses the Garden as a womb, filled with feminine imagery, ultimately arguing the Garden itself is a sexual symbol of the uterus. The Garden does in fact stand for regeneration and life, but not in the sense that Ann Alston mentions in *The Family in English Children's Literature*. Alston mentions the analysis of her predecessor critics who have discussed the "imagery of female genitalia: the 'tendrils of ivy, budding plants and blooming flowers,'" and lengthens their discussion through a comparison of Colin's exit from the Garden to Mr. Craven as birth from the womb (86). Alston's argument makes similar claims as analyzed in this paper, such as, "It is within Colin's mother's garden that Colin is nurtured and returned to health" as apposed to the manor (86). The Garden does symbolize life, but not in the procreative sense, but in the regenerative sense. The Garden is meant to bring Mary, Colin, and Mr. Craven back into the best versions of themselves. Their time spent in the Garden allows them to become productive members of their society and embrace the gender roles of Victorian England. The Garden reveals to them how to productively achieve their goals instead of counterproductively distorting their lives and the lives of those around them.

Wilkie, in her article, argues the novel's sexual themes by bringing in the works of the Romantics and also common mythology, but fails to note the sexual tones of the Romantics' works was directed onto the adult subjects, and if ever directed on children, as with Rosetti's "The Goblin Market," was done with a clearly disturbing and foreboding air in the tone of the

writing. The argument for sex's presence in the garden is a gross misconception of the novels' themes and its Romantic origins regarding childhood and disregards the concepts of the well and deep-rooted beliefs of childhood in the mindset of the previous and current century at the time of the novel's publication. While each article is concise and clear in its argument, offering analysis and depth, each fails to consider the express need for childhood before adult sexual themes may come into discussion.

By the novel's end, both Colin and Mary are restored from their aberrant forms of childhood to the healthy form of childhood conducive to adult Victorian gender expectations. It is noteworthy that Mary fades from narration once Mr. Craven and Colin reunite. A common idea amongst scholars is that her absence notes the value of the patriarchy in the novel, which is not difficult to argue. But the novel closes, not on the importance of patriarchy, but on the final restoration the Garden is able to provide. Having restored Mary and Colin, the Garden has now restored Mr. Craven and the relationship with his son. Their relationship is in part also due to Mary's arrival and interference at Misselthwaite. While it is a bit disturbing to see the novel's protagonist removed from the last lines of the tale, she is by no means obsolete now that the father and son are restored to one another. *The Secret Garden* builds on ideas of childhood alongside those of Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Victorian childhood is meant to be the stage in life when children begin learning and taking on traits of their expected adult gender roles. Yet, it should also be valued, extended, and nurtured so as to protect innocence. *The Secret Garden* upholds the male and female sphere of adulthood in accordance with Romantic beliefs of nature's restorative function, while revealing the depth and value each gender role entails.

## Chapter, The Third

War & Adulthood in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*

C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, published in 1950, critiques and echoes Wartime British culture. An evident change in the gender roles of the British culture from the preceding Victorian and Edwardian Eras is present in the portrayal of the Pevensie children. These alterations are influenced by the events of World War I and II and are heavily highlighted by the accepted concepts of war in Narnia. Three aspects of the children's novel expose the change in British society's beliefs: war and the roles of the male and female protagonist. Lewis' portrayal of war in contrast to previous children's stories turns from lightly playful to deathly serious. The male role is no longer to be tried on, as is seen in *Peter Pan*, where Peter only plays a man's domestic expectations. Contrasting the negative views represented in *Peter Pan*, Lewis offers an alternative perspective to manhood by transforming adulthood into a portal of positive maturation. Perhaps most notable is the evolution of the female protagonist's role. The role initially begins as passive and purely domestic, as seen in *Peter Pan* through Wendy's passivity in the battle on the ship. In Lewis' work the role of the young girl undergoes a metamorphosis into active and versatile. The Victorian and Edwardian concepts of male and female roles shift from what is expressed in earlier children's literature, which is reflected in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* through the Pevensie children: Peter, Edmund, Susan and Lucy. The alteration of gender expectations delineated in prior children's novels demands the notice of a larger change, the British transformation of gender roles and concepts of war brought on by the experiences endured throughout World War I and II.

During Lewis's lifetime there were two great events that affected the British people in a large way. World War I, 1914-18, and World War II, 1939-45, introduced chemical warfare,

trench warfare, and faceless killing where men were led into impersonal battles (Wilson 54). Death became a result of mechanization and science. Boys who would have been in university left the halls empty with “nearly all the young men [sent] to Flanders and France, fighting in the trenches” (Wilson 50). The British boys who were raised to believe in the glory of war and death became disillusioned as their comrades fell around them in grisly ways. Michael Paris notes particularly of British airmen in the WWI, “The myth of the chivalry of the air war probably originated in 1916, with Henry Newbolt’s influential *Tales of the Great War*,” a work quoted by Paris a little further on saying, “Our airmen are singularly like the knights of the old romances . . . There is something especially chivalrous about these champions of the air” (69). Works such as these were present for children throughout wartime and the interwar periods. The tales of chivalry handed down to children from times before the Victorian Age, fed into the lives of those fighting in the trenches, implied by the use of such chivalry in the new books for wartime British children, which is discussed by Ferrall and Jackson. Their research reflects on such periodicals as *Chums* and *For The Colours*, works teaching children about the glory of death in battle (Ferrall and Jackson 35-36). The war left many sobered from the idealized versions of war they had been fed throughout their schooling, which left their former lives on the home front more and more appealing. Women also experienced their own changes during the war. Many were left at home to fill the positions the men had left open. Women took on new positions in the family and society at large, economically and through their own military efforts. Doing so ensured the home front did not fall into chaos.

In accordance with the maturation of a generation, Lewis generates male protagonists such as Peter and Edmund, in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* who accept and correspond to the post WWI and II male ideal of adulthood. Lewis’ personal life also mildly



reflects Peter's entrance into the atmosphere of war. Lewis joined the army during his initial studies at Oxford in 1917 at eighteen years old: "he was in effect a trainee officer in the British Army" (Wilson 50). Having essentially received only a month's worth of training, first at Keble and then in Wytham Woods, "by the time of his nineteenth birthday, he was in the front-line trenches" as "a second lieutenant attached to the Somerset Light Infantry (Wilson 52-4 & Melton 3). While in the field, Lewis began to understand the reality of war, from the barbed wire that cut boots, letting in mud, to, as Lewis wrote, "'the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, [and] the sitting or standing corpses'" (Melton 3). He dealt with these horrors by removing himself into his imagination through reading any literature that came into hand (Melton 3). Lewis was never able to finish the war with his comrades after shells exploded around him, wounding him in the face, arm, leg and lung (Wilson 56). His own experiences add weight to the removed ideals of glory in battle which were present in the British culture throughout the previous decades.

The Romantic ideals of children prominent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and well into the early 1900s were by no means obsolete by WWII, the time of the novel's setting; such is presumed so due to Operation Pied Piper in England, where thousands of children were sent away for fear of German air assaults (Prest). As discussed in the previous two chapters, the Romantic ideals of childhood often incorporated nature and children into views of innocence and purity. When becoming adults, people were, as similar to today's era, often introduced into society through school, commerce, or general social gatherings. These interactions were believed to taint those involved, making them less pure than the inherent purity he or she possessed naturally as a child. John Ruskin acknowledged these concepts in his speech, "Of Queen's Gardens," where he outlined and gendered the differing taint experienced, as he believed, between the two sexes. He

notes, “The man, in his rough work in the open world, must encounter all peril and trial,” which therefore taints him more so than his wife who remains more often in the home or, if outside the home, then is present at more pleasant social or charitable gatherings (Mitchell 266). This taint, though, is nearly unavoidable, because it is part of the man’s role to exit the home in order to provide. Thus, he is shielding his family from societal taint. In shielding the family, the wife is expected to be naturally purer, and is the needed restoration to purity, a balm or salve from the moral wounds received in society. These views in Ruskin’s speech from 1865 remain present in Lewis’ portrayal of the Pevensie children, especially noted when Susan and Lucy are the two allowed to frolic with Aslan, as well as kept from the battlefield until their assistance is needed in the form of healing.

Lewis reveals delineated views of childhood in Wartime Britain, views that both contrast and reiterate the previous century’s concepts of the ideal child, for example the division of gendered spheres. Lewis’ *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is an amalgamation of the ideas presented in the two preceding chapters. Childhood is where boys and girls begin learning the society’s expectations of each gender but is also where each child learns the necessities of life – good versus evil. Lewis’ work addresses the evils of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and ensures children are not blindfolded to the realities of what adult life can entail, which widens the gender roles for women and exemplifies expectations for adulthood. The values learned in Narnia are meant to be carried into adulthood so that the corruption of general society values does not tarnish the goodness inherent in young boys and girls. The Pevensie siblings’ journey in the first *Chronicles of Narnia* is meant to teach them to see past the frivolities of life to the important moral ideals they need to avoid the trappings of everyday life. The division in gender roles is quickly noted in the domestic scene set at the Beaver residence. Mr. Beaver and Peter go

outdoors to catch fish for dinner, “Meanwhile the girls were helping Mrs. Beaver to fill the kettle and lay the table and cut the bread,” among other domestic tasks (Lewis 79-80). The siblings naturally fall into these jobs, needing no direction from the older Beavers. Such delineation indicates the roles the children were being taught prior to their removal to the countryside.

Though the division in domestic roles is obvious, more consideration is given to the equality of each role. This is well noted through the numerous times Peter equally requests the opinions of each of his siblings in times of trouble. When first entering Narnia, Peter accepts “Susan’s very sensible plan” of wearing the fur coats in the wardrobe (Lewis 61). Yet even before then, when Lucy’s sanity was in question, prior to discussing the situation with the Professor, Peter and Susan corroborate their mutual concerns. Even through narration, the action of both the boys and girls is written as, “And when each person got his (or her) cup of tea, each person shoved back his (or her) stool” (Lewis 82). Incorporating the feminine pronoun into the descriptions of movement is a method of acknowledging the two disparate identities of men and women and puts each in line with the other instead of staggering the two. While the spheres are undeniably gendered, they are given each their own value. Whereas the genders in previous novels, once on the path to those expected in adulthood, have given the male gender role an elevation above the female, such an elevation is lacking in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. Unlike in the previous two novels, the sacred childhood space the children inhabit, the Neverland and the Garden, only teaches them how to inhabit their gender roles, how to best fall into society’s expectations. Time in the Garden does bring Mary and Colin insight into better thinking, so they can avoid the debilitating effects of bitterness and selfishness. But time in Narnia brings this a step further by teaching the children more than what is expected of them

domestically. They are taught what is expected of them in a more humanitarian way, with perspectives expanded to a more communal focus than localized familial focus.

If there were a child, boy or girl, closer to purity and innocence of the Romantic sense, it would be the girl. As Ruskin points out, the woman is expected to remain morally pure, so the home may become a source of restoration. Even as Sarah Stickney Ellis tells the daughters of England in her conduct book, the home is a place cultivated by women who are taught from a young age the best qualities and ways of ensuring the hearth is warm, both literally and metaphorically (207). The Victorian ideals of the previous century undoubtedly lingered into Lewis' Edwardian youth, which can easily be shown in the favoring of Lucy. Lucy is the first to discover the wardrobe's special qualities; such is because she is the youngest, therefore the most inexperienced in the world, making her the most imaginative and innocent. Lucy's characterization is in accord with the previous century's Victorian idealism of the young girl. Such admiration is warranted in Lucy by her instantaneous forgiveness for the faun, Mr. Tumnus. Though he would have betrayed her to the Witch, she wishes him well and "I do hope you won't get into dreadful trouble on my account" (Lewis 23). Due to women not interacting with society in the same capacity as men in British society, women were meant to be morally upright, examples in the home. As the children in Narnia are taking on aspects of their intended adult gender roles, Lucy fits superbly into these expectations for women. Her actions greatly contrast with Edmunds' just chapters later when he betrays Mr. Tumnus to the White Witch. His actions, too, parallel the British concepts of men's moral tarnish when they enter society to fulfill their duties. As these adult roles are running parallel to the children's actions, it is only natural then for Lucy, a young girl, to be purer than her other siblings. Even Peter supports Lucy's goodness of character when he says, "I think Lu ought to be the leader. . . . Goodness knows she

deserves it” (Lewis 62). Peter is acknowledging first, the wounds Lucy has received at the hands of her siblings’ disbelief, but he is also acknowledging her patience and kindness during her suffering. Her girlhood and integrity make her the ideal candidate to discover Narnia instead of her other siblings, which expresses the deep valuation of the young girl.

The prominent Victorian ideal of a woman’s innocence needing protection by men is shown and even rewarded as Susan and Lucy are kept from the battle between Peter’s Army and the White Witch’s. The reward comes in the form of comforting Aslan and being the only two of the lion’s allies allowed to witness Aslan’s sacrifice. Victorian literature, such as in *Peter Pan*, has depicted women as inherently innocent, more so than their counterparts who become spiritually tainted via their entrance into society. While this taint is not as prominently highlighted in Lewis’ novel, the idea is upheld as Aslan, the male protector of Narnia, is escorted to the Stone Table for his sacrificial execution. Only Aslan is able to save Edmund after his traitorous actions bind him to the White Witch who wishes to kill Edmund. Aslan’s deal with the witch tarnishes Aslan because he takes on the punishment and guilt of Edmund’s actions. Susan and Lucy are kept from such a taint, which effectually keeps the girls on the outskirts of dirtying themselves through physical interactions with the Witch. When traveling to the Stone Table, in the minds of Susan and Lucy, “He looked somehow different from the Aslan they knew. His tail and head hung low, and he walked slowly as if he were very, very tired” (Lewis 163). The girls are even permitted to put their hands in Aslan’s mane: “I am sad and lonely. Put your hands in my mane so that I can feel you are there” (Lewis 164). Aslan’s need for comfort is understandable since he is walking to his death, and when considering the supposed inherent and protected innocence of women, comparable in the two girls, their comfort is the only kind able to provide true sustenance. A Victorian woman’s job was to create her domestic sphere as a place

of rejuvenation for her husband who left the comfort of home each day. Susan and Lucy take on this role, because their innocence supplies their ability. This innocence is rewarded as they are the only two allowed to comfort Aslan, a just reward for two girls who will remain further untainted from participation in the next day's battle. Though they are untainted by having to actively engage in the next day's physical violence, they are permitted to engage with the men after the battle's end to ensure wounds are healed and their family, as well as Aslan, is safe.

The young girls are further rewarded for their innocence in their romp with Aslan once he returns from death. The story's narration describes their time together joyously as a celebration of life with a game of chase and the tossing of the girls

in the air with his huge and beautifully velvety paws . . . now stopping unexpectedly so that all three of them rolled over together in a happy laughing heap of fur and arms and legs. It was such a romp as no one has ever had except in Narnia (Lewis 179).

Only the girls could be the two who romp with Aslan. Once returned from the dead Aslan is fully restored to his natural joyous and confident state that was stripped from him upon making his bargain with the White Witch. First, Aslan must celebrate with children, the beings most capable of holding within themselves the belief in hope, hope that has not been struck down by numerous encounters with life's woes and blunders. Those children must be Susan and Lucy, the only two girls in the story and therefore the only two closest to the Romantic and Victorian ideals of innocence inherited by the preceding generations. Aslan fully allows himself to be immersed in the celebration of life though a war is commencing, and such seeming callousness for those battling is in fact the complete acceptance of all things good – the needed moral to win over the day's battle. Their romp must also occur in Narnia because Narnia is where people discover their

true selves, such as Lucy's belief in herself, Susan's optimism, and not to mention Peter's bravery, and Edmund's eventual wisdom.

These ideals of childhood are particularly present in the scenery of Narnia, which reflects lingering Romantic ideals of childhood and nature from the preceding century. The evil, obviously corrupted, adult queen has the land turned into a continuous winter land: "Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!" (Lewis 20). For the Romantic writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nature was the place where one could retreat from society's corruption and debased values, the place where innocence could be returned. The interconnectedness of nature and the Self, a Romantic term defining the true person, was best discovered in "the natural world – free from human social enterprise . . . g[iving] a ground of value both to nature and to the purely human" (Peckham 25). While the White Witch reigns, the inhabitants of Narnia are unable to live freely due to her spies, exemplified when Mr. Beaver, an ally of Aslan, says to the children, "We're not safe even here. . . . there *are* trees who would betray us to *her*" (Lewis 73). The White Witch has tainted not only nature's rejuvenating spring, but also the trees. She has created an unnatural environment. Yet, when the children are all in Narnia, which signals Aslan's return, the season changes quickly to spring, allowing Santa Claus to visit and spring to arrive within a matter of hours with once frozen rivers rushing and once stunted bulbs blooming: "'This is no thaw,' said the dwarf [evil henchman] suddenly stopping. 'This is *Spring*'" (Lewis 133). The children's arrival sets the prophecy of the Witch's demise in motion and brings Aslan back to Narnia. The change in the season corresponds to the Romantic ideal of childhood innocence and nature's restorative abilities for corrupted adults. The children are inherently close with nature due to their youth, and as the Pevensie children remain in Narnia they set in motion the restoration of the country's natural state. They restore natural order and return the country to its

needed balance of good and evil. The dwarf's evident concern when notifying the Witch of his revelation indicates that not only do the allies of Aslan see the progress of good, but that the side of evil is frightened at the idea of the prophecy's completion.

Peter of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, in contrast with Peter Pan, accepts his role as the eldest child and the reality of his battles in Narnia. Peter demonstrates his authority comfortably when he reprimands Edmund for harshly tricking Lucy, which begins the implications of Peter's natural born leadership capabilities (Lewis 48-9). Later, "Peter saw to it that Edmund stopped jeering at [Lucy]" which reflects Peter's authoritative and protective attitude in contrast to Edmund's self-centered and dishonest one (Lewis 55). While Peter Pan, too, shows leadership over the Lost Boys, he does not see the reality of their situation; recall the times where only imaginary food was served. Peter Pevensie, though, takes in the realities of his siblings' condition; for example, he ensures the children have warm coats. Peter reveals, too, he is a humble leader – willing to admit his wrongs no matter the age of who he has harmed. Peter's first act upon entering Narnia is to apologize to Lucy: "Peter turned at once to Lucy. 'I apologize for not believing you,' he said, 'I'm sorry. Will you shake hands with me?'" (Lewis 60). Though Lucy is the youngest of their group, Peter takes no hesitation when it comes to making amends. Unlike Edmund, Peter does not resent Lucy for being correct, and he does not let embarrassment turn to resentment.

The battles and associated moments Peter and Edmund face reflect the maturation of the male. Peter's place is prescribed by Aslan. Though Peter Pan runs from talk of his parents' ideas of his adult life, Peter Pevensie makes no argument. Both Lewis and his brother Warren were subjected to the common parental scrutiny when their parents decided Warren was to be an officer in the military and Lewis to be an attorney. Only one of the plans came true as Warren



did become an officer who served during WWI and Lewis became a military officer and, later, a professor at Oxford. The Lewis brothers' experience with their parents in combination with those reflected by Peter Pan and Peter Pevensie implies the continued relevance of parental influence in children's adult track. The specificity of Peter Pevensie's role and the surety of its happening never make Peter waver, and he only proves his worthiness of the title High King by never running away and facing his problems straightforwardly. Santa Claus makes a brief appearance where he delivers the gifts the children need. Peter was "silent and solemn" when given his sword and shield, knowing "they were a very serious kind of present" (Lewis 118). When under attack, Peter "set off running as hard as he could to the pavilion" to his siblings and others (Lewis 143). The reality of his sibling's danger urges his timely reaction, and Peter experiences his first battle. His natural instincts were brought out by the situation, beginning his first step into maturation for the role set out for him by Aslan. Peter is ordered by Aslan "to clean your sword" after the battle with the wolf since the sword "was all covered with the Wolf's hair and blood," and is then knighted (Lewis 145). The moment is a "marker of maturing" (Muth). Peter's blade is baptized in the blood of his first kill. This baptism marks his entrance into the next phase of his life, that of leader and protector – two positions Peter was already heading towards as the eldest brother. The necessity of growing up is reflected in Narnia's battles, like the necessity of maturing was brought about in the experiences of WWI and II.

Peter's roles only expand during his time in Narnia, becoming a general leading an army and then the High King of Narnia who rules the land with his siblings from their childhood into adulthood. What is likely the most puzzling aspect of the Pevensie children's adventures is that by the end of the novel they are left to rule Narnia: "So sat the children on their thrones . . . But amid all these rejoicings Aslan himself quietly slipped away" (Lewis 199-200). The rulers are

not left under Aslan's supervision or any supervision by rulers more experienced. Yet, the children prove their worth in honor, respect, and wisdom during their time in Narnia, and therefore win the trust of Aslan. Children ruling Narnia asserts the inherent qualities of goodness the children have, and as well the belief in their ability to retain those qualities as they become adults instead of becoming corrupted by shallow frivolities, courtly fiascos, and power jealousy. Such a distraction by the shallower qualities of adulthood would keep the rulers from acting for the good of the people because they would be focusing on themselves instead of what is best for the Narnians. Peter's own training reflects Lewis' own military experiences in an even shorter length of time: one day. The levity with which he faces every battle and new foe in Narnia signifies his understanding of the depth his roles have. He upholds maturation as a natural step in life. Brian Melton explains "The transformation that the boys undergo is notable" and points out the physical and emotional transformation the girls became aware of, such as Peter's sternness and Edmund's return to his more honest and noble nature (8). Peter, versus Peter Pan, never struggles to maintain a view of the world as a playground such as Peter Pan does in Neverland.

Edmund's character undergoes a dynamic shift by the end of the story. When the story commences, Edmund's personality does not align with that of Romantic childhood or Aslan's requirements for ruler. But after the battle and some years of reigning as co-king of Narnia, "Edmund was graver and quieter than Peter, and great in council and judgement" (Lewis 201). But before he becomes King Edmund the Just, he "always liked being beastly to anyone smaller than [him]self," and is deemed a traitor, because out of spite, he leaves his siblings to join the White Witch (49). Excepting Edmund, the Pevensie children are selfless and courageous before entering Narnia. Though it can be assumed all the Pevensie children, perhaps Lucy excepting, have begun school, Edmund is the only to have altered due to those school experiences. Peter

notices how “beastly” Edmund is to the younger children, but such behavior is odd for Edmund: “ever since his first term at the horrid school . . . he had begun to go wrong” (Lewis 197). In *Peter Pan* school is the beginning of corruption to the Lost Boys who lose their ability to fly because they lose their imagination, their ability to believe. Their innocence is removed from them. Schools are the representation of one’s first steps into society, where expectations are pressed upon children in a world outside of the home, and where knowledge of people is gathered both through history lessons and personal interactions with others. Even in *The Secret Garden*, Mary and Colin are not allowed to enter school until their moral characters are reformed, making the instruction of their personal selves into the best people the priority of lessons. School is another place of potential corruption, even questioned, though humourously, by the Professor: “Logic! Why don’t they teach logic at these schools? . . . I wonder what they *do* teach them at these schools” (Lewis 52-54). The Professor is not referencing a type of logic that rules out the existence of Narnia, but one that includes the seemingly impossible; logic is only limited by one’s imagination. Edmund loses the personal integrity and sense of imagination the story implies he once had before schooling began.

The female role in society also shifted during the world wars, which is reflected in Susan and Lucy’s roles in Narnia. The British women did not have a role on the battlefield, and neither do the Pevensie girls, further evidence of protecting women’s innocence. While the absence of British women from the battlefield may imply a lack of import, such was not the case. For British and American women, the war was a time to flourish. Both World War I and II “affected a revelation in the lives of [British] women of all classes” (*A Woman’s World*, 9:56). Such is the case with Susan and Lucy as they tend to and mourn Aslan’s death, and then take on the role of bringing in the supporting ranks. Through each World War “enough men had gone to the front to

mean women taking over at the back,” meaning women began to fill the roles of men, all the way from working in factories to becoming guards and mailwomen (*A Woman’s World*, 11:08).

Susan and Lucy must too ensure their brothers and Peter’s Army have a Narnia to return to and do so by aiding Aslan. They are told specifically they “are not meant to fight in the battle,” but instead of having to fade into the background, nonexistent, as Wendy does in Neverland, they are each given a gift, bow and arrows plus horn for Susan, and healing potion for Lucy (Lewis 118-9). It is important to note these gifts are not one for domestic work. The gifts are an acknowledgement of the times’ state of danger and war. Both literally in the British lives and within the novel, the need to protect oneself was a reality that could not be ignored. The gifts given to Susan and Lucy states their potential need to defend themselves. The bow and horn indicate the girls, while still under the protection of men, may not always find them in hand. Instead of wishing for the help of men and forsaking action, as Wendy does in the lagoon, Susan and Lucy are given instruments of action, because, like in England, the boys and girls do become separated, and therefore cannot always fight for one another directly. The healing cordial given to Lucy is indicative of the active need for women’s aid in the war, both in Narnia and in Britain. In correspondence to the more active role the British women had during the wars, working in factories and such, Susan and Lucy must accomplish their mission with Aslan.

Women gained an entirely new idea of freedom. Men played an important role in protecting the country, and the British women ensured the men had a country to come home to when each of the wars were over. Due to the women’s incredible work and effort exerted there was a “subsequent alter[ing of] perceptions of women’s capabilities [that] was to have lasting ramifications” (*A Woman’s World*, 10:12). Each aspect of life changed for many women, from their sporting activities to their haircuts and fashions. The modification in the role of both men

and women is reflected and rejoiced in C. S. Lewis's post-war children's book. The girls are recognized as competent members of their group and thus, as told by Aslan, "We have a long journey to go. You must ride on me" (Lewis 180). The girls have no choice. The "we" and "must" assert their inclusivity as well as their necessity to the cause's success. While the boys are leading the battle with formerly Aslan's, now Peter's Army, the girls are meant to aid Aslan by freeing the stone creatures at the Witch's castle, creatures who are essential to winning the battle against the White Witch. Lucy's role is more prominent at the end of the battle when "she [attended] the wounded while [Aslan] restored those who had been turned into stone" (Lewis 197). Her gift from Santa Claus is necessary for the wounded to live. Lucy is directed by Aslan to leave her family and work alongside him. She is not meant to strictly focus on her own family, but her purpose has expanded to the needs of the greater sphere of people, like the British women who worked, not solely for their own immediate family, but for the general good of their countrymen. Women of the British Red Cross were firmly active in aiding wounded soldiers and civilians, either in hospitals or by helping civilians who opened their homes for the recovery of wounded soldiers (British Red Cross). Henry Buckton notes the many young women who joined the British Red Cross Society as a way to become a part of the war efforts (95-96). As with the many British women who served as nurses, Lucy must remove herself from her family to ensure others may return to their own.

Where before the world wars the concept of battle and death in battle were romanticized, in Narnia, unlike in Neverland, war is not glorious, and death is gory. Michael Paris references the historical work of Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau: "Children were fully integrated into the war [WWI & II]. In all the combatant nations childhood was the target for intense propaganda," and further states "This was equally true of Britain, where such propaganda was directed at boys and

young men,” via toys, tracts, and fictionalized accounts of the war” (xi-xii). Instead of being unmarked and even callously or immaturely unaware of the great battle that took place, such as the Lost Boys were, “the experience . . . could have in fact helped [the Pevensies] mature” (Melton 9). The images of the war portray “a sense of realism that pervades Narnian war. War and its accoutrements in Narnia are no more glorious or frivolous than in real life” (Melton 9). While Lewis does protect his readers from the physical descriptions of dead bodies and gaping wounds, he does make the war in Narnia a reality to his readers and the Pevensies. The sound of war is heard by Lucy as she and Peter’s reinforcements arrive at the battle. Lewis does not apply a “sense of fun or grandeur,” but the narrator does note the “queer feeling inside” (Melton 7) Lucy has when she hears “shouts and shrieks and the clashing of metal against metal” (Lewis 193). While reading *Peter Pan* the descriptions of the boys fighting creates a distinct detachment the boys have from their emotions while fighting, all the while leaving readers with a sense of excitement. In Narnia the tone portrayed to readers is tense, fearful and apprehensive, making readers worried for the fate of Peter, Edmund, and Peter’s Army. The imagery of evil is not shielded from readers as Lucy views Aslan’s sleighing nor with descriptions of the foes.

Neither are the Pevensie children shielded from the reality of death in a battle, Edmund being point in case. Edmund does not die, though when he is seen by his siblings he is “covered with blood, his mouth [is] open, and his face a nasty green color” (Lewis 196). Then Lucy and the other children’s attention is drawn to the number of near dead and already dead when Lucy wishes to remain with her family. Aslan, “in a graver voice,” says, “others also are on the point of death. Must *more* people die for Edmund?” (Lewis 197). Their focus, initially within their circle’s circumstances, must expand to incorporate the need of the others in the battle, and thus Edmund provides the portal for the children to imbibe the reality of death into their minds. Lewis

notes in his essay “On Three Ways of Writing for Children” that to attempt to hide from children the truth of being “born into a world of death, violence, wounds, adventure, heroism and cowardice, good and evil” would “indeed be to give children a false impression and feed them on escapism in a bad sense,” especially when considering his world was now one “of the atomic bomb” (39). The reality of battle gives children the sense of difficulty they will face in their lives, whether their reality is a true battle or a fight with life’s other circumstances. Lewis wrote to have “the villains be soundly killed at the end of the book,” to show good will conquer evil (Lewis 40). The children, like those in Neverland, do experience adventure, but the adventure is reinforced with a true sense of danger and high stakes, ending purposefully to show morality. The adventure is not for adventure’s sake, but instead reflects the sense of purpose and energy infused into the British mindset during the world wars.

In *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* the adventures serve to aid the children in developing the qualities they will carry into adulthood, not freeze the mind and physical form from maturing. Narnia is not a place to remain a child but reflects how one should carry the ideas of childhood into adulthood (Muth). *Peter Pan* is the notion that all good things stop in childhood because childhood is the place where believing and truth are more accessible, and adulthood is the place of distractions (Muth). The children are not given an ultimatum as those in the Neverland – grow up and never return or stay and never grow up. Instead, the Pevensies grow up as wonderful rulers, and then return as children to the English countryside where the truth of Narnia is meant to reside within them. The distractions of adulthood are recognized by many of those who travel to Narnia, most obviously in *The Last Battle*, the conclusion to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, when Susan does not die with her siblings. One critic suggests Susan is not allowed to reunite with her siblings in the series’ conclusion because Susan “is embedded within

traditional femininity, and it is these character traits that exclude her from the Narnian equivalent to Heaven,” further concluding “the *Chronicles* are indeed ‘unfriendly’ to the feminine” (Fry 160 & 166). Susan’s death does not take place as she is being given a chance to see the flaw in being “interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipsticks and invitations” (Lewis 169). In Lewis’ own words, to break “the evil enchantment of worldliness” is in part why he writes (31). Susan does become taken in by the distractions and false importance of certain aspects of adulthood. Susan, by the time of *The Last Battle*, has lost the lessons she learned in Narnia, loses her belief in Aslan, the children’s adventures, and therefore the values Aslan and Narnia instills in the Pevensies. The other children from *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, Peter, Edmund and Lucy, are able to return though. They have retained the specialty of childhood by not letting their character diminish in adulthood.

In the years corresponding to literature post WWI and II, men were sobered by their war experiences as they realized the schoolboy dream of glory in war was false, crushed in the brutal reality of death and the new machinations used to carry out the killings. Women flourished as they were needed to maintain the country. Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy reflect such changes in the British lifestyle. Lewis experienced the war and was face to face with the shifting roles of women as more and more came to teach at and attend Oxford. In Lewis’s lifetime the boys who had been taught the glory of war by their schoolmasters, family members, and peers quickly learned the brutality of war. The reality of the war in Lewis’s life lasted far longer than his personal time in the trenches and was truly brought home with his brother who became an alcoholic and longed for their childhood lives (Wilson 203). Warren’s alcoholism was a disease that even kept him from Lewis’s funeral, eventually following Warren to his death (Wilson 299). Even J. M. Barrie did not go unscathed from the wars. George Llewelyn Davies, one of the



brothers who inspired *Peter Pan*, was killed fighting for the English in France, January of 1914 (Chaney 307). Barrie, during “This year, and for the duration, [had] the famous phrase ‘To die would be an awfully big adventure’ [removed] from the annual revivals of *Peter Pan*,” proving even Barrie realized war was no longer a plaything (Chaney 307). Reality hit his family hard, and in letters prior to George’s death Barrie wrote saying he “doesn’t care a ‘farthing’ for any kind of military glory” (Chaney 308). As expressed by Barrie through the change in the manuscript for *Peter Pan*, and also in Lewis’s personal knowledge of the wars’ after affects, the war changed mindsets. Men’s view became more somber towards war, and unlike the playtime of war in Neverland, war in Narnia was a sobering experience and catalyst for maturity.

## Conclusion:

## Frolicking in Childhood – Frolicking in Adulthood

Girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales . . . But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what you think of it.

- Dedication, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*

C. S. Lewis' brief letter to Lucy Barfield, his goddaughter, concisely states the theme of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*: the lessons of childhood about hope and good conquering evil are meant to remain within a person forever. Childhood in these novels is meant to serve adulthood by forming the young personalities to fit into the adult gender expectations of society. But not all children wish to fulfill these expectations. The either/or philosophy of maturation presented in *Peter Pan* is abandoned in Burnett's and Lewis' work as each adopt similar ideas about growing up. *Peter Pan* declaratively states growing up is bad. Maturation is a fetter on imagination, adventure, and everything lighthearted. But in *The Secret Garden* and in Lewis' work, maturation is the time when all good things are learned. Burnett's work follows the ideals of Romantic childhood, which is in accord with becoming a successful adult for one's societal gender role. Lewis' novel shows how the principles gained in childhood will be the principles guiding one throughout life. While all three novels reveal how imperative childhood is, they differ in deciding on whether a child should grow up or should be allowed to enter adulthood. In Burnett's and Lewis' novels, children are meant to learn their gender roles while

young, and they are also meant to gain personal, moral values to help them uphold their roles and ensure their personal happiness.

These differing philosophies of maturation are notably brought forth in the duration and conditions of the children's ability to remain in their magical lands or the Garden. For Peter, the Lost Boys and the Darling Children, Victorian adulthood is a form of restriction. Childhood on the Neverland is the only place and time when people are free to form their own identity and take on their own roles. There is no condemnation for being a saucy mermaid or an adventurous squaw. Yet, as noted of Mr. Darling's worries at the novel's beginning, English society's judgment can have a serious impact on one's social and business life, ultimately possessing power enough to remove the father/provider figure's ability to fulfill his gender role. Only children may venture to the Neverland. The only way to remain there is to forever stay a child. A rule is given shortly into the story, that though the adult readers may know of the Neverland "we [adults] shall land no more" (Barrie 7). Wendy has to make the choice to either stay and remain a child or leave, never to come back by choosing to grow up, but the Pevensie children and those in Misselthwaite are given no such ultimatum (Muth). The idea portrayed in *Peter Pan* is that there is a sacred imagination, a special ability to believe and hope that is only available to humankind through childhood and that upon growing up the ability is irrevocably lost.

In *The Secret Garden* there is no other expectation than to grow up, but growing up becomes more complex. The Garden may be left and reentered at anyone's leisure, adult or child. The Garden rejuvenates all people, from Ben Weatherstaff to ten-year-old Mary. It is the incorporation of Romantic ideals that really emphasize a different way of imagining adulthood. People may grow up to become negative, embittered people who neglect their gender role, or they can become positively determined people who accept their gender roles, and inevitably end

up happier for doing so, but the crux lies in the development of Romantic ideals in childhood. Colin and Mary are very much on the path to becoming such toxic adults, but because nature interferes with their upbringing, the path alters. Their time in the Garden does not conclude like Wendy's and the Lost Boys'. The Garden is meant to remain as a source of goodness, a reminder of purity and positivity. The Garden serves to remind those who tend it that life is what you plant. Life can be fresh and pure, but it is only so by the actions one takes and the beliefs one holds.

*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* takes on a fully rounded ideal of adulthood best exemplified in the Pevensie children reaching full maturation in Narnia before returning to England as children. Such coincides with *The Secret Garden's* surmises of adulthood: children are meant to grow up, and growing up does not have to be so bad. Becoming adult rulers in Narnia is expected of the Pevensie siblings as fulfillment of the prophecy. The lessons they have learned in their battle experiences are meant to form their adult selves, which will aid them as rulers. Nothing sacred about childhood is lost in Narnia, and is instead brought with the Pevensie siblings to full maturation. Lewis' work broadens the ideals of adulthood from being confined to the domestic through the children becoming the realized rulers of Narnia. Their roles, though clearly taught in a domestic sphere while in England, become more concerned with saving Narnia. Those roles remain gendered, but their gendering does not confine Susan and Lucy to the passive role Wendy inhabits in the Neverland. The World Wars widened the opportunities offered for women in England as the roles men often inhabited were vacated. The British community was infused with a sense of nationalism and brought all people outside of their domestic roles to roles attuned to a greater good sewn together by one purpose. The children's roles in Narnia reflect the different sense of purpose the adult British roles were incorporating

into the previous Victorian and Edwardian views of men and women's domestic gender expectations. Narnia, unlike the Garden, cannot be reentered by whim. Instead, the potential to return to Narnia is stimulus for maintaining its morals and beliefs.

Together, Wendy, Peter, the Lost Boys, Mary, Colin, Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy create a diverse lens to see a cohesive idealization of childhood with a contrasting and evolving concept of adulthood. No judgment is placed on the role expected of women. Often, the role is idealized and celebrated. Women serve a special purpose in these novels. The girls mirror the goodness of the women around them, and in the case of Susan and Lucy, they become the images meant to be mirrored. The girls are beacons of the moral goodness women in the British society were expected to possess. The boys, though, reveal a sense of lightheartedness that is missing from manhood, especially for Peter Pan and the Lost Boys. But Colin, Peter, and Edmund rejuvenate the idea of manhood with purpose and creativity found in discovering new aspects of oneself and personal drive. Yet, it is good to acknowledge that any expectation placed on a person without their believing in the expectation themselves, will be found confining and limiting. Ultimately, though, these children's novels generate discussion on the definition of childhood and adulthood, which concludes with the message that childhood serves a purpose even in adulthood and should not be forgotten.

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