"Do You Believe?"
Peter Pan and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as Historical Artifacts

By

Tamara Stone

* * * * * * * * *

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of English and History

UNION COLLEGE
June, 2013

ABSTRACT

STONE, TAMARA "Do You Believe?"**--***Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as Historical Artifacts**.** Departments of English and History, June 2013.

ADVISORS: Professors Katherine Lynes, Bunkong Tuon, and Andrew Morris

Scholars often analyze J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* biographically through the author, didactically, or as pure entertainment. While those interpretations provide insight, children's literature like *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* can also be analyzed as political and social commentary. Although children's literature is often discounted as a *lesser* genre of literature, analyzing children's works offers later generations a view into contemporary societal mores because the generally straightforward plotline allows for subtly incorporated commentary by the author. One can read *Peter Pan* as "simply a children's story," or note the underlying satirical view of Victorian England, consumed with class and propriety, highlighting emerging Edwardian ideals about leisure and fun. Previous scholars have looked at *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a populist, progressive, and even purely economic, allegory of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. While valuing the potential of the story to serve dual purposes, seeing the work as an American pro-isolationist document seems to have been overlooked. Studying *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* as both literary and historical texts, suggests an explanation for their continued relevance today. Looking at children's works as potential social and political criticisms will allow future scholars to utilize these stories as more than simply didactic tales, but as historical texts commenting on societal concerns of their time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"Children's books are always an expression of their times."[1]

Many consider the period between 1865 and 1914 the "Era of the Child."[2] Studying that time period through contemporary literature offers a valuable view into societal mores of the time. Children's books not only serve as educational entertainment, but as historical artifacts abundant with information about revered societal values. J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan (*1904)[3] and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (*1900) are two extremely popular children's works from their times, that remain revered classic tales today. While dissimilar in plot, setting, and country of origin, the books share children as protagonists, common themes, and satirical structure. Both share a fantastical element as well as a running motif about the importance of home. Well-known in various cultures today, these works still resonate. It is for this reason that they have been chosen as appropriate samplings from which to analyze and draw conclusions about two rapidly changing societies (English and the United States) at the turn of the twentieth century.

The difference in country of origin accounts for certain differences between *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (American) and *Peter Pan* (English). Cornelia Meigs, children's author and literary scholar, offers a concise and revealing analysis of children's books from the two countries. She states how English literature at the turn of the century often

---

[1] Meigs, Cornelia. *A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in English. Prepared in Four Parts*. New York: Macmillan, 1969. Print. Page 667.
[2] Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 20.
[3] *Peter Pan* was first performed as a play in 1904. It was not published in print until 1911, although the storyline remained predominantly the same. This paper refers only to the printed text, although for purposes of analysis, the audience of play and the novel are considered one and the same (from 1904).

encompassed a "sense of adventure;" "the fierce feeling for right and justice;" "class consciousness;" and "humor running so easily into nonsense and fantasy."[4] Many of these characteristics were reflective of traits the English saw in themselves. In *Peter Pan,* Barrie played on the fact that the English viewed themselves as models of respectability, in order to satirize "proper" Victorian English society and the social rules to which they adhered.

In American children's literature, one notes a somewhat different set of values presented. Meigs describes American literature as embracing "equalitarianism rather than class consciousness… [containing] a stronger family feeling …courage and a hatred of the bully; self-reliance …simplicity and morality."[5] This offers a striking contrast to the "class consciousness" of England. These traits, categorized by Meigs, are reflective of turn-of-the-century America, which saw itself as the independent frontier. One notes a striking resemblance between the characteristics defining the United States in 1900, and the character of Dorothy in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, allegorically representative of the American "everyman." Baum uses Dorothy, and all she represents, to illustrate a pro-isolationist, anti-imperialist policy for the United States.

Despite select differences representative of the respective countries in which various works were published, much of the children's literature shares certain characteristics. One common aspect of both American and English children's books is their simplistic storyline, which lightly veils certain subtle underlying social and political commentaries made by the author. While many books may offer telling information

---

[4] Meigs, Cornelia. *A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in English. Prepared in Four Parts*. New York: Macmillan, 1969. Print. Page xvii.
[5] Meigs, Cornelia. *A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in English. Prepared in Four Parts*. New York: Macmillan, 1969. Print. Page xvii.

about a time in history, children's literature is especially significant, as the themes and key ideas are much more direct. The author employs exciting "plot points" to keep younger readers engaged. "'Wow' moments saturate children's stories, exploiting the emotive power of language for maximum effect."[6] These "wow" moments include fighting scenes, encounters with the story's antagonist, magical events, and unexpected plotline twists. While adults can pick up on the author's underlying commentary, the entertaining story makes it enjoyable for children as well. On the surface, both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* seem simplistic, yet their simplicity allows the author to incorporate satirical undertones.

One way of enhancing meaning in the otherwise simplistic storyline of children's books is through the use of juxtapositions, meant to offer commentary for adults and impart moral lessons to children. Literary scholar Seth Lerer argues that children live in a world of juxtaposition, and that children's books only echo this reality. He states:

> All children live on [a] cusp: between the memories of their comfortable youth and the fears of the future; between machines that work as playful toys and those that morph into weapons; between a natural world through which they romp and the demarcation of that world by the fences, walls, rails, roads, and bridges of adult administration.[7]

Thus, juxtaposition in children's stories serves as a literary device echoing the alternative realities children face. Authors use these contrasts in children's works as a means of highlighting aspects of society that seem contradictory. This includes both thematic paradoxes, like the hierarchical relationship between parents and their children, as well as societal paradoxes satirizing a place and/or specific period in history. One notes the

---

[6] Tatar, Maria. *Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Print. Page 11.
[7] Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, From Aesop to Harry Potter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print. Page 273.

presence of juxtaposition, specifically in the apparent disconnect between children and adults (guardians), in both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Children's literary scholars argue that one of the main roles of children's literature is to educate children about evils they may not encounter in their everyday lives. According to literary scholar Selma Lanes, "The best of young children's books, factual or fanciful, are those that give the child listener some window on the wider world outside his or her own limited domestic experience."[8] Books give children an opportunity to explore places and experiences outside their familiar surroundings; they give children the chance to gain an understanding of a world outside their sphere of comfort. This "good versus evil" thread present in children's literature accomplishes the didactic element of children's books; the story imparts certain life lessons and morals. At the same time however, the author uses the rudimentary juxtaposition of "good" versus "evil" to subtly offer commentary about a controversial subject or highlight societal inconsistencies he finds apparent or unreasonable.

One way of incorporating the "good" versus "evil" juxtaposition is through the use of the fantasy genre. Whether as a means to engage, or because children have active imaginations, much of children's literature, including both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, incorporates elements of fantasy. Lanes argues: "Fantasy [can] bring a child into meaningful contact with a difficult subject matter, with the darker side of human existence—with cruelty and evil—without threatening the child's own inner

---

[8] Lanes, Selma G.. *Through the Looking Glass: Further Adventures & Misadventures in the Realm of Children's Literature*. Boston: D.R. Godine, 2004. Print. Page 7.

security."[9] Fantasy serves as the perfect instructional tool to introduce children to the idea of fear, without actually approaching danger.

Furthermore, fantasy creates a domain where the impossible seems possible. Historian John Savage argues: "L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful World of Oz* and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* [were both] highly romantic, uncannily predictive, and striving to define something that was in the air but which did not yet have a definitive name."[10] The authors' use of fantasy enhances their story by allowing them to stretch limits and inject political and social commentaries. English scholar Alison Lurie posits that: "Fairy tales [portrayed] a society in which women were as competent and active as men, at every age and in every class."[11] Especially relevant at the turn of the twentieth century, fantasy allowed authors to create worlds with gender equality, as seen in *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, both of which featured a female protagonist. Both books strive to bend the usual, expand the imagination, and suggest a world different from the one in which their original readers lived.

In a children's fantasy world, children are portrayed as independent individuals, which seems fantastical compared to the "real-world" view of children. In the "real-world," children are often seen as pure and innocent, lacking the ability to make their own choices or take care of themselves. This begs the question however, what makes children so dependent? Professor of Childhood Studies Susan Honeyman contends that characterizing the child as "pure" has no legitimate basis; she states: "we construct

---

[9] Lanes, Selma G.. *Through the Looking Glass: Further Adventures & Misadventures in the Realm of Children's Literature*. Boston: D.R. Godine, 2004. Print. Page 35.
[10] Savage, Jon. *Teenage*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2007. Print. Page xvii.
[11] Lurie, Alison. *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: Subversive Children's Literature*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1990. Print. Page 18.

childhood as such in order to protest that adulthood is experienced, sexual, rational, and schooled."[12] Honeyman argues that seeing the child as "irrational" and the adult as "rational" is a societal generalization. Yet, children are members of society who do not have the ability to speak up for themselves and contradict this belief. Thus, this generalization continues to persist. Honeyman argue that: "cuteness [is] not something we find in our children but something we *do* to them."[13] Children are often not given the opportunity to speak their mind or take action in society, which at least partially explains what makes the headstrong, adventurous child protagonist in fantasy so appealing. Adults in children's stories often see children as equals. It is not that children are sophisticated in children's books, but they are not marginalized in terms of their "cuteness;" they have strong personalities and make their own decisions as well.

Related to this idea of children as "irrational" and "dependent," some miss the value of analyzing children's literature as a literary form. Just as children are perceived as simply "cute," children's literature, in comparison to *regular* fiction, is sometimes viewed as work of lesser quality, intended for the simple-minded. Analyzing *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* offers a characterization of what defines children's literature and questions why it is classified as its own genre. While many scholars argue that the primary role of children's literature is to teach children morals—"finely crafted stories for children that make honesty, responsibility, and compassion come alive"—it

[12] Honeyman, Susan. *Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005. Print. Page 3.
[13] Honeyman, Susan. *Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005. Print. Page 82.

also can serve as a social and political commentary.[14] Didactically written, the stories communicate values esteemed by the society for which they were written, as well as subtly highlight, for the adult reader, societal issues.

A variety of scholars have studied children's literature generally, and many have looked specifically at *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Yet scholars either focus their research singularly on one of the two classics, or use a thematic point from the tale to make a broader point about a variety of children's books. The approach of this thesis is closer to the second strategy; however, scholarly works encompassing an anthology of children's books usually focus on one common theme or a similar take away moral message. Instead I prove that social and political commentaries are reflected in children's literature (using specifically *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*), and thus argue the merit of using children's books as a historical document of their time.

Chapter One begins with an historical overview of the "Era of the Child," during which period both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* were published. While many children's books offer insight into the time they were written, the turn of the twentieth century is especially significant; it is the first time childhood begins to be celebrated in the western world. In Britain, the end of Queen Victoria's reign, with its structured societal rules, welcomed in a new age, celebrating leisure, defined by historians as the Edwardian Period. At the same time, the United States was on the brink of becoming a world power, having just prevailed in the Spanish American War of 1898, stirring much debate about the possibility of America as an imperial nation.

---

[14] Kilpatrick, William, Gregory Wolfe, and Suzanne M. Wolfe. *Books that build character: a guide to teaching your child moral values through stories*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. Print. Page 17.

Chapter One addresses potential reasons for this shift in the societal viewpoint about childhood, which also resulted in an increase in the children's book market. At the turn of the century, the "ideal" reader came from the middle class; the chapter addresses what values middle class parents hoped to impart to their children by buying specific works. The chapter also questions the idea of who children's books are written for, arguing that children's books are meant for *both* adults and children.

Chapter Two specifically focuses on J.M. Barrie's acclaimed story *Peter Pan*, the story of a boy who refuses to grow up. The chapter argues that Barrie used *Peter Pan* as a tool to satirize the rigidity of Victorian England, particularly mocking the English obsession with class, societal rules, and assigned gender roles. Barrie's use of paradox, puns, and double entendre subtly draws attention to aspects of society he saw as flawed, while on the surface creating a didactic story for young children to enjoy. The children in Neverland attempt to mimic English societal rules, without any understanding of their purpose, making such rules seem silly and pointless. Barrie creates Neverland, a classless utopia with gender equality, as juxtaposition to the rigidity of Victorian England.

Chapter Three analyzes L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the tale of a young girl whisked into a foreign land whose greatest desire is to return home. The chapter illustrates how the children's text can be analyzed as an anti-imperialist commentary of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Baum uses his *female* protagonist Dorothy, a child, to embody the American everyman. The chapter argues that Oz represents the imperial world stage at the turn of the twentieth century, while Kansas represents the burgeoning United States. The story serves as an allegorical text to support the idea of American isolationism; Baum emphasizes the point of feeling

confidence at "home" before extending an imperial reach abroad. Baum uses various characters in Oz to illustrate the potential harms in joining the global, imperial world.

The concluding chapter serves to illustrate the consequence of having children's literature serve as a political and social commentary (however subtly). It discusses the significance of comparing the two stories, one written in Great Britain, the other in the United States, and how their country of origins affects their overall story. It discusses the change in how both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* are now perceived since their initial publishing date, yet how both manage to remain revered classics. It suggests that future scholars can use children's stories as more than simply didactic tales, but as historical texts commenting on societal concerns of their time.

Chapter 1-Redefining Childhood
Historical Overview of Turn-of-the-Century Britain and the United States

"Throughout its history, children's literature has been used by adults to encourage readers to think in particular ways, to value certain kinds of behaviors and activities and to refrain from others."[1]

Children's literature provides a treasure trove of historical artifacts from which we may examine social values from the time the works were written. English J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan (*1904)[2] and American L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (*1900) were two extremely popular children's works, when they were published at the turn of the twentieth century, and remain so a century later. Both books were published into a time of rethinking children's roles, indicative of a greater societal shift regarding issues of gender, imperial growth, and social expectations taking place.

Although politically the United States and Great Britain differed, they shared many social changes at the turn of the twentieth century. The issue of women's rights, specifically their right to vote, was increasingly debated in both countries. Although at the time of publication neither country had granted women suffrage, both Baum and Barrie's decision to make their protagonist female is noteworthy. The focus on gender in children's literature, along with representations of imperialism, class structure, and social hierarchy, echo central societal issues of the time.

---

[1] Reynolds, Kimberley. *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011. Print. Page 112.
[2] As addressed in the introduction, *Peter Pan* was not published in print until 1911, but the storyline remained predominantly the same.

Looking at Great Britain specifically, the Victorian era gave way to the Edwardian period at the turn of the century.[3] For the sake of this thesis, choosing a specific year for the "start" of the Edwardian period is not central; it is more pertinent to simply note the significant social and political changes taking place. It is also noteworthy to consider that social mores often transcend their "assigned" time period; as such, analyzing the Victorian elements in *Peter Pan* remains relevant although the play was only first performed in 1904.

Scholars often discuss Victorian England as a time of rigidity and fixation with social class. Looking at familial structure, "Victorians idealized the family and, in theory, had strict roles for husbands, wives, and children. It was a middle class ideal, but it influenced those both above and below the social scale."[4] Concerned with appearances and demonstration of wealth, the Victorian middle class focused greatly on differentiating themselves from the lower classes. They not only saw themselves as separate from the working class but, "Victorian middle-class culture was dedicated to separate spheres: separate single-family houses, separation of work from home, and separation of women from work."[5] This "separation" serves to define the middle class Victorian mindset, and thus resonates throughout J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.

The Edwardian mindset evolved as a reaction to the stifling nature of Victorian England. Scholars associate the Edwardian Era with celebrating childlike frivolity,

---

[3] Determining when this separation between the Victorian and Edwardian period took place is quite disputed by historians. Strictly speaking, Victorian fiction spanned the length of Queen Victoria's reign, 1837 to 1901.

[4] Frost, Ginger Suzanne. *Victorian Childhoods*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009. Print. Page 3.

[5] Thompson, Francis Michael Longstreth. *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain: 1830-1900*. London: Fontana, 1988. Print. Page 275.

embracing entertainment, and championing leisure time. It was "part of a broad social revolution that reversed the early Victorian attack on amusement and made recreation a major mass industry in England."[6] Strains of this "social revolution" can be identified throughout *Peter Pan*. Barrie satirizes the middle-class Victorian mindset in *Peter Pan,* as a means of promoting the *laissez faire* Edwardian attitudes emerging at the turn of the century.

The end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century marked noteworthy change in the United States as well. Historian Maury Klein states that in the nineteenth century:

> [T]he United States underwent a remarkable transformation from an economy based on the production of raw materials and subsistence agriculture to an expanding market economy…by the end of the nineteenth century, [they] had outdistanced England, France, and Germany in the rate of economic growth, per capita wealth, and general prosperity.[7]

The period coming out of the Civil War in 1865 was a time of monumental social, political, and economic change in the United States. One notes a shift towards corporate capitalists; however, historian M.J. Heale states that while, "Big business [had been] featured in other industrial economies, [nowhere] did their appearance meet [such] suspicion as in the United States."[8] Americans saw their country as representative of the

---

[6] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 165.
[7] Klein, Maury. *The Genesis of Industrial America, 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print. Page xi.
[8] Heale, M. J.. *Twentieth-Century America: Politics and Power in the United States, 1900-2000*. London: Arnold, 2004. Print. Page 6.

everyman,[9] not the large business conglomerates of abroad. They treasured their legacy of individualism, as well as their democratic, decentralized government, and struggled to maintain this legacy as they developed exponentially.

Into this emerging, industrializing country developed a controversial and influential American political movement, known as the Populist movement. Populism, "a predominantly agrarian and decidedly democratic, social-political movement of the 1890s that was formally known as the People's Party of America" echoed the idea that the United States represented the American everyman.[10] Coming out of the Civil War, the United States suffered from great deflation; although statistics vary, "the dollar appreciated significantly throughout the period. (According to one study, deflation totaled 57.9 percent from 1870 to 1900…most severe in the South and West).[11] As a means of solving America's economic problems, many began championing bimetallism, or the introduction of silver into the United States gold standard economy. Passionate silver advocates, like presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, "contended that silver would bring about a stable dollar situation; gold-standard advocates, who had matters going their way, were convinced that results would be extreme in the opposite

[9] This term "everyman" is used throughout Chapter 3 and refers to the average American as well as America's image *as* symbolic of the average American. The word "everyman" has roots in the morality play *Everyman,* written fittingly by an anonymous writer. In the story the protagonist Everyman must go on a strenuous journey. When he turns to his friends, "personifications of his qualities and possessions," they refuse to help. It is only Good Deeds and Knowledge who go with him to the End, as mentioned in the introduction of Drusilla Scott's *Everyman revived: the common sense of Michael Polanyi*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.1995), Page 15.
[10] Clanton, Gene. *Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print. Page xi.
[11] Clanton, Gene. *Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print. Page 121.

direction."[12] The gold standard debate[13] was widely argued across political parties, "[coming] to a crescendo of sorts in the presidential campaign of 1896…between Bryan [for free silver] and Republican William McKinley [who championed the gold standard]."[14] That year voter turnout was at an ultimate high, with at least two million voters than that of the previous election; McKinley won.[15] Many scholars argue *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* serves as a Populist allegory, incorporating the election of 1896 and the gold standard debate.[16]

Related to the compelling Populist movement, one also saw increased support for Progressivism and the American Progressive Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.[17] Progressivism was "less an organized movement than a mosaic of discrete, often piecemeal and overlapping efforts to solve a catalog of problems generated by the growth of the industrial system."[18] Unlike the Populist movement, the Progressive movement was not restricted to the United States; it occurred around the world in industrializing countries. The advocates of Progressivism "were not the downtrodden but

---

[12] Clanton, Gene. *Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print. Page 121.
[13] Also known as the "Silver Issue"
[14] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print. Page 28.
[15] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print. Page 28.
[16] Henry Littlefield was the first to suggest a connection between *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and the American Populist movement. Since he published his article in 1964, a variety of other scholars have taken his argument to prove other possible allegorical connections.
[17] Historian Gene Clanton argues that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is an allegory about Progressivism *not* Populism.
[18] Klein, Maury. *The Genesis of Industrial America, 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print. Page 147.

rather an assortment of middle-and-upper-class citizens eager to cure the social ills."[19] These "ills" included illiteracy, disease, and poverty, widespread in both industrializing United States and Britain.

In the United States, the Progressive Era also coincided with the widely debated, and extremely significant, argument about the emergence of the United States as a world power.[20] In 1898, the United States went to battle with Spain, in a war known as the Spanish American War. Commonly referred to as the "splendid little war," as historian Christopher McKnight Nichols puts it eloquently: "Nothing about the war had been 'little' except its duration, from the declaration on April 25th 1898, to the peace on December 10, 1898."[21] The American triumph in the Spanish American War left the United States occupying the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico. So suddenly it seemed, "the United States had acquired an empire of sorts and there was outspoken opposition by those who insisted that America's own traditions required it to denounce imperialism."[22] Americans saw themselves as a beacon of hope to the rest of the world, the emerging new leaders of society championing individualism and integrity; the possible dissolution of such an image generated much debate.

Amongst all the changes occurring, one also saw a significant shift in views towards children and the concept of childhood in both the United States and Great Britain. Throughout the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century, children had been

---

[19] Klein, Maury. *The Genesis of Industrial America, 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print. Page 147.
[20] Heale, M. J.. *Twentieth-Century America: Politics and Power in the United States, 1900-2000*. London: Arnold, 2004. Print. Page 51.
[21] Nichols, Christopher McKnight. *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print. Page 59.
[22] Nichols, Christopher McKnight. *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print. Page 53.

trained to be quiet and useful. Jerold Griswold, a specialist in American literature and children's literature culture, states: "while it cannot be said that childhood was ignored before the nineteenth century, [children] were less indulged in these earlier times and childhood was not the primary locus of attention."[23] Rather than coddling their children, in the 19th century (and earlier), many families viewed their young ones as able workers. Society viewed children as dependent entities, not mature enough to be considered valuable. Seth Lerer, renowned for his historical analyses of English literature, argues: "[t]he years before the First World War in Britain and American were [years] that socially and politically redefined childhood."[24] While both countries had different traditions and practices related to child rearing, the shift in adults' perspective of a child's role in the family and in society was widespread; parents began to focus on nurturing and supporting their children. As a result, as Victorian historian Ginger Frost claims, "on average, childhood last[ed] longer in 1890 than it did in 1830."[25] No longer was childhood a period to make it through; it was a time to be cherished and enjoyed.

While historians have difficulty pinpointing what caused the shift in views about childhood, certain factors seem to have played a significant role. One explanation includes the emergence of pediatrics as a discipline in the medical world, signifying a medical endorsement of the idea of childhood. The study of the child, and problems afflicting them, began to be accepted as legitimate research at the turn of the century. According to historian Sally Shuttlework:

---

[23] Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 22.
[24] Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, From Aesop to Harry Potter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print. Page 254.
[25] Frost, Ginger Suzanne. *Victorian Childhoods*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009. Print. Page 143.

> The beginnings of British scientific interest in the area are often traced to the publication of Darwin's article 'A Biographical Sketch of an Infant,' in the journal *Mind* in 1877, which clearly had a catalytic effect on the field, giving rise to numerous other scientific studies of a child's early years."[26]

Soon after, in the United States, "pediatrics was officially ranked a specialty at a meeting of the American Medical Association in 1880."[27] The British Child-Study Association was founded in 1894, "inspired by American work in child psychology."[28]

With the acceptance of scientific research focused on children and the establishment of national pediatric organizations, child mortality rates decreased. In Britain, the mortality rate for the general population fell from 21.8 deaths per thousand in 1868, to 14.8 deaths per thousand in 1908—significant for the most likely cause of death at the time was infancy, not old age.[29] Parents, more secure that their children would survive their early years, began to spend more time with, and invest in, the wellbeing of their offspring. As child life expectancy began to rise, one notes a drop in birthrates in both the United States and England. With assurance that their children were more likely to survive, women began to have fewer children. In the United States, "[t]he fertility rate among white women dropped from 7 children in 1800 to 3.9 in 1890, and to 3.2 by 1920."[30] While not as drastic a shift in Britain, the birthrate (combining England and Wales) dropped from 7.43 children in 1851, to 6.75 children in 1891, to 4.55 children by

---

[26] Shuttleworth, Sally. *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print. Page 221.
[27] Hulbert, Ann. *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print. Page 27.
[28] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 179.
[29] Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. Print. Page 77.
[30] Hulbert, Ann. *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print. Page 35.

1922.[31] Fewer children per family resulted in a higher standard of living for individuals in both the United States and Great Britain, especially for the middle class, although the shift was present in all classes.

In many ways, these decreasing mortality numbers in the United States and Britain were related to the work of the American and English Progressive middle classes. Connected to the cries of Progressivism, society also began to champion reformed labor laws—one aspect of which focused on children. No longer was it acceptable to send a child to work in a factory all day; labor laws were enacted as a means of protecting the innocuous child. This call for progressive reform emphasized not only the importance of labor reform, but also a call for universal children's education; educated children meant a more well-informed and lawful future populace. After 1880, in England, child attendance in school was made mandatory.[32] In the United States, "by 1890, twenty-seven states had passed such [compulsory education] laws, and by 1918 all forty-eight states then in the Union had enacted such legislation."[33] The upper classes viewed school as a way to keep children from the lower classes off the street. More children in school also meant an increase in childhood literacy rates, and thus an increased demand for children's books.

As society began to cherish childhood, and the demand for children's books began to grow, it seems unsurprising that the market for children's literature expanded greatly as well. At the turn of the twentieth century, one began to see: "[c]hildren's librarians [being] trained, and publishing companies establish[ing] separate departments

---

[31] Daunton, M. J.. *Wealth and Welfare: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1851-1951*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print. Page 375.
[32] Frost, Ginger Suzanne. *Victorian Childhoods*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009. Print. Page 37.
[33] Wayne J. Urban, *American Education: A History, Fourth Edition* (Taylor & Francis, 2008), Page 197.

to focus on creating books that children would want to read. Awards for excellence in children's literature were created, assuring quality would continue to be cultivated."[34] Children's book production became an increasingly successful source of revenue for publishing houses and bookstores. According to historian Jonathan Rose's research in *The Publishers' Circular,* which "compiled an annual census of book titles published in Britain," the number of children's books dramatically increased coming into the Edwardian era.[35] In 1870, in Britain, 14.1 percent of all books published were children's books and 7.8 percent of all books were fiction; by 1904 (the year *Peter Pan* was first performed), 30.6 percent of all books published were "fiction and juvenile," almost a 9 percent increase over a period of thirty four years.[36] Additionally, the number of works published rose from 657 juvenile books and 362 fiction books printed in 1870, to a combined 2548 fiction and juvenile books printed in 1904.[37] This upsurge in book sale numbers, as well as the increase in the number of books written, highlights the considerable shift, taking place at the end of the nineteenth century, in society's attitudes towards children.[38] As parents began to take pride in nurturing their children, and governmental ordinances mandated children's attendance at school, literacy rates improved, explaining in part the monumental increase in books sales.

---

[34] Mass, Wendy. *Children's Literature*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2001. Print. Page 11.
[35] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 213.
[36] After 1894, they no longer had the breakdown individually of juvenile and fiction books; the statistic was combined.
[37] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 218.
[38] No comparative research numbers could be found for the United States. However, considering the similarities in shifting childhood views in the United States and Britain, one can safely assume there was an increase in children's book sales in the United States as well.

Progressive ideals championed a protection of childhood, similar to the English Edwardian ideals about childhood. Jonathan Rose argues: "the Edwardian spirit of play was bound up with [such] a reversion to a childlike turn of mind, [it was] often an outright refusal to grow up."[39] The "Edwardian spirit of play" was a complete rejection of the rigid Victorian attitude that preceded it, and a striking parallel to the theme of "never growing up," woven throughout the classic *Peter Pan* tale.

This cultural shift, in both the United States and Britain, encouraged a new type of child protagonist as well. Unlike previous children's works, with undeveloped characters which served representative purposes above all else, child protagonists, at the turn of the twentieth century, "became [public figures], seized on as a vehicle for nostalgia or as a symbol of the future's promise" for adults.[40] Children's authors used their protagonists to illustrate societal flaws, as well as offer solutions to such flaws. Griswold presents an intriguing interpretation of the new type of child protagonist: "Writers would often portray the Child as a symbol of the hopeful future, enjoying a better life than its parents and more ready to accept the fruits of progress than recalcitrant seniors."[41] Reifying Griswold's argument, *Peter Pan*'s spirited protagonist Wendy represents Barrie's hopes for a better future Britain, shifting from the Victorian Period into the Edwardian Era. In flying to Neverland, Wendy becomes independent and, even as an adult, less concerned with the superficiality her parents seem so absorbed with at the start of the novel. Similarly, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* protagonist Dorothy can be seen as "a symbol of

---

[39] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 178.
[40] Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 25.
[41] Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 21.

the hopeful future," as she embodies the American everyman. As indicated in the following chapters, the seemingly straightforward characters in *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* are not quite so simple.

Children's authors often model their protagonists on their target reader. At the turn of the twentieth century, "child characters in, and the implied child readers of, children's literature were, with very few exceptions, prepubescent, white, middle class, and living in families with two heterosexual parents."[42] Before the American Civil Rights movement and the end of British colonialism, children's literature catered to a white, middle-class child because "children preferred books 'in which they [found] it easy to identify themselves with the hero or heroine" and the largest social group reading these classic children's stories came from the middle class.[43] Both Barrie and Baum would have assumed their central literary audience came from the middle class.

On the most basic level, children's books are created for children as entertainment and for imparting moral lessons. Stories, arguably, "create an emotional attachment to goodness, a desire to do the right thing…[they] provide a wealth of good examples…[they] familiarize youngsters with the codes of conduct they need to know…[and they] help to make sense out of life."[44] Children's books serve as an educational tool, teaching the young about upholding societal rules and values.

---

[42] Reynolds, Kimberley. *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011. Print. Page 19.
[43] Briggs, Julia, Dennis Butts, and M. O. Grenby. *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print. Page 15.
[44] Kilpatrick, William, Gregory Wolfe, and Suzanne M. Wolfe. *Books That Build Character: A Guide to Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. Print. Page 18.

Some scholars, however, argue that the political and social commentaries incorporated into children's works are geared towards impacting juvenile readers. Jack Zipes argues that, in the nineteenth century, "the literary fairy tale was becoming more and more a political weapon used to challenge or capture the minds and sensibilities of the young."[45] While adults perhaps have a greater understanding of the agenda of the book's author, scholars like Zipes argue that children follow the author's argument as well. By realizing this, the author hopes the child will understand the societal problems addressed in the work, and do something about such flaws in their future. One sees this underlying social and political commentary in Barrie's *Peter Pan* and Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Both stories are multilayered; their façade seems simply for children, but their underlying interpretations go much deeper.

Knowing that the majority of children's books published at the turn of the century were published with a middle class audience in mind proves useful in analyzing which ideals the middle class cherished. As adults were often the ones choosing the works for the children, it is important to consider what factors parents considered in making book choices for their children. Parents chose books for their children based on lessons and societal values they hoped the books would impart. Thus, one might question whether authors actually aim their stories at an adult consumer.

The most compelling argument about who children's books are really written for falls between the claim of works dedicated solely to children, and, conversely, the contention that children's books are actually meant for adult readers. Literary scholar Jacqueline Rose argues that a work dedicated completely to children is impossible. She

---

[45] Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. New York: Wildman Press, 1983. Print. Page 135.

states: "the best book for children is a book for adult *and* child"[46] Children's books often contain adult themes, in an attempt to appeal to both the child and adult reader. Literary scholar Susan Honeyman argues: "writers often utilize childhood as a lucid space through which to criticize the adult world."[47] Seemingly simplistic symbols (like Dorothy's shoes in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* or Peter's detached shadow in *Peter Pan*), in children's literature represent underlying criticisms and commentaries meant for an adult audience. A successful children's book is one which both children *and* adults can enjoy and appreciate. Although directed at children, the undertones of many children's books clearly address an older audience. An effective children's book is one that contains a basic, entertaining plotline for the child, but is also layered with underlying meaning, so that the book can continue to be picked up again and again. The addition of subtle commentary, as well as an engaging plotline, allows the story to continue to be analyzed in detail, much as *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* are in this thesis.

Both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* have deep roots in the society they were published into. From each, one can see a changing of the times, both for the emergence of children's literature as a genre, and for children as a newly treasured class. Not only did these works entertain children, but as argued by Jacqueline Rose, they engaged adults as well. Both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* are stories: "aimed at children but [which hook] adults [in] by [their] deep psychological complexity. [The stories continue] to speak so effectively across the generations that it is easy to

---

[46] Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1984. Print. Page 2.
[47] Honeyman, Susan. *Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005. Print. Page 5.

forget [their] origins in a particular time, place, and biography."[48] This is what in part has made them so successful, and keeps them relevant today.

[48] Savage, Jon. *Teenage*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2007. Print. Page 79.

Chapter 2: Who is Really the Child?
Looking at Peter Pan as a Social Commentary on the Victorian Class System

"'Pan, who and what art thou?'
'[I'm] youth, I'm joy… I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg'"-Peter Pan[1]

This chapter illustrates how J.M. Barrie satirizes the sentiments and social mores of Victorian England through his timeless tale of *Peter Pan,* while still captivating young audiences. According to contemporary children's literary scholar Michael Egan:

> Barrie appears to be making use of one of the important but unrecognized conventions of writing for children: the Double Address. On the one hand the author speaks directly to his principal audience…from time to time, however, he glances sidelong at the adults listening in and winks…Most of the humor in *Peter Pan* is of this type.[2]

Barrie's "Double Address" allows children to absorb the story and its lessons didactically, while adults (and scholars) decipher the subtler satirical undertones of the story. Barrie's satire pokes fun at the self-righteous Victorians' strict societal conventions, including its rigid class system, superficial devotion to appearance, and prescribed gender roles**.** While many are familiar with the plot line of *Peter Pan,* from the Disney animated film, theatrical adaptations, or various editions of the text, in order to alleviate confusion and provide for a better understanding of the text references, a short synopsis is included below.

---

[1] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 135.
[2] Egan, Michael. *The Neverland of Id: Barrie, Peter Pan, and Freud*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982. Print. Page 47.

Since its initial performance in 1904,[3] *Peter Pan*, a story about the passing of time and the cycle of life, has delighted readers and viewers, both young and old. The story begins in the Darling nursery, as Mr. and Mrs. Darling prepare to go out for the evening. From this initial encounter, the reader gains valuable information about the family dynamic of the Darling family. The children are playful, imaginative, and boisterous. Mr. and Mrs. Darling appear immature, while Nana, the children's dog (and ersatz nanny), seems to be the one most capable of caring for the three Darling children, Wendy, John, and Michael. Once their parents leave, Peter Pan appears in the Darling nursery and invites the children to join him in flying to Neverland, a land where children never grow up. Although hesitant at first, the children cannot resist the appeal of flying, and float out the window, leaving their beds empty when their parents return. While their parents pine in London for their lost children, the children embark on wild adventures with Peter and his band of Lost Boys, encountering fantastical fairies, mermaids, Indians, and pirates. The boys pretend that Wendy is their "mother," and follow her rules about eating, napping, and playing. With no sense of the passing of time, Wendy (and the reader) are unsure of how long she and her brothers have remained in Neverland. At the end of the story, the Darling children return home, bringing the motherless Lost Boys with them. Peter remains in Neverland, but each year (or when Peter remembers), Wendy returns to Neverland with him for "spring cleaning." When Wendy gets too old to make the pilgrimage, her daughter Jane goes, and then Jane's daughter Margaret, and "when

[3] *Peter Pan* was first performed as a play in 1904. It was not published in print until 1911, although the storyline remained predominantly the same. This paper refers only to the printed text, although for purposes of analysis, the audience of play and the novel are considered one and the same (from 1904).

Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and so it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless."[4]

Many who have analyzed *Peter Pan* focus upon the challenges of growing up, and the striking connection between Barrie's personal struggles as he matured and Peter Pan's refusal to grow up. The mother-child theme recurs throughout the novel, which in many ways is a celebration of childhood, signifying a shift in attitude in English society with respect to the role of children in society. Viewed in a historical context, *Peter Pan* can be seen as a subtle mockery of the Victorian mindset, highlighting the absurdity of the Victorian obsession with class and material wealth.

One aspect of Barrie's life that may have influenced the satirical adult-child relationship observed in *Peter Pan* is Barrie's own distant relationship with his mother Margaret Ogilvy. Apparently, although she paid Barrie little attention, so "deep was the influence that Margaret Ogilvy had over her son…from the time he was a small boy he idealized and all but worshipped her."[5] Barrie never gained the close relationship with his mother that he longed for, perhaps inspiring his decision to make the Lost Boys a group of motherless boys. Looking at *Peter Pan* biographically, Barrie's deep dependence upon his own mother may have played a role in casting the Lost Boys' as completely independent of parental influence. Barrie turns the typical parent-child relationship on its head in *Peter Pan,* by creating children who are easily independent from their parents, while the rather immature Darling parents depend heavily upon Victorian conventions and assessments.

---

[4] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 159.
[5] Darlington, W. A., *J. M. Barrie*. London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Limited, 1938. Print. Page 70.

It is possible that Barrie's distant relationship with his mother had a negative impact upon his ability to develop his relationships with other women; evidence suggests that, as an adult, Barrie remained romantically immature. As J.M. Barrie biographer Janet Dunbar states: "There is no evidence that any woman had ever excited him in the way other men were excited by attractive women. His worship of them did not go deeper than admiration for their beauty."[6] In this way, we see Barrie echoed in the character of Peter Pan. Just as Peter Pan does not understand that Wendy, Tinker Bell, and Tiger Lily all desire love from him, Barrie did not seem to exhibit an understanding of or desire for women.

A published author and successful playwright, Barrie spent much of his free time with the Davies children, from whom many of the *Peter Pan* characters get their names. Much of *Peter Pan*: "grew out of storytelling, playacting, and photography sessions Barrie engaged in with George, Jack, Peter, Michael, and Nico Llewelyn Davies."[7] Having no children of his own, and adopting the Davies children as his family, "[Barrie] brought to his games with [the Davies children] a child's zest and a man's breadth of imagination."[8] Barrie's affinity for children and the celebration of childhood enhanced his ability to reach both children and adults through his story. After an initial *Peter Pan* performance, critic Max Beerbohm, in a 1905 *Saturday Review* writes: "Mr. Barrie is not that rare creature, a man of genius. He is something even more rare—a child who, by some divine grace, can express through an artistic medium the childishness that is in

---

[6] Dunbar, Janet. *J.M. Barrie; The Man Behind the Image*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970. Print. Page 107.
[7] Gubar, Marah. *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print. Page 175.
[8] Darlington, W. A. *J. M. Barrie*. London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Limited, 1938. Print. Page 93.

him."[9] The public's view of Barrie as a child, a representation of his own character Peter, allowed Barrie to ridicule Victorian England in a manner subtle enough to remain undetected at the time. Critics, readers, and audiences viewed *Peter Pan* as a whimsical return to childhood that Barrie, "childlike" himself, seemed to embrace. Noteworthy in a time which began to celebrate childhood, a *New York Times* article from 1905 writes: "[Barrie] calls on his hearers to place themselves in the mental attitude they occupied when children…[*Peter Pan]* is a play which the auditor is compelled to accept a wild riot of imagination as natural and reasonable."[10] On its surface, the story does seem to ask adults to remember their childhood; Barrie's underlying message however, goes deeper, mocking the very audience watching his performance (or reading his story). The *New York Times* article continues: "How darling the experiment was and how it succeeded [when] Tinker Bell the fairy was dying. The only thing that could save her was for grown people to believe in fairies…the audience responded to this risky challenge with a storm of hand-clapping."[11] The critic writes that Barrie needed "grownup people" to believe in fairies to save Tinker Bell. However, in the text, Tinker Bell actually tells Peter: "she thought she could get well again if *children* believed in fairies."[12] Thus, Barrie ironically blurs the line between Victorian adults and children, satirizing the Victorian adults who see themselves as more mature than their children, while both adult and child watch (read), and enjoy the same story.

---

[9] Beerbohm, Max. "*Saturday Review*." 7 January 1905 within Hanson, Bruce K. *Peter Pan on stage and screen, 1904-2010*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011. Page 48.
[10] "For Believers in Fairies." *Special to The New York Times. New York Times (1857-1922)*: 11. Oct 18 1905.
[11] "For Believers in Fairies." *Special to The New York Times. New York Times (1857-1922)*: 11. Oct 18 1905.
[12] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 118.

Barrie pokes fun at the superficiality of Victorian middle-class society in *Peter Pan*, especially using the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Darling as examples of the "flawed" Victorian mindset. He casts Mr. Darling as vain, dramatic, and ultra-sensitive. Mr. Darling's obsession with appearance comes into sharp relief when he bursts into the children's room, shouting about the fact that he cannot get the tie to knot. "It is an astonishing thing to have to tell, but this man, though he knew about stocks and shares, had no real mastery of his tie."[13] Apparently well-qualified for his bank job—"he knew about stocks and shares"—Mr. Darling feels inadequate without his tie, a symbol of his position in the middle class. Rather than calmly asking Mrs. Darling to do his tie for him, Mr. Darling throws a tantrum: "'I warn you of this, mother, that unless this tie is round my neck we don't go to dinner to-night, and if I don't go out to dinner to-night, I never go to the office again, and if I don't go to the office again, you and I starve, and our children will be flung into the streets."[14] Mr. Darling's petulant if-then scenarios are reminiscent of a child's rant, exaggerating to the point of absurdity. He cares so much about his appearance, and proving his place in society, that he equates dressing improperly to starvation and homelessness. Mr. Darling's inability to tie his tie suggests perhaps he should not be wearing one at all. Barrie's comical depiction of Mr. Darling as child-like and immature, despite his social standing and supposed role as a parent, reflects the author's questioning of parent-child roles, and serves as a critique of contemporary social conventions (like wearing a tie as superficial).

---

[13] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 18.
[14] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 19.

Later that evening Mr. Darling's childish demeanor re-appears when he musses his trousers. He gets extremely upset upon "collid[ing] against [Nana], covering his new trousers with hair. They were not only new trousers, but they were the first he had ever had with braid on them, and he had had to bite his lip to prevent the tears coming."[15] Mr. Darling is again depicted as immaturely unable to control his emotions, when he nearly cries over an incident as inconsequential as getting dog-hair on his trousers. Mr. Darling's reaction to the possible blemish on his appearance seems to cause more of a reaction than the possible abduction of his own children.

Mr. Darling's distress is exacerbated because his pants were not only new, "but they were the first he had ever had with braid on them." The word "first" makes Mr. Darling seem as though he's only *now* old enough for pants with braiding. In fact, his economic status is most likely why these trousers are his first with braiding. Braiding signifies ornamentation, something different and usually more expensive than simple trousers. In Victorian England, where one purchased garments, as well as the styling, material, and ornamentation thereof, proved of great consequence. Historian Claire Rose cites how:

> [A] 1900 catalogue from Gardiner and Co. (John Johnson Collection), offered seven different boys' sailor suits in four different fabrics (white drill, navy serge, tweed, and plush). For the same size, the costs ranged from 1s. 11d. for the suit in white drill, 2s. 5d. for tweed, 2s. 11d. for serge, up to 11s. 9d. for plush.[16]

At the turn of the century, although dress continued to be formal, with the advances in factory production of clothing, not only were there more styles available, but they were

---

[15] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 19.
[16] Rose, Clare. "'The Novelty Consists In The Ornamental Design': Design Innovation In Mass-Produced Boys' Clothing, 1840–1900." *Textile History 38.1* (2007).

also less expensive than bespoke garments. Rose argues, "The relative and absolute decline in the cost of clothes by 1900 may have had profound effects on the availability of clothing at all levels of society."[17] The turn of the century "decline" in clothing costs meant that Mr. Darling could wear trousers with braiding, as part of a tuxedo, symbolizing his wealth (or appearance of wealth). Mr. Darling's braiding, like his attitude towards appearances, is superficial; it does not actually signify anything, but Mr. Darling assumes it elevates his position in society. Mr. Darling's excessive concern for his public image, and his fixation on appearance, adds another layer to Barrie's apparent disdain for the Victorian obsession with superficiality.

Mrs. Darling, the children's mother, provides Barrie with another opportunity to mock Victorian material ostentation. Again blurring the line between parent and child, Mrs. Darling seems like Wendy's sister more than she does her mother; "[Mrs. Darling] was wearing Wendy's bracelet on her arm; she had asked for the loan of it. Wendy loved to lend her bracelet to her mother."[18] Does Mrs. Darling wear Wendy's bracelet because she does not have one of her own, suggesting that Mrs. Darling must keep up appearances even if she cannot afford her own trappings of wealth? Perhaps; it is a nod to the child-like activity of *dressing up* with a twist. Instead of a young daughter donning her mother's clothes, makeup and jewelry as a game, Mrs. Darling wears all her jewelry, as well as her daughter's bracelet, to impress the guests at dinner. Mr. and Mrs. Darling pretend to belong to a class which they do not necessarily belong, once again a satirical point by Barrie about the Victorian fixation with appearance.

---

[17] Rose, Clare. "'The Novelty Consists In The Ornamental Design': Design Innovation In Mass-Produced Boys' Clothing, 1840–1900." *Textile History 38.1* (2007).
[18] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 18.

Mr. and Mrs. Darling's juvenile anxiety with appearance adversely impacts their ability to be exemplary parents. Their role and public appearance in society seems of more concern to them than their private role at home (as parents). When Peter Pan loses his shadow in the nursery, it is the dog Nana who knows what ought to be done, not Mrs. Darling.

> Nana had no doubt of what was the best thing to do with this shadow. She hung it out the window, meaning, 'He is sure to come back for it; let us put it where he can get it easily without disturbing the children.' But unfortunately Mrs. Darling could not leave it hanging out the window; it looked so like the washing and the lowered the whole tone of the house.[19]

Mrs. Darling cannot consider sacrificing her social standing, by placing Peter's shadow out the window, even for the benefit of her children. Blinded by the fear of societal judgment, Mrs. Darling puts the worth of her social status above her role as protecting mother. Historian Judith Flanders, in writing about the Victorian home explains:

> In theory, home was the private space of families. In practice—unacknowledged—houses were another aspect of public life. 'Home' was created by family life, but the house itself was inextricably linked with worldly success: the size of the house, how it was furnished, where it was located, all were indicative of the family that lived privately within.[20]

While "home" should represent comfort and repose, in the nineteenth century it also served as a vehicle to display wealth and prominence. Mrs. Darling cannot put Peter's shadow out, for doing so would be unbecoming. Barrie uses Mrs. Darling to ridicule the Victorian preoccupation with reputation and appearance.

Barrie pokes fun at Victorian society's penchant for ostentation, through the comical plot device of casting Nana, the dog, to watch over the Darlings' children. The

---

[19] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 16.
[20] Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. Print. Page 10.

Darlings had Nana because: "Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours."[21] When the Darlings cannot afford a *proper* nanny as society dictates, they use a Newfoundland dog instead. The desire for a nanny illustrates the Darlings' desperate attempt to keep up appearances:

> No nursery could possibly have been conducted more correctly, and Mr. Darling knew it, yet he sometimes wondered uneasily whether the neighbours talked. He had his position in the city to consider. Nana also troubled him in another way. He had sometimes a feeling that she did not admire him.[22]

Additional humor resides in the fact that Mr. Darling looks for admiration and acceptance from the dog, as a child looks to a parent for praise and accolades. Mr. Darling places so much weight on his neighbors' opinions that he believes negative opinions could impact "his position in the city." Mr. Darling's puerile fear of disapproval illustrates his preoccupation with appearances and social standing, satirized with humor by Barrie.

Barrie demonstrates the, sometimes fuzzy, lines between childhood and adulthood and offers a satirical look at the Victorian mothering role, by having the children act out ("play"), being adults (and Wendy "play" being her mother). At the start of the story, Mrs. Darling finds "her two older children playing [being] herself and father on the occasion of Wendy's birth, and John was saying: 'I am happy to inform you, Mrs. Darling, that you are now a mother,' in just such a tone as Mr. Darling himself may have used on the real occasion."[23] John's declaration (as Mr. Darling), suggests that Wendy (as Mrs. Darling), would not have known she had just birthed a child, had John not told her.

---

[21] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 9.
[22] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 10.
[23] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 18.

That the children are able to mimic their parents so easily suggests the possibility that the children have an innate sense of responsibility. Or perhaps, as this is a game, their parents really are not as mature as they appear. The children act out being their parents, yet their attempt seems believable. Historian Anthony Fletcher argues that, in Victorian England, "[m]others thought about the work of bringing up children as performance…they believed their own status in the community, besides their self-esteem, depended on the demonstration of effective motherhood."[24] Ironically, the mother's status in the community hinged on effective motherhood; much of the "mothering" and child rearing in general, was left to the nanny (in this story, comically a dog).

Barrie develops the performance element of a Victorian mother, filling a very specific role as instructed by society, by casting Wendy's brother Michael as her "baby" in Neverland. While "Michael should have used [the bed]; [you] know what women are, and the short and long of it is that he was hung up in a basket."[25] The phrase "you know what women are," suggests that mothers feel the need to fuss over their children; Michael is old enough to sleep in the bed with the other boys, but because Wendy "needs" a baby, he is hung up in a basket instead. Barrie's ridicule of the Victorian mother, who pretends watching over her children is of the upmost importance, suggests that a mother's role is for show. Wendy, trying to fill the *role* of mother, feels a baby is necessary.

---

[24] Fletcher, Anthony. *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914*. New Haven [Conn]: Yale University Press, 2008. Print. Page 108.
[25] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 70.

Barrie satirizes the Victorian mother as *playing the role*, just as much as Wendy "plays" being mother in Neverland.[26] Historians Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, in analyzing the "public lives" of those living in Victorian England, argue that: "Inasmuch as [a mother] was a slave to her children, she would be a more than willing one."[27] Wendy, delighted to act as mother to the "Lost Boys," is portrayed as a caricature of a child-rearing mother; she constantly croons over them, darning their socks and making sure they go to bed on time. Although she complains, "'Oh dear, oh dear…I'm sure I sometimes think that children are more trouble than they're worth,'" the reader knows that she loves taking care of the Lost Boys.[28] Wendy's hyperbolized complaining about housework suggests that when mothers complain about work, they do not really mind it at all. Barrie uses Wendy's enjoyment of "playing" mother to illustrate the absurdity of the societal view that Victorian women lacked a choice in their primary role as caretaker to their children and homes.

Barrie uses light and weightlessness as twin motifs to emphasize differences between adult and child roles in Victorian England and in *Peter Pan*. Although "light," as a motif in children's works, often symbolizes purity and goodness, Barrie satirically employs it in various forms to: "bring to light" the "heaviness" of the rigid Victorian mindset as well as highlight a disconnect between Victorian children and adults**.** Barrie sets the physical lightness of children, able to fly to Neverland, against the heavy

---

[26] (relating back to Fletcher's argument as motherhood in Victorian England as merely a performance) Fletcher, Anthony. *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914*. New Haven [Conn]: Yale University Press, 2008. Print. Page 108.
[27] Gordon, Eleanor, and Gwyneth Nair. *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003. Print. Page 145.
[28] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 93.

restrictive nature of Victorian England. Scholar Jerry Griswold, writing about *Peter Pan*, suggests that: "aerial mobility is the perquisite of the young, and the loss of lightness is the inevitable price of maturity."[29] Griswold offers a valuable interpretation to why only children can fly, positing that while their weightlessness may in part be due to their physical "lightness," children also seem to embody a psychological *lightness*.[30] Children can soar for they are not yet weighed down by the problems of the world. These problems include economic and social stresses – concerns adults in Victorian England often struggled with.

Children's *lightness*, and their ability to fly (and be happily free of social conventions), dissipates once they mature and take their place in burdensome society. At the end of the story, Wendy's daughter asks her mother:

> 'Why can't you fly now, mother?'
> 'Because I am grown up, dearest. When people grow up they forget the way.'
> 'Why do they forget the way?'
> 'Because they are no longer gay and innocent and heartless. It is only the gay and innocent and heartless who can fly.'[31]

As an adult, Wendy has forgotten "the way [to be] gay and innocent and heartless." The narrator suggests it is Wendy's "growing up" that has made her less "light," preventing her from flying back to Neverland. Literary scholar Michael Egan claims: "[aerial] passage is [a] flight/escape from confinement" in *Peter Pan*.[32] Physical and emotional flight allows the children to escape the confines of Victorian England, and

---

[29] Griswold, Jerome. *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Print. Page 81.
[30] Griswold, Jerome. *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Print. Page 81.
[31] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 195.
[32] Toohey, Peter and Worthington, Ian, "Flights of Fancy in Nonnus and J.M. Barrie," *Electronic Antiquity* Vol. 3 Issue 5 - October 1996

embrace the freedom and independence of Neverland. Once Wendy has grown up, she is tethered to considerable socially mandated responsibilities. Barrie's portrayal of Victorian England as confining and restricting, contrasted by the freer Neverland where no one has "to go to school and learn solemn things" may also be a literary nod by Barrie to Edwardian ideals that began to emerge at the turn of the 20th century.[33] While Victorian England stressed adherence to rules and puritanical decorum, the Edwardians preached the "spirit of play."[34] Weighed down by worries of a rigid social class system, Victorian adults lacked the freedom to question norms and "fly" off to distant lands. Barrie satirizes Victorian England, in order to celebrate Edwardian ideals.

Like the children who could transport themselves to Neverland, the Neverland fairies are likewise depicted as "light." Fairies are responsible for children being able to fly, as "no one can fly unless the fairy dust has been blown on him."[35] Fairies represent the imaginative elements of children, which allow the children to rise above societal expectations and partake in thrilling fun. Griswold posits that Tinker Bell serves as "a kind of hyperbolic version of Peter's youthful and aerial mobility."[36] Just as Tinker Bell represents Peter's youth, collectively, the fairies represent the youth of all children. The Edwardian period encouraged the "gospel of fun" and the importance of leisure time.[37] As Peter laments, "Every time a child says 'I don't believe in fairies,' there is a fairy

---

[33] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 150.
[34] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 178.
[35] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 35.
[36] Griswold, Jerome. *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Print. Page 78.
[37] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 165.

somewhere that drops down dead." [38] In other words, the loss of childhood is tantamount to death. Barrie's celebration of childhood coincided with the emerging new image of the Child at the turn of the twentieth century. Throughout his life, Barrie remained devoted to children.[39] To Barrie, without childish glee and enjoyment, one may as well be "dead."

Barrie satirizes the lack of control held by Victorian parents, who attempt to make following rules and maintaining order central in their life, by making the children seem mature and the adults childlike. Here, the readings of post-colonial scholars, such as M. Daphne Kutzer, seem misplaced. Kutzer argues that just as "Britain tried to impose Western cultural ideals and behaviors in Africa, India, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, British adults try to impose adult cultural ideals of thought and behavior upon children."[40] Barrie's text however, suggests a different analysis. Barrie depicts the Darling parents as foolish, as they attempt to blindly adhere to social conventions, insinuating that adults too are subject to the tyranny of these "cultural ideas." Unlike Britain, a strong, domineering power during the 1800s, Mr. and Mrs. Darling seem to lack control of their household. As the parents concern themselves with their own appearances and problems, they lose control of their wards, who wander far to Neverland, a kind of utopia. This paradoxical portrayal, of the relationship between parent and child breaking free, illustrates how the unseemly struggle for order and control in Victorian England ultimately gave way to the more liberal Edwardian attitudes towards society, which followed.

---

[38] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 29.
[39] Barrie philanthropically donated the rights to *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.
[40] Kutzer, M. Daphne. *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*. New York: Garland Pub. 2000. Print. Page xvi.

The sheer freedom represented by Neverland contrasts with the Victorian belief that only Saturday night was a time for leisure. Barrie endorses the Edwardian ideal of the "gospel of fun," which was "part of [the] broader Edwardian effort to reconcile opposites. It erased the distinction between work and play and, as well, the boundary separating humor and seriousness."[41] When the children in Neverland want to dance, they "justify" it by deeming it Saturday night: "It was not really Saturday night, at least it may have been, for they had long since lost count of the days; but always if they wanted to do anything special they said this was Saturday night, and then they did it."[42] The middle and working classes traditionally did not work Sundays, so families could partake in enjoyable activities on Saturday nights, without worrying about waking for work the following the morning; "By the end of the 1850s the five-and-a-half-day week, 'la semaine anglaise', was well on the way to becoming an immemorial custom… Saturday afternoon and evening [became seen as the] high spot of the workers' week…for sociability and enjoyment."[43] Yet Wendy and the Lost Boys, accustomed as they are to freedom, do not understand why Saturday night is "anything special." Naïve about the rules of the Victorian "work week," the Neverland children make seeing "Saturday night" as different from other nights seem foolish. They thus, underscore the artificial distinction between work and play.

Neverland, devoid of rules and conventions, juxtaposes British society, where the Darling family resides, in another attempt to mock various aspects of Victorian society.

---

[41] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 174.
[42] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 94.
[43] Thompson, Francis Michael Longstreth. *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain : 1830-1900*. London: Fontana, 1988. Print. Page 275.

Peter warns the Lost Boys upon meeting Wendy for the first time, "'[a]ll look your best…first impressions are awfully important.' He was glad no one asked him what first impressions are; they were all too busy looking their best."[44] This comical paradox highlights the Victorian priggish concern with appearances and the idea of "first impressions." Barrie uses Neverland, and the children's innocent ignorance of societal rules to illustrate the lack of importance of such concerns.

Barrie subtly ridicules Victorian society through comical devices meant to deflate the sanctity of "bedtime." In Neverland, staying up past "bedtime," is the holy-grail. When Wendy and Peter Pan make it home after being stranded on the Marooner's Rock to die, "[e]very boy had adventures to tell; but perhaps the biggest adventure of all was that they were several hours late for bed."[45] To the Lost Boys, breaking the bedtime rule was even more exciting than real life adventures. Similarly, after the Lost Boys defeat the pirates, Peter Pan throws Hook off the pirate ship, and the boys excitedly discuss their night's adventure, Wendy worries about the lateness of the hour. The narrator states, "The lateness of the hour was almost the biggest thing of all. She got them to bed in the pirates' bunks pretty quickly, you may be sure."[46] The boys revel in the fact that they were able to "break the rules" and go to bed later than "they should." Barrie uses this instance to once again ridicule the austere rigidity of Victorian England.

As alluded to above, Barrie's use of Wendy as "mother" in Neverland satirizes a variety of Victorian middle class principles, including the requirement of routine and

---

[44] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 66.
[45] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 90.
[46] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 138.

automatic need to "stick to [their] rule[s]." Wendy declares that the boys must take a midday nap on the Marooner's Rock. Even when danger approaches, Wendy resists waking the children from their nap:

> Of course [Wendy] should have roused the children at once; not merely because of the unknown that was stalking towards them, but because it was no longer good for them to sleep on a rock grown chilly. But she was a young mother and she did not know this; she thought you simply must stick to your rule about half an hour after the midday meal.[47]

The narrator's odd emphasis on the chilliness of the rock, as a more compelling danger than avoiding the "unknown [stalking] towards them," illustrates the absurdity of blind adherence to one's rules for the sake of the rules. Barrie artfully employs the didacticism often seen in children's literature, to reach his both his child *and* adult audience. The instructional voice "you must stick to your rule," resonates like a lesson being taught. However, rather than demonstrating the importance of "sticking to your rules," Barrie pokes fun at the Victorian parents. Through his commentary, Barrie suggests that the singular rigidity of Victorian society renders many of its practices and customs obsolete and ineffective.

Barrie mocks Victorian middle-class propriety when Mrs. Darling is simply unable to fathom that Peter Pan could have entered the Darling house by any means other than the front door after knocking. Wendy tells her mother that Peter flies through the window, and rather than dispute whether someone can fly, Mrs. Darling states: "'What nonsense you talk, precious. No one can get into the house without knocking.'"[48] Mrs. Darling's denial of Peter's existence, due to her belief that "no one can get into the house

---

[47] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 78.
[48] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 13.

without knocking" suggests a world that can exist only through adherence to prescribed rules.[49] Through this instance, Barrie satirizes the Victorian fixation with societal rules, rules clearly upended by Peter's unconventional mode of entry.

Barrie criticizes the Victorian middle class typecast of associating physical dirt with physiological or mental filth through, once again, using Wendy as representative of the Victorian mother figure in Neverland. When Wendy gets kidnapped by the pirates and tied up on the boat, she "despise[d] those pirates. To the boys there was at least some glamour in the pirate calling; but all that she saw was that the ship had not been scrubbed for years."[50] Wendy scorns the pirates for their dirtiness, not for their lying, cheating, or scheming ways. Wendy seems like a "silly" woman, caring more about the boat's condition, than the appalling nature of the pirates themselves. In turn of the century England, the Victorian middle class looked down on their working class counterparts. They saw "unwashed children covered in vermin [as] the ultimate sign of degeneration… the middle classes used dirt's connection to disease to intervene directly into the family lives of the poor; such filth, after all, could lead to a contagion—physically or morally."[51] The reader sees Wendy's reaction to the pirates' dirtiness as absurd, connecting it to Barrie's belief about the *unreasonable* feelings of obligation the middle class felt in "intervening" in the lives of the poor, simply because of their "dirtiness." Barrie suggests that, like Wendy, the Victorian middle class was more concerned with the appearance of

[49] Knocking on the door to enter is a middle-class construct indicative of Mrs. Darling's place in Victorian England.
[50] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 125.
[51] Rosenman, Ellen Bayuk, and Claudia C. Klaver. *Other Mothers: Beyond the Maternal Ideal*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008. Print. Page 159.

cleanliness; they emphasized hygiene more than attempting to solve the problem of criminals situated in the poor class.

Barrie uses his timeless character Peter, the immortal boy, to inject humor at the well-known British convention of teatime. Historian Julie Fromer explains that tea "be[came] crucial in exhibiting characters' inner morality and their familial bonds, and as such, the participation in this ritual by both men and women is essential, contributing to the reproduction of their middle-class status."[52] Although Fromer refers to English tea practices historically, her point applies in examining Neverland as well; devoid of the hierarchical class system present in Victorian England, Neverland has no need for customs like "taking tea" to illustrate social status, as in Victorian England. When the Darlings land in Neverland, Peter asks John, "'Do you want an adventure now…or would you like to have your tea first?'"[53] Such a query could be viewed as a tongue-in-cheek attempt by Peter to demonstrate hospitality, but more likely it is a jab at John and the English society from which he just arrived. The English are known to take tea in the afternoon, and certainly could not have that tradition supplanted by an adventure. Peter's question suggests an inversion of rules; those in *civilized* Britain take tea, while the brave embark on adventures. Fromer notes that: "[t]ea is consistently associated with…an ideal vision of femininity to uphold all of those elements of home."[54] Thus Peter also implies John's "femininity," in coming from England and drinking tea, when he asks John about "taking tea."

---

[52] Fromer, Julie E. *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008. Print. Page 20.
[53] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 44.
[54] Fromer, Julie E. *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008. Print. Page 23.

Barrie questions assumed Victorian middle-class gender roles throughout *Peter Pan***.** While gender is a theme commonly analyzed in *Peter Pan,* scholars often apply the analysis to support either a pro- or anti-feminist reading of the novel. However, Barrie's words can also be read to highlight the nature of gender disparity in Victorian England. The Lost Boys build Wendy her own house to show how much they appreciate her. "'Build a house?' exclaimed John. 'For the Wendy,' said Curly. 'For Wendy?' John said, aghast. 'Why, she is only a girl!' 'That,' explained Curly, 'is why we are her servants.'"[55] The contrast between how Curly says "the Wendy" while John simply says "Wendy" is noteworthy. "The Wendy" suggests an air of royalty, similar to how one might say "the Queen." In contrast, John sees Wendy as "only a girl." In Neverland, girls are exalted, while John remains influenced by the traditional English view of girls as inferior. In contrast to in the Lost Boys' appreciation of Wendy, John appears biased and unsophisticated. He cannot see Wendy as more than her gender allows. Yet the Lost Boys, who have not been affected by contemporary social biases, see Wendy as superior. While one might argue that the boys' views of girl (and mother) are quite stereotypical, Barrrie, a product of the society he critiques, is predisposed to see women as nurturing figures as well. Especially given the evidence that he did not seem romantically inclined towards women, he seemed to view them as mother figures.[56] As such, Barrie projects his personal opinions of women, positive yet not necessarily egalitarian using today's standards, into the characters he creates.

---

[55] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 63.
[56] This may be due to his distant relationship with his own mother.

Barrie's positive representation of women in *Peter Pan* champions the Edwardian ideal of the "new woman." During the Edwardian Era, "Independence and self-reliance became central issues in this whole attempt to define what women should be, while dependence, especially financial dependence, was seen as parasitic."[57] While Mrs. Darling, representative of the mother figure in Victorian England, remains completely dependent on Mr. Darling in London, Wendy embraces independence and self-reliance in Neverland. Edwardian beliefs about this "new woman" also supported the idea that marriage should become "an institution in which men and women were equal. And guaranteed their right to privacy, freedom, and to terminate the relationship on equal terms."[58] Although Wendy and Peter do not live together as husband and wife, they do play "mother" and "father" to the Lost Boys. Their relationship serves as a model for the relationship of the Edwardian "new woman."

Wendy is not the typical example of a culturally constructed female, although she does embody certain feminine traits. These feminine traits, her nurturing and caring role as a mother figure, do not diminish her strength as a character, but rather make her character seem believable to an audience at the turn of the twentieth century; they simultaneously allow Wendy to make decisions for herself and others throughout the story. Wendy is not defined by her gender or in terms of her relationships with others; her differences, both in gender and role as a mother, from the other characters in Neverland separates her and renders her a more powerful character. The boys in Neverland are

---

[57] Caine, Barbara. *Victorian Feminists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 135.
[58] Caine, Barbara. *Victorian Feminists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 137.

referred to as a collective group: the "Lost Boys." Wendy, in contrast, is described individually, her actions uniquely hers.

At the end of the story, it is Wendy who suggests returning to England, and Peter adheres to her request. Wendy is "on equal terms" with Peter; while she governs over the house in Neverland, a vestige of the Victorian society from which she comes, she also has the power to tell Peter when she wants to return home. Literary scholars Dudley Jones and Tony Watkins argue in their work, *A Necessary Fantasy? The Heroic Figure in Children's Popular Culture*, that:

> As the only character who maintains a strong grip on "reality' throughout their adventures, Wendy plays an important part in defining the Neverland adventures as 'fantasy'; and as a child who regards the Neverland adventures as a diversion rather than an escape from the unavoidable business of growing up, she is the reader's touchstone for recognizing the significance of Peter's desire for eternal youth.[59]

Wendy's ability to see past the fantasy, enjoying it whilst remembering the "reality" she has left behind, renders her "superior" to the other characters in Neverland. Wendy seems more mature than Peter, a boy who longs to stay young forever, and the rest of the Lost Boys, who easily forget their pasts and homes in London. Wendy understands her responsibilities, but allows herself a "diversion" in Neverland. While "escaping" to Neverland seems as irresponsible as focusing singularly on one's societal image in Victorian England, Wendy represents an even balance of both. Barrie uses Wendy to illustrate the progressive nature of Edwardianism, which supported limited leisure, as a means of increasing productivity.[60]

---

[59] Jones, Dudley, and Tony Watkins. *A Necessary Fantasy?: The Heroic Figure in Children's Popular Culture*. New York: Garland Publication. 2000. Print. Page 301.
[60] Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print. Page 165.

Barrie portrays all other female mortals *in* Neverland positively, not simply Wendy.[61] Barrie uses the complex character of Tiger Lily, the Indian girl of the island, to further question rigid gender roles. "[T]here is not a brave who would not have the wayward thing to wife, but [Tiger Lily] staves off the altar with a hatchet."[62] Tiger Lily is portrayed as powerful and able to defend herself, a stark juxtaposition to Mrs. Darling, a product of Victorian society, wholly dependent and unable to defy even the neighbors gossiping. Like Wendy, Tiger Lily is not portrayed as weak, dependent, or helpless; she is treated as an equal, if not superior, to the boys in Neverland.

Despite his positive portrayal of Tiger Lily as a strong female character, Barrie distinguishes her from Wendy, imbuing her with attributes of a "noble savage." According to historian M. Daphne Kutzer, readers of the time often looked positively at the savage character: "The appeal of the noble savage is a romantic appeal: the noble savage escapes the constraints of civilization, but retains some of the essential moral characteristics of the civilized."[63] Tiger Lily speaks in an unconvincing (stereotypical) broken English: "'Me Tiger Lily…Peter Pan save me, me his velly nice friend. Me no let pirates hurt him.'"[64] Although by today's standards, the portrayal of Tiger Lily would smack of racism, in *Peter Pan,* she is romanticized, as one brave enough to "escape" the confines of civilization. Tiger Lily, even with her broken language skills, embodies a strong character, fittingly referred to as a "brave." She serves as another foil to the

---

[61] Interestingly, in stage productions, the role of Peter Pan is often played by a woman. Peter Pan's possible androgyny is beyond the scope of this paper.
[62] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 53.
[63] Kutzer, M. Daphne. *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*. New York: Garland Pub. 2000. Print. Page 8.
[64] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 91.

straight-laced women of Victorian society; unlike the Victorian women "constrained" as much by their bodices and social conventions, Tiger Lily is an independent character who leads rather than follows. Perceived positively, she is able to "retain some of the essential moral characteristics" valued by the Victorians, while blazing her own trail and making her own decisions. This idea of the "noble savage" is limited and stereotypical, but evidence of Barrie's ongoing satire about the Victorian mindset, juxtaposing Tiger Lily's character with Mrs Darling back in London.

Neverland, a fantastical place of mermaids and pirates, represents the antithesis of "proper" England. One of the most distinctive qualities of Neverland is the complete absence of a social class system; Neverland is depicted as a utopia of sorts, an escape from the stifling nature of 19th century England. No one group has the "upper hand" in Neverland because there is no endemic system of hierarchy. The narrator reflects on how the Lost Boys, pirates, redskins, and beasts "[go] round and round the island, but they [do] not meet because all [go] at the same rate."[65] Everyone on the island "go[es] at the same rate," so no one group is inherently superior. The egalitarian nature of Neverland contrasts with the stratification of Victorian society.

One notes the Victorian middle class social categories, endorsing rigid rules that separated the middle class from the working class, as reflected through the architecture of the Victorian home. Historian Judith Flanders states that Victorian "houses were designed to keep the function of any one group of inhabitants from impinging on any other."[66] Thus, public entertaining areas of the home were separated from the "private" living

---

[65] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 49.
[66] Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. Print. Page 31.

spaces. Family quarters were kept separate from the servant quarters; even the nursery represents segmentation: "[t]he separate nursery space, in retrospect, symbolize[d] the distance [in] been in place between parents and their children."[67]

Contrasting the segmentation and hierarchical divisions of Victorian England, the Lost Boys and Wendy live in a one-room house in Neverland. "It consisted of one large room, as all houses should do."[68] Barrie apparently endorsed the elimination of divisions of all sorts—class, adult-child, and male-female. Not only does the home in Neverland consist of one room, but all the Lost Boys (except Michael) also share one bed. Even Michael, deemed the baby of the family, sleeps in a basket in the same room. The children are all treated equally; no one has a bigger room or separate bed.

Neverland has a compelling appeal to the Darling children, despite being from England. The narrator tells the reader: "Strange to say, [the Darling children] all recognized [Neverland] at once, and…they hailed it…as a familiar friend to whom they were returning home for the holidays."[69] The narrator describes the children's reaction to seeing Neverland as "returning home." Neverland feels comfortable because rather than attempting to squeeze its inhabitants into pre-ordained roles, Neverland tries to suit the individual needs of all its inhabitants. Neverland begins to feel like "home" once the children have a space to call their own. Wendy and the Lost Boys live together under the ground; "And how ardently they grew to love their home under the ground; especially

---

[67] Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. Print. Page 67.
[68] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 69.
[69] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 42.

Wendy."[70] At the end of the story, when Wendy's daughter asks her mother what part of Neverland she liked best, Wendy responds: "'I think I liked the home under the ground best.'" [71] Despite the absence of creature comforts and trappings of wealth, the home under the ground, "rough and simple, and not unlike what baby bears would have made," embodies an environment where its inhabitants are free to play, act and laugh. Thus, it is seen as more beloved than Number 14, a place where each inhabitant must fulfill a prescribed role.[72]

Peter Pan demonstrates how examining children's literature can reveal much about the sentiments and mores of society at the time. About *Peter Pan,* literary scholars Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr state: "This text can [be] regarded as seminal to the genre of children's fiction while simultaneously subverting it. It occupies a position both within and outside the genre."[73] The story engages children, while offering additional layered meaning to adults and historians. Barrie uses the basic plotline and characters to provide commentary on aspects of Victorian society. *Peter Pan* fits snugly at the intersection of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, as the strictures of the Victorians gave way to a celebration of play and leisure time. Barrie suggests that embracing

---

[70] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 69.
[71] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 154.
[72] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 70.
[73] White, Donna R., and C. Anita Tarr. *J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006. Print. Page 209.

imagination and belief, as children do, creates a more productive society. The moment one "no longer believes," they cease forever to be able to fly.[74]

[74] Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print. Page 151.

Ch 3: The Power to Stand Alone
Looking at *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a Political Allegory Supporting American Isolationism

"If this road goes in, it must come out…and as the Emerald City is at the other end of the road, we must go wherever it leads us"- The Wonderful Wizard of Oz[1]

While Great Britain faced considerable social and political change at the turn of the twentieth century, with the death of Queen Victoria and the rise of King Edward VII, the United States underwent transformation as well. L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* allegorically represents a variety of historical events and political concerns that began developing in the United States in 1900, when the book was first published. Culturally similar to Britain in many ways, the United States sought to forge its own future, using its own uniquely American voice to champion individualism and self-determination. It is into this shifting and transforming atmosphere that Baum introduced his celebrated tale, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, widely acclaimed as "the first truly American fairy tale."[2] The story serves as the perfect prototype to analyze American children's literature at the turn of the twentieth century because it echoes the nationalistic sentiments felt by many Americans at the time.

The Spanish American War took place only two years before the publication of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* triggering tremendous consequences for the United States' domestic and foreign policy. Historians have argued that the war was "the United States' first step on the road to imperialism—that is, the extension of American authority by

---

[1] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 58.
[2] Glassman, Peter. Afterword. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. By L. Frank Baum. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 309.

territorial acquisition or the establishment of political hegemony."[3] Winning the war, the United States acquired the Philippines, inciting much debate over the U.S. role as a potential world power.[4] *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* offers a pro-isolationist argument

Baum uses *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to highlight the importance of American isolationism at a time of global imperial expansion, by using simplistic literary devices commonly seen in children's books. These devices include allegorical representations of various caricatures involved in imperialism, use of motifs such as gold, flight, and the color white, and the overarching theme of appearance versus reality**.** The allegory casts Kansas as a metaphor for the United States, while Oz represents the imperial world stage.

Baum draws a connection between the generalized representation of children and generalizations made about the United States (seen as a "child" of Great Britain), at the turn of the twentieth century. At a time when views of childhood were shifting,[5] Baum manipulates the social constructs of "adult" and "child" in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, as a means of making an American pro-isolationist argument. One not only notes a likeness in how children and the United States were viewed by *others* at the turn of the century, but also a striking similarity in how both viewed *themselves*. Baum connects the feelings of insecurity a child might feel about their abilities, to the feelings of uncertainty felt by the United States questioning their potential role in the imperial world. Literary scholar Jerry Griswold argues: "[the] pervasive 'America-as-Child' [ideal] shaped the way Americans saw themselves and their history. In the colonial days, America was an

---

[3] Saldin, Robert P. *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Page 32.
[4] While some urged the United States to embrace its imperial potentials, many Americans believed imperialism ran counter to classic American ideals.
[5] Refer back to Chapter 1.

infant in a macrocosmic family headed by the English monarch."[6] At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had transformed from "an infant in a macrocosmic family" into an adult, a country in its own right. As such, Baum argued the United States needed to prove itself, by focusing internally, not expanding outwardly into the global imperial world.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz opens in Kansas, with a young orphan girl Dorothy, her aunt Em, her Uncle Henry, and her dog Toto. A cyclone strikes, whisking Dorothy, Toto, and their house into the mystical Land of Oz. From the moment she arrives, Dorothy longs to return to Kansas. Directed to "follow the yellow brick road" to the Emerald City and the Wizard, Dorothy sets off to find a way back home, meeting, along the way, the Scarecrow, who wishes for a brain, the Tin Woodman, who longs for a heart, and the Lion, who dreams of gaining courage. Accompanying Dorothy on her quest to meet the Wizard, each hopes that the Wizard will grant his wishes as well. Upon arriving in the Emerald City, having vanquished the Wicked Witch of the West, as mandated by Oz, Dorothy and her companions discover that the Wizard is nothing more than a "humbug" who ultimately fails to transport Dorothy back to her home.[7] Upon making it to the Good Witch of the North however, Dorothy discovers she had the power within herself all along to return home. Dorothy returns to Kansas, with Aunt Em and Uncle Henry waiting for her, things *almost* exactly as she left them.

One of the best known of all children's stories, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has been analyzed in a wide variety of ways since its initial publication in 1900. Literary

---

[6] Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 14.
[7] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 216.

scholars often focus on the tale's didacticism, centering on the importance of belief, and believing in one's self. Other scholars have viewed the tale as a parable on populism, or an allegory about the economic and political issues surrounding the American gold standard. While the story can be analyzed through each of those lenses, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* can also be seen as a pro-isolationist allegory, opposing US expansionist policies—a reading seemingly overlooked by many scholars. Viewed figuratively, the "believe in yourself" motif means "belief" in the strength of America. Baum argues that Dorothy, and by extension the United States, both young and strong, have it within themselves to accomplish what they strive for if only they can believe in themselves. Tucked neatly within the storyline of a girl who travels far, only to learn that "there is no place like home," the literary historian finds the author's pro-isolationist point of view.

In analyzing the work, it proves beneficial to examine Baum's biographical history and note elements of his own life that may have influenced his writing. In general, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* remains such a popular story for both children and adults because of Baum's ability to connect to both audiences. Biographers describe Baum as childlike: "Frank was the most imaginative of the bunch [of siblings], inclined to lose himself in fictional worlds."[8] Records suggest that even as an adult Baum remained quite immature, fond of playing children's games. A letter from Baum to a friend states: "The boys are growing wonderfully and I sometimes think I must be a kid no longer…There's a mistake somewhere, for I have failed to grow up—and we're just five boys together…"[9] One hears an echo of Peter Pan in Baum, an adult with the interests and longings of a

[8] Schwartz, Evan I., *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print. Page 6.
[9] Baum, Frank Joslyn, and Russell P. MacFall. *To Please a Child: A Biography of L. Frank Baum, Royal Historian of Oz*. Chicago: Reilly & Lee Co., 1961. Print. Page 118.

child. Like Baum's nostalgia for his own childhood, Baum's sentimental portrayal of Kansas can be seen as a tribute to the values and ideals of America's younger days, before development of expansionist or imperial policies. Looking at *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a pro-isolationist commentary, Baum sought to keep the independence and innocence of the early American spirit alive, rather than expand into the corrupting, imperial world.

Baum's personal experience, relocating often, may also have influenced the resonating importance of "home" in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*—a critical feature of the story when viewed as an allegory championing American nationalism. When the Baum family moved to Chicago (in the 1890s), it was the ninth or tenth move for Baum and his wife as a couple.[10] In an effort to find success and improve the quality of life for his family, Baum continued moving west, from New York, to Chicago, South Dakota, and eventually bought a house in California, the ultimate frontier. Baum found his "home" in the West (California), as Dorothy treasures the Western frontier (Kansas) as home as well in the story.

Historical records do not make clear Baum's personal political affiliation, but various statements attributed to him may be interpreted to support a pro-isolationist bend. Regardless of whether Baum leaned Democratic or Republican, isolationism was a cause supported by both parties in the Midwest and West at the turn of the twentieth century: "The Midwestern and Western sections of the U.S. were generally suspicious of American entanglements in the old world, which they saw as another symptom of the

[10] Schwartz, Evan I., *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print. Page 302.

decadence of the country's eastern establishment."[11] While "it is known that [Baum] marched in torchlight parades for Bryan and voted Democratic,"[12] other historical records seem to suggest Baum's Republican support; i.e., Baum owned the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, which was a known Republican newspaper.[13] In an 1890 article Baum wrote for the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer,* he opposed the growing Independent movement by stating: "We are all members of one great family, the family which saved the Union, the family which stands together as the emblem of prosperity among the nations--Republicanism!"[14] It is reasonable to assume that Baum would have supported isolationism, regardless of his political views (which scholars have used both ways to prove populism and progressivism in his work), due to his strong Midwestern alliance.

Baum's relationship with women in his personal life provides insight into the development of Dorothy, as his strong protagonist. Baum's mother, Cynthia Ann Stanton "ran [her] household as a stern disciplinarian."[15] Not only that, but Baum married Maud Gage Baum, the headstrong, independent daughter of Matilda Joselyn Gage, a prominent

---

[11] Rae, Nicol C., "Class and Culture: American Political Cleavages in the Twentieth Century." *The Western Political Quarterly* , Vol. 45, No. 3 (Sep., 1992), pp. 629-650. University of Utah on behalf of the Western Political Science Association.
[12] Rockoff, Hugh. "The 'Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory." *Journal of Political Economy* , Vol. 98, No. 4 (Aug., 1990), pp. 739-760. University of Chicago Press. Page 756.
[13] Parker, David. "The Rise and Fall of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a "Parable on Populism." *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians*. *V*ol. 15 (1994), pp. 49-63.
[14] Baum, L. Frank. *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, 12 April 1890, 19 April 1890, 18 Oct. 1890. As cited by: Parker, David. "The Rise and Fall of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a "Parable on Populism." *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians*. *V*ol. 15 (1994), pp. 49-63.
[15] Zipes, Jack. *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and their Tradition*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. Page 196.

United States feminist of the mid 19th century.[16] Maud was a college graduate who, for many years, was the major breadwinner of the family, when Frank Baum fell on hard times. It is unsurprising that Baum's strong-willed, self-reliant mother and wife would have had an influence on his attitudes toward women, as reflected in his portrayal of Dorothy in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

A strong female, featured prominently in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is, of course, Dorothy. It is no coincidence that Dorothy's last name is "Gale," meaning an extremely powerful wind, one fit to confront the cyclone she encounters. Dorothy is portrayed as strong, brave, and equal to men. It has been said that Dorothy symbolically represents the American "everyman."[17] Although gender inequality persisted at the turn of the century in the United States, it collided with the "American Dream," an ideal which provided that success was within reach to all men and women who worked hard. The second half of the 19th century was central "to the redefinition of women's political roles and relations with the state."[18] Women began to play a role in political, economic, and social movements in the United States. "The first three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage* [were] published in 1881,1882, and 1886…[and] set out to present a comprehensive picture of those feminist struggles."[19] Baum's decision to make the

---

[16] Schwartz, Evan I., *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print. Page xi.
[17] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print. Page 44.
[18] Kleinberg, S. J.. *Women in the United States, 1830-1945*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999. Print. Page 3.
[19] Bolt, Christine. *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. Print., Page 151.

story's central character female signifies his pro-feminist opinions.[20] The "feminist" sentiments in Baum's work draw attention to the reforming societal opinions at the time, a relevant historical aspect for historians to consider in studying turn of the century America.

Dorothy, portrayed as independent and possessing leadership qualities, is arguably Baum's allegorical representation of the United States in 1900.[21] Although depicted as brave and independent, Dorothy is not a hero per se; instead, she represents the ordinary American "everyman," helping others when possible, with a keen devotion to "home." Her iconic representation of the American "everyman" is of great consequence in a work that reached so many, and continues to remain relevant. Scholar Katherine Rogers points out the fact that even "[b]oy readers do not have trouble identifying with Dorothy, because she has qualities they admire and adventures that engage them." [22] Part of the reason so many are able to connect with Dorothy stems from the fact that she "is not highly individualized, which makes it easier for readers to identify with her. Even her age is not specified."[23] Contrary to her "assumed" gender role (in turn of the century United States), Dorothy makes her decisions independent of her gender, basing them instead on the circumstances that confront her. The other characters in the novel, many male, do not treat Dorothy differently because she is female. In fact,

---

[20] Rogers, Katharine M.. *L. Frank Baum, Creator of Oz: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Print. Page 76.
[21] As the United States saw itself as representative of the American "everyman," Dorothy signifies both the "everyman" American citizen and the "everyman" as the United States itself.
[22] Rogers, Katharine M.. *L. Frank Baum, Creator of Oz: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Print. Page 76.
[23] Rogers, Katharine M.. *L. Frank Baum, Creator of Oz: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Print. Page 76.

all of her traveling companions look to Dorothy for guidance as their leader.[24] Extending the metaphor of Dorothy as symbolic of the United States, Baum portrays the United States as a strong and pure force.

Literary scholar Jerry Griswold argues that "many American children's books must be seen as nationalistic tracts," for the child in American children's literature often serves as a symbol of the United States as a burgeoning child.[25] Dorothy is a young adolescent, straddling childhood and adulthood, and who faces many decisions and choices that will impact her future. As a "burgeoning child," Dorothy embodies self-direction and self-sufficiency, both in Oz and at home in Kansas. Dorothy, as an orphan, figuratively represents the United States, separated from its "mother" Britain and required to forge its own path.

Dorothy's Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, her adoptive parents, do not serve as nurturing individuals. Dorothy's physical and emotional detachment from her aunt and uncle ultimately lead to her personal development and self-reliance. As does Barrie in *Peter Pan,* Baum depicts a paradoxical juxtaposition between parent and child in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to highlight the independence of the respective children.

In analyzing Dorothy's character as an allegorical representation of the American "everyman," and her interaction with other characters, we glean valuable historical information about changing views on childhood, the role of women, and American imperialism. Toto, Dorothy's best friend and constant companion, represents unfaltering loyalty. In the story, the reader understands that "Toto did not really care whether he was

---

[24] Similar to how the Lost Boys look to Wendy in *Peter Pan*.
[25] Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print. Page 15.

in Kansas or the Land of Oz so long as Dorothy was with him."[26] Both Dorothy and Toto remain faithful to each other, and to the goal of making it back home to Kansas. Griswold's argument, in the previous chapter, about Tinker Bell's role as a "hyperbolic version" of Peter's youth can be applied to the figure of Toto, as a "hyperbolic version of Dorothy's loyalty.[27] Just as Peter and Tinker Bell are seldom apart, Dorothy and Toto remain together throughout *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

The traits sought after by Dorothy's companions, the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion (brains, heart, and courage, respectively) are arguably the same traits children seek to possess in order to subdue their own insecurities. Literary scholar Sheldon Cashdan argues that:

> The three figures Dorothy encounters on her excursion to the Emerald City are not fantasy figures who materialize from out of the blue; they represent emotional aspects of her own inner world. No child, Dorothy included, wants to think of herself as stupid, heartless, or cowardly.[28]

Cashdan argues that Dorothy's companions represent insecurities of Dorothy's "inner world" (representing the inner world of all children). Yet, while Dorothy and her companions feel as though they are missing certain elements they perceive as required for success, on their journey to Oz they ironically display that which they feel themselves to be missing. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* seems to make the case that children possess within themselves all the elements needed for success and self-sufficiency, and are not quite as dependent as they seem, an appropriate argument at the turn of the twentieth

---

[26] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 180.
[27] Griswold, Jerome. *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Print. Page 78.
[28] Cashdan, Sheldon. *The Witch Must Die: How Fairy Tales Shape our Lives*. New York: Basic Books, 1999. Print. Page 230.

century, when views on childhood were in the midst of transforming.[29]

Like Dorothy and her companions, the United States viewed as a "child" in the eyes of the developed world, Baum used *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz to* argue that the United States had the strength and self-sufficiency within herself, without the material aid acquired by colonizing satellite countries. Looking specifically at criticisms about American hesitance, regarding territorial gains after the Spanish American War, some claimed the United States lacked the intelligence to understand the immense economic wealth available with increased territorial gain. Others believed that the United States lacked a heart, refusing to extend aid and "enlightened" Western ideals to smaller countries like the Philippines. Supporters of imperial expansion argued, "often in overtly racist and paternalistic fashion—of God's desire for the United States, with its superior way of life, to enlighten the less fortunate around the world."[30] Others faulted the United States for a lack of courage belief in her own ability. They believed "Bryan's opposition to America's war against Spain in 1898 [was] cowardly and unpatriotic."[31] The message of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* lies in the importance of "believing in oneself;" Baum argues that belief brings one "home," to self-determination, security and the pursuit of happiness. Likewise, nationalism dictated that the United States needed to focus on internal domestic matters at home, before turning outward.

---

[29] The case Baum makes about children as independent parallels the same claim described in the previous chapter about J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.
[30] Saldin, Robert P. *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Page 38.
[31] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print. Page 3.

Baum demonstrates how power has the ability to corrupt, in portraying the Wizard of the Emerald City as childlike and greedy. The Wizard contrasts Dorothy, depicted as pure-hearted and mature. Like Dorothy, the Wizard hails from Kansas, yet upon arriving in Oz, he gets swept up in the attractiveness of ruling the Emerald City. Political science scholar Timothy Cook argues that Baum "indicates that one should lower one's expectations of government and be pleasantly surprised at whatever achievements can be won."[32] Alternatively, the Wizard embodies the negative repercussions of remaining in Oz (as an imperial power), for too long. His "power" is all smoke and mirrors; in reality he is really nothing more than a "humbug."[33]

Baum uses the Wizard to illustrate the harmful effects of being seduced by imperialism: lying, subjugating another people, and growing dependent on another country's resources. The people of Oz think he is a great Wizard so "of course I let them think so, because they were afraid of me, and promised to do anything I wished."[34] The Wizard then goes on to say, "'Just to amuse myself, and keep the good people busy, I ordered them to build this City, and my Palace; and they did it all willingly and well."[35] Using the Wizard, as an allegorical symbol of a ruler who becomes intoxicated by power and riches, Baum condemns imperialism with its greedy and self-indulgent motivations.

---

[32] Cook, Timothy E., "Another Perspective on Political Authority in Children's Literature: The Fallible Leader in L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss." *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1983), University of Utah on behalf of the Western Political Science Association. Page 300.
[33] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 216.
[34] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 221.
[35] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 221.

The Wizard takes pleasure in the fact that the people in Oz are frightened of him and willing to follow his orders. When Dorothy and her companions complete their task of killing the Wicked Witch of the West and return to the Wizard, he informs them that he "[has] been making believe" and cannot actually grant their wishes.[36] Like a child, the Wizard pretends to be something he is not, and rules the Emerald City as if it were a game, where he simply "plays" the role of Wizard. The Wizard cannot grant Dorothy and her companions' wishes, for despite his grandiose claims, the imperial Wizard is no more powerful than simple Dorothy and her companions. Dorothy (figuratively America-as Child) appears reasoned and mature, thus a foil for the Wizard, depicted as irresponsible, and ultimately a purveyor of false hopes.

Baum uses the "Good" and "Evil" Witches in the Land of Oz as figurative representations of 20th century world powers. Two of the four witches serve as just rulers, possessing qualities of kindness and impartiality. Each witch represents a regional area (North, East, South, or West). Baum notably assigns the *wicked* witches the cardinal signs "East" and "West," symbolic of the imperial mindset, which divide the global world into "East" and "West." Puzzling over which witch is "East" and which is "West" is not as probative as the recognition that the *wicked* witches are those assign the "East" and "West" directions. The Wicked Witches' assigned regional directions can be argued as symbolic of the imperial divide between the Eastern and Western hemisphere at the turn of the twentieth century.

---

[36] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 216.

The Wicked Witch of the West's enslavement of the Winkies can be seen as a metaphoric depiction of tyrannical power. She has "one eye, yet that was as powerful as a telescope, and could see everywhere."[37] The Witch's single eye symbolizes her single focus, maintaining sovereignty over her lands. Describing her eye as "powerful as a telescope," suggests that her lands and subjects are distant, not viewable with the naked eye. The Wicked Witch of the West made the Winkies "work hard for many years… treated with great cruelty."[38] The Winkies serve as an allegorical representation of a people imprisoned by their conquerors. Hugh Rockoff, author of one of the best-known allegorical interpretations of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* suggests, in support of his argument of the text as an economic allegory, that the Wicked Witch of the West represents President McKinley in the 1890s. Rockoff makes note of McKinley's support for the gold standard (his central point), as well as McKinley's support for American imperialism (serving as evidence for an anti-imperialist reading of the text as well). Discussing the Winkie enslavement, Rockoff states:

> After winning the Philippines [in the Spanish American War of 1898], the United States…had to put down a bloody rebellion to maintain control of the islands. The Wicked Witch of the West's enslavement of the yellow Winkies is a not very well disguised reference to McKinley's decision to deny immediate independence to the Philippines.[39]

While the argument that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* serves as an anti-imperialist allegory does not match up perfectly to Rockoff's argument, it serves as a viable

---

[37] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 167.
[38] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 187.
[39] Rockoff, Hugh. "The 'Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory." *Journal of Political Economy* , Vol. 98, No. 4 (Aug., 1990), pp. 739-760. University of Chicago Press. Page 751.

extension. Rockoff, in arguing that McKinley represents the Wicked Witch of West, makes a case for McKinley as an imperialist. While dissimilar in that this thesis argues the Wicked Witch of the West represents a *foreign* imperial power, Rockoff's line of reasoning serves as basic support of the Witch of the West as an allegorical representation of an imperial power.

The Spanish American War of 1898 serves as the historical backdrop for the references to imperialism in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Historian M.J. Heale argues that, after the United States "acquired an empire of sorts [there] was outspoken opposition by those who insisted that American's own traditions required it to renounce imperialism."[40] Having always championed themselves as anti-imperialist, many Americans decried the United States' new acquisitions, at the turn of the twentieth century. Many saw the idea of "empire" as un-American and, as Baum argues, "evil." In Baum's original script for the musical version of *The Wizard of Oz,* we see evidence of Baum's anti-imperialist views from a reference not included in the novel; Scarecrow tells Dorothy: "It isn't the people who live in a country who know the most about it…Look at the Filipinos. Everyone knows more about their country than they do."[41] Although the line is not included in the novel for reasons unknown, when Dorothy, the American everyman, comes to Oz, she frees the Winkies from enslavement.

Baum also critiques European imperialism in China at the end of the 19th century. In his article, Rockoff notes a connection between the field of poppies, in which Dorothy

---

[40] Heale, M. J.. *Twentieth-Century America: Politics and Power in the United States, 1900-2000*. London: Arnold, 2004. Print. Page 53.
[41] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print. Page 93.

and the Cowardly Lion doze, and opium[42] grown in China. While Rockoff uses the association between poppies and opium to support his argument about the story as a monetary allegory (arguing the Cowardly Lion sleeping represents the Populist candidate Bryan "sleeping" on the job), the connection supports an anti-imperialism argument as well. The scarlet poppies "were so brilliant in color they almost dazzled Dorothy's eyes" to look at them.[43] Baum offers a warning, suggesting such "brilliance" can prove dangerous. Dorothy and the Lion cannot escape falling asleep in the flowers. The Lion states: "the smell of the flowers is killing us all," when Dorothy and her companions first realize its drug-like effect.[44] While alluring, the poppies are a dangerous and destructive distraction from the journey to return "home," an argument that can be applied to U.S. expansionism as well.

Dorothy's experience in the Dainty China Country serves as another allegorical reference to 19th century imperialism in China. The narrator describes how, in the Dainty China Country, "houses were quite small, the biggest of them reaching only as high as Dorothy's waist…And, strangest of all, these people were all made of china, even to their clothes, and were so small that the tallest of them was no higher than Dorothy's knee."[45] Dorothy's height alone renders her dominant over the *china* people. Despite her potential for domination, Dorothy resists exerting her power. Ranjit Dighe, author of a comprehensive analysis of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, entitled *The Historian's Wizard*

---

[42] Made from poppies
[43] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 111.
[44] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 112.
[45] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 271.

of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory, offers historical support for reading Baum's text as an isolationist allegory:

> In the late nineteenth century the Chinese dynasty was weak and Japan and the imperial powers of Europe seemed well on their way to carving up China…American exporters feared that a European and Japanese partition of China would jeopardize their business; anti-imperialists lamented the assault on Chinese self-determination."[46]

American isolationists condemned imperialism, both for humanitarian and economic reasons. They argued that entanglement in other countries prevented those countries from "self-determination," and harmed American economic opportunities at home. Demonstrating resistance, Dorothy quickly leaves the Dainty China Country upon arrival, in order to avoid disrupting the fragile insular community.

Baum uses the didactic literary motif device, often found in children's literature, to bolster his argument about American isolationism, and illustrate the harms of embracing imperialism. One notes a considerable emphasis on gold throughout the story. Historians like Littlefield[47] and Rockoff argue *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* can be seen as an economic allegory, illustrating Baum's lack of support for the gold standard, which was adopted in the United States in 1900.[48] Littlefield notes the contrast of "silver shoes walking on a golden road," which he cites as evidence for "Baum's ironic view of the silver issue."[49] Gold plays a role in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in the economics of imperialism. American financial historian Peter Bernstein states that: "popular opinion

---

[46] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print. Page 123.
[47] He was the first to write about *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a parable on populism.
[48] The same year *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was published.
[49] The "silver issue" concerned whether the U.S. should adopt bimetallism—use both silver and gold as currency standards—instead of gold. Littlefield, Henry M., "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism." *American Quarterly* , Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1964). P. 47-58. The John Hopkins University Press.

among Americans held that the gold standard was a devilish concoction of foreigners…One typical cartoon of the 1890s carried the title, 'THE ENGLISH OCTOPUS: It feeds on nothing but gold!'"[50] Much of the gold in the world economies derived from colonies of imperial countries and, like a monstrous machine, those countries, including Britain, sought to sate their hunger for gold with the riches of their colonies. Unlike gold, as represented in many children's stories, symbolizing goodness and royalty, gold in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* implies greed and extravagance. Gold in Baum's story is depicted similarly to how it is illustrated in the myth of King Midas. King Midas covets the precious metal until everything he touches turns to gold, leading to his tragic demise. Midas ultimately dies of hunger, unable to have anything *but* the gold he so coveted. Baum suggests a similar fatal outcome for imperial powers, like those illustrated in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* obsessed with both gold and maintaining their imperial control.

Gold is also featured in the story of the "Golden Cap," which can call Winged Monkeys to grant its wearer three wishes. The Winged Monkeys are "three times the slaves of the owner of the Golden Cap, whosoever he may be;" the Golden Cap serves as a manacle chaining the community of Winged Monkeys to the sovereign power that controls them, in effect, enslaving them.[51] The gold motif emphasizes the harm in imperialism, both to the "conquered" community, and to the greedy powers that become monster-like, due to their insatiable appetite for foreign metal.

---

[50] Bernstein, Peter L.. *The Power of Gold: The History of an Obsession*. New York: Wiley, 2000. Print. Page 261.
[51] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 206.

Like in *Peter Pan*, the motif of "flight" appears in several parts of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as well. The motif is used not to satirize social class however, but again, as a criticism of imperialism. In *Peter Pan,* flying illustrates innocence and "lightness," as Wendy and her brothers choose to fly off to Neverland; in contrast, Dorothy is swept off to Oz through no choice of her own. Dorothy's unintentional arrival in Oz seems representative of the United States and its "accidental" acquirement of the Philippines following the Spanish American War. Historian Robert Saldin claims, "The Spanish American war was not a result of imperialism. Rather, imperialism was an unintended consequence of the war, and its emergence was at last partially an historical accident."[52] Dorothy, upon arriving in Oz, is given the opportunity to *embrace* her place in the imperial world; she has no desire to disturb the Oz people, seeking only to make it back to her own home in Kansas.

Related to the "flight" motif, balloon symbolism floats through *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Historian John Christopher describes how a "'balloon mania' spread throughout both Europe and America," following the first balloon flight, at the end of the 19th century, around the time of publication of the novel.[53] At the start of the story, the narrator describes how Dorothy's house **"**whirled around two or three times and rose slowly through the air. Dorothy felt as if she were going up in a balloon."[54] In the 19th century, hot air balloons served as both entertainment and governmental military

---

[52] Saldin, Robert P., *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Page 32.
[53] Christopher, John. *Riding the Jetstream: The Story of Ballooning, From Montgolfier to Breitling*. London: John Murray, 2001. Print. Page 15.
[54] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 16

purposes; the elite class used balloons for amusement racing, and the government used balloons as a military surveillance tool (used by imperialist powers in war).[55]

The balloon imagery in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* reappears in mid-story, as the Wizard uses a hot air balloon to depart from Oz. The Wizard tells Dorothy, "When I came to this country it was by balloon. You also came through the air, being carried by cyclone. So I believe the best way to get across the desert [and back to Kansas] will be through the air."[56] While the Wizard manages to flee Oz by balloon, Dorothy remains behinds. Politicians in the 1890s were often portrayed with balloons, spewing "hot air," or empty rhetoric, like the Wizard.[57] Fittingly, the Wizard departs in a hot air balloon, kept aloft by his imperial lies, while Dorothy remains grounded, waiting for her Silver Shoes to take her back home to Kansas.

Color symbolism features prominently in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Scholars have looked at the representation of color in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as evidence of the story as an economic allegory. Dighe notices that: "the book teems with references to the colors gold, silver, and green—the colors of money." Although Dighe makes no mention of the prominent color white, throughout the story Dorothy wears white, a color associated with innocence and integrity. Upon arriving in Oz, Dorothy's dress is gingham blue and white. The Munchkins believe she has great power for she has "'white in [her]

---

[55] Christopher, John. *Riding the Jetstream: The Story of Ballooning, From Montgolfier to Breitling*. London: John Murray, 2001. Print. Page 39; 47.
[56] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 240.
[57] Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print.

frock, and only witches and sorceresses wear white.'"[58] White symbolizes both power and purity, two qualities that are not always compatible.[59] Dorothy changes into another dress upon entering the Emerald City, which she believes to be green in color. Yet upon leaving the City: "to her surprise, she found [her dress] was no longer green, but pure white. The ribbon around Toto's neck had also lost its green color and was as white as Dorothy's dress."[60] Dorothy, as a child, remains pure, as does Toto, as an extension of her. Everyone in the Emerald City wears green-tinted goggles, visions of wealth, clouding their vision and obfuscating reality. Yet the green is a façade, like the Wizard himself. Dorothy, with her childlike innocence, leaves the Emerald City still wearing white. The Wizard however, flies from Oz in a balloon with "green silk more than twenty feet long;" the balloon's greenness is representative of the Wizard as simply a "humbug," an imperial ruler without concern for his people.

Aside from the blinding nature of lucre, which distorts clear vision (like the green goggles), reality is sometimes hidden under the veil of appearances. The theme of appearance versus reality, common in many children's books, supports *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a pro-isolationist text. Although the Land of Oz appears shiny and brilliant, next to the dull grey of Kansas, ultimately the glittery surface of Oz pales in comparison to the solid and stable Kansas (as Dorothy realizes when she returns home). At first, in Kansas, "even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the

---

[58] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 38.
[59] Although film adaptation of "The Wizard of Oz" is beyond the scope of this paper, one might also draw the connection between Dorothy's blue and white dress and her red shoes, in the movie, as symbolic of Dorothy as the American "everyman."
[60] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 166.

long blades until they were the same grey color to be seen everywhere…the house was as dull and gray as everything else,"[61] while in Oz there were, "lovely patches of green sward all about, with stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Banks of gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered in the trees and bushes.[62] This verdant description of Oz in many ways reflects the twin idioms: "the grass is always greener on the other side" and "all that glitters is not gold." Although Dorothy's first impressions of Oz, upon being set down by the cyclone into a foreign land, were positive, as the novel progresses Oz darkens. Dorothy and her companions must go through "dark and gloomy" forests, with frightening "strange noises."[63] Later they encounter, "a great flock of wild crows [enough] to darken the sky," and "a swarm of black bees."[64] The longer Dorothy spends in Oz, the more compelling is her desire to return home; Oz is not as wonderful as it first appears.

One notes a striking contrast between the Kansas described at the beginning of the story, and the Kansas Dorothy returns to at the end of the story; such change is symbolic of Dorothy's transformation. While, at the outset, Kansas's grayness seems depressing and dull, upon returning from Oz, Kansas's grayness is representative of stability and reliability. The narrator describes how, upon making it home, "before [Dorothy] was the new farmhouse Uncle Henry built after the cyclone had carried away the old one. Uncle Henry was milking the cows in the barnyards, and Toto had jumped out of her arms and

---

[61] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 12.
[62] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 22.
[63] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 93.
[64] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 169-170.

was running toward the barn, barking joyously."[65] The "dull and gray" house from the beginning of the story has been replaced; the phrase "Uncle Henry was milking the cows," implies that Dorothy's aunt and uncle own more than one cow. Although, at the start of the story, Dorothy's home seems barren, the description of "cows" (numerous) implies the economic comfort Dorothy enjoys at home when she returns from Oz. The cows symbolize fertility and prosperity. While, arguably, not a herd of cows (as perhaps possible in the land of Oz, or the imperial world stage), Dorothy's family seems quite comfortable with their farm assets upon her return.

Even Aunt Em, described as "thin and gaunt, and never smiled" at the outset, seems to have changed into a warmer, more devoted caretaker.[66] After Dorothy returns home, the narrator describes Aunt Em "folding the little girl in her arms and covering her face with kisses."[67] The narrator's change in tone, in describing Kansas seems to reflect Dorothy's newfound respect for Kansas. Toto, a hyperbolic exaggeration of Dorothy, likewise expresses pure joy upon returning home; he "jump[s]" out of her arms and "run[s]" for the barn.

Baum depicts Kansas so positively at the end of the story, as a means of emphasizing his isolationist beliefs. In the same way Oz seemed so brilliant upon Dorothy's arrival, the American acquisition of the Philippines seemed to promise great wealth, respect, and additional power after the Spanish American War. Yet, in the same way Oz becomes darker the longer Dorothy remains far from home, Baum suggests the

---

[65] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 305.
[66] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 12.
[67] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 306.

future in the Philippines holds uprisings and a draining of resources. It thus seems fitting that when Dorothy and Toto return from Oz, Toto joyfully jumps out of Dorothy's arms, indicative of Dorothy's feelings of returning to Kansas, a place she remains forever loyal to: her home.

Ultimately, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is a tale about the value of returning "home." The cyclical structure of the cyclone and the circular nature of the balloons suggest hope and return. The Wizard, a balloonist from Kansas, comes to Oz, and leaves by hot air balloon. Dorothy ends her "journey" in the same place the story begins, but with a fresh perspective after she discovers her strengths and virtues. It is fitting that she returns home after completing this self-discovery, ready to embrace her home with a positive outlook, having gained intelligence, compassion, and courage.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is a colorful children's novel upon which Baum builds a case against American imperialism. Dorothy's return home is the culmination of the extended metaphor about the United States, appreciating the considerable assets between its own shores, as opposed to looking beyond its shores for prosperity. Using *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as an historical artifact with which to analyze twentieth century American society, the reader gains valuable insight about societal sentiments surrounding childhood and American nationalism. The success of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* pushed American children's literature another step from under the shadow of her mother country, Great Britain.

Conclusion: The End of the Beginning
Using Children's Literature to Analyze the Time Period They Were Written In

"And so it will go, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless"- J.M. Barrie[1]

Literature, and specifically children's literature, creates a contemporary view of a society from another time. Children's books are often analyzed as literary works; this thesis not only reviews these texts as a literary documents however, but as historical artifacts with which to analyze the time period the story was written. While all books can serve as historical documents, the simplified and moralizing nature of children's books makes them even more revealing. One can analyze the didactic elements of the story, as a means of discovering that which society felt was of importance to teach their children at the time. More noteworthy yet less realized, is the author's ability to subtly incorporate political and social commentary of the time into his work, while still creating an entertaining surface story. Authors can conceal their controversial opinions within the storyline, using the story's simple plot as protection of the work's central purpose, if called into question.

While all children's texts can be analyzed as a means of studying the time period they were written in, this thesis focuses on J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. These two works were written at the turn of the twentieth century, significantly termed the "Age of the Child." Both works illustrate the momentous power of a children's text, as an avenue of commentary on society. In analyzing children's literature, scholars often disagree on whom the author is addressing. While the entertainment aspect of children's stories is meant to engage children, one

[1] Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987. Page 159.

notes a variety of complex issues subtly addressed in the tales as well. These issues often reflect conflicts of the time, of which the younger audience would be ignorant of, but their parents would understand. These issues include the likes of American isolationism in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* or the mockery of the rigidity of the Victorian class system in *Peter Pan*. Often seen as *just* children's books, the children's book genre should not to be discounted as of lesser quality. Successful children's book authors' ability to reach both adults and children illustrates both skill and ingenuity.

Both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* were extremely well received when they were initially published, and continue to remain popular and relevant stories today. *Peter Pan* has been reproduced in a variety of different mediums and time periods including: a Disney animated movie (1953), Steven Spielberg's spin-off movie *Hook* (1991), P.J. Hogan's live-action film *Peter Pan* (2003), and in *Finding Neverland (*2004), the story of J.M. Barrie, and his relationship with the Llewelyn Boys.[2] These are only some of the many reproductions of the classic story, not to mention the various theater revival *Peter Pan* performances put on since the initial performance in 1904.

Like *Peter Pan, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has celebrated enormous success, growing even more popular with the release of *The Wizard of Oz* movie in 1939. There are been various reproductions created, including *O, Wicked, The Wiz*, (a *Wizard of Oz* remake where the characters are black, illustrative of the transcending qualities of the original story, which addressed an audience of middle-class white children and their families), and even *Oz, The Great and Powerful,* released March 2013, which brought in

[2] White, Donna R., and C. Anita Tarr. *J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006. Print. Page xix.

$150 million domestically and abroad opening weekend, number one in the box office (illustrating the continuing appeal of the *Wizard of Oz* story in today's society as well).[3]

In looking at these various reproductions, the underlying social and political commentaries of the original tales seem to be missing. This illustrates both Barrie and Baum's success in creating stories that perform on dual-platforms. While *Peter Pan* is most commonly seen as the story of a boy who does not want to grow up, the widespread use of paradox, witticism, and double entendre allows Barrie to illustrate societal traits he finds flawed. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, while the most common take away is about the importance of believing in oneself, the story can also be analyzed as a political allegory for American isolationism. Although the subtle messages incorporated in each classic seem to have been lost, their timeless stories remain.

While both *Peter Pan* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* are arguably historical documents that can be used to analyze the turn of the twentieth century in the United States and Britain, the stories offer different illustrations and commentaries on the time period they were written in. This is, in large part, due to the divergence in issues between the United States and Britain. In *Peter Pan,* Barrie chooses to focus his satirical commentary on the hierarchical class system of Britain. Extremely concerned with material and superficial ideals, Barrie uses the Darling parents to poke fun at the "rigidity" of Victorian England. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* no class system exists in Kansas. Kansas, symbolic of the American frontier, epitomizes independence, self-reliance, and persistence. This relates to the broader idea that Americans had of

---

[3] Associated Press, "Disney's 'Oz' prequel bewitches box office with $80 million debut." *Fox News*. 10 March 2013.<http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2013/03/10/disney-oz-prequel-bewitches-box-office-with-80-million-debut/>.

themselves vis-à-vis Europe: a land for all not differentiated by economic or social identity. Dorothy, her aunt, and her uncle are rather isolated; as such they survive independently. In contrast, the Darling family does not seem to be able to function without the rules and expectations of society. While the Darlings seems frivolous, Dorothy's family appears minimalistic. This juxtaposition between families can be seen as juxtaposition between the societal norms of the countries they represent.

Barrie uses the fantastical Neverland as juxtaposition to the "stuffiness" of Victorian England, a "utopia" in a world full of class struggle and rigidity. The relationship between Oz and Kansas however, is not portrayed in the same manner. Oz represents the enticing evils of the imperial world, brilliant and beautiful, yet filled with greed and "humbugs." While the Darling children voluntarily choose to leave with Peter for Neverland, Dorothy is swept away accidentally, through no fault of her own. And while the Darling children struggle with the predicament of staying in Neverland, where they long to be, and returning to England, where they know their parents long for them, Dorothy has no such qualms. From her initial appearance in Oz, she longs to go home. Her home is the United States, a place of dependability and honest (admittedly modest) growth. While Neverland represents a "utopia" from England, where all live equally and ethically, Oz is more comparable to England, a place of hierarchy and material obsession. Thus, while Barrie uses Neverland as a model to illustrate the negative aspects of Victorian English society, Baum uses Oz to highlight the positive aspects of an isolated United States, separated from the allures of the imperial world stage. Comparing the British *Peter Pan* to American *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* illustrates noteworthy distinctions between the two turn-of-the-century societies.

It is significant to note the difference between studying the undertones of Barrie's *Peter Pan* and Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Other scholars have argued *The Wonderful of Oz* as an allegorical representation of turn of the century America. While not looking at the story as an anti-imperialist argument, they have seen the merit in analyzing the story as more than simply a "kid's story." In looking at *Peter Pan* however, scholars seem to have missed viewing the story as a satire of the middle class Victorian English mindset altogether. Both *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Peter Pan* serve as beneficial examples of looking at children's books as more than purely entertainment, noting the valuable insight imparted through the text about their respective historical times as well

Analyzing the depths of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* illustrates that children's books can serve as historical documents with which to analyze the time they were written. Scholars can garner key information about the time through a didactic reading of the text (the commonly assumed role of children's literature), as well as through a more cynical reading, analyzing the work as a social, political, and/or economic commentary of the times. The genre "children's literature" does not necessarily imply a collection of more simplistic works. Future scholars can follow the model laid out in this thesis, analyzing the time period in which a children's book was written, to connect specific historical events and/or societal ideals to the primary children's text itself. Such analysis allows scholars to look at other children's stories (including modern children's books) and note what evidence they suggest about their time period.

WORK CITED

1. Associated Press, "Disney's 'Oz' prequel bewitches box office with $80 million debut." *Fox News*. 10 March 2013. <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2013/03/10/disney-oz-prequel-bewitches-box-office-with-80-million-debut/>.

2. Barrie, J. M., Amy Billone, and F. D. Bedford. *Peter Pan*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print.

3. Bates, Laura Raidonis. "'Sweet Sorrow': The Universal Theme of Separation in Folklore and Children's Literature." The Lion and the Unicorn 31.1 (2007).

4. Beerbohm, Max. "*Saturday Review*." 7 January 1905 within Hanson, Bruce K. *Peter Pan on stage and screen, 1904-2010*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, N.C. McFarland, 2011.

5. Briggs, Julia, Dennis Butts, and M. O. Grenby. *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008. Print.

6. Baum, L. Frank. *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, 12 April 1890, 19 April 1890, 18 Oct. 1890. As cited by: Parker, David. "The Rise and Fall of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a "Parable on Populism." *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians*. Vol. 15 (1994).

7. Baum, L. Frank. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987.

8. Bernstein, Peter L.. *The Power of Gold: The History of an Obsession*. New York: Wiley, 2000. Print.

9. Bolt, Christine. *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993. Print.

10. Caine, Barbara. *Victorian Feminists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.

11. Cashdan, Sheldon. *The Witch Must Die: How Fairy Tales Shape our Lives*. New York: Basic Books, 1999. Print.

12. Clanton, Gene. *Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print.

13. Christopher, John. *Riding the Jetstream: The Story of Ballooning, From Montgolfier to Breitling*. London: John Murray, 2001. Print.

14. Cook, Timothy E., "Another Perspective on Political Authority in Children's Literature: The Fallible Leader in L. Frank Baum and Dr. Seuss." *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1983), University of Utah on behalf of the Western Political Science Association.
15. Darlington, W. A. *J. M. Barrie,*. London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Limited, 1938. Print.

16. Daunton, M. J.. *Wealth and Welfare: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1851-1951*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.

17. Dighe, Ranjit S.. *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002. Print.

18. Drusilla Scott, *Everyman revived: the common sense of Michael Polanyi*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.1995).

19. Dunbar, Janet. *J.M. Barrie; the Man behind the Image*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970. Print.

20. Egan, Michael. *The Neverland of Id: Barrie, Peter Pan, and Freud*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982. Print.

21. Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. Print.

22. Fletcher, Anthony. *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood, 1600-1914*. New Haven [Conn]: Yale University Press, 2008. Print. Page 108.

23. "For Believers in Fairies." *Special to The New York Times. New York Times (1857-1922)*: 11. Oct 18 1905.

24. Fromer, Julie E. *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008. Print.

25. Frost, Ginger Suzanne. *Victorian Childhoods*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009. Print.

26. Glassman, Peter. Afterword. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. By L. Frank Baum. 1900. Reprint. New York: Harper Collins Publishers and Books of Wonder, 1987.

27. Gordon, Eleanor, and Gwyneth Nair. *Public Lives: Women, Family, and Society in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003. Print.

28. Griswold, Jerome. *Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Print.

29. Griswold, Jerome. *Feeling Like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Print.

30. Gubar, Marah. *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

31. Heale, M. J.. *Twentieth-Century America: Politics and Power in the United States, 1900-2000*. London: Arnold, 2004. Print.

32. Honeyman, Susan. *Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005. Print.

33. Hulbert, Ann. *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print.

34. Jones, Dudley, and Tony Watkins. *A Necessary Fantasy?: The Heroic Figure in Children's Popular Culture*. New York: Garland Publication. 2000. Print.

35. Kilpatrick, William, Gregory Wolfe, and Suzanne M. Wolfe. *Books that build character: a guide to teaching your child moral values through stories*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. Print.

36. Klein, Maury. *The Genesis of Industrial America, 1870-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.

37. Kleinberg, S. J.. *Women in the United States, 1830-1945*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999. Print.

38. Kutzer, M. Daphne. *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books*. New York: Garland Pub. 2000. Print.

39. Lanes, Selma G.. *Through the Looking Glass: Further Adventures & Misadventures in the Realm of Children's Literature*. Boston: D.R. Godine, 2004. Print.

40. Littlefield, Henry M., "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism." *American Quarterly* , Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1964). P. 47-58. The John Hopkins University Press.

41. Lerer, Seth. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, From Aesop to Harry Potter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.

42. Lurie, Alison. *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: Subversive Children's Literature*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1990. Print.

43. Mass, Wendy. *Children's Literature*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2001. Print.

44. Meigs, Cornelia. *A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in English. Prepared in Four Parts*. New York: Macmillan, 1969. Print.

45. Nichols, Christopher McKnight. *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. Print.

46. Parker, David. "The Rise and Fall of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a "Parable on Populism." *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians*. *V*ol. 15 (1994).

47. Rae, Nicol C., "Class and Culture: American Political Cleavages in the Twentieth Century." *The Western Political Quarterly* , Vol. 45, No. 3 (Sep., 1992), pp. 629-650. University of Utah on behalf of the Western Political Science Association.

48. Reynolds, Kimberley. *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011. Print.

49. Rockoff, Hugh. "The 'Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory." *Journal of Political Economy* , Vol. 98, No. 4 (Aug., 1990), pp. 739-760. University of Chicago Press.

50. Rogers, Katharine M.. *L. Frank Baum, Creator of Oz: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Print.

51. Rose, Clare. "'The Novelty Consists In The Ornamental Design': Design Innovation In Mass-Produced Boys' Clothing, 1840–1900." *Textile History 38.1* (2007).

52. Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1984. Print.

53. Rose, Jonathan, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986. Print.

54. Rosenman, Ellen Bayuk, and Claudia C. Klaver. *Other Mothers: Beyond the Maternal Ideal*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008. Print.

55. Saldin, Robert P. *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

56. Savage, Jon. *Teenage*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2007. Print. .
57. Shuttleworth, Sally. *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.

58. Schwartz, Evan I., *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print.

59. Tatar, Maria. *Enchanted Hunters: The Power of Stories in Childhood*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Print.

60. Thompson, F. M. L.. *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988. Print.

61. Toohey, Peter and Worthington, Ian, "Flights of Fancy in Nonnus and J.M. Barrie," *Electronic Antiquity* Vol. 3 Issue 5 - October 1996.

62. Wayne J. Urban, *American Education: A History, Fourth Edition* (Taylor & Francis, 2008),

63. White, Donna R., and C. Anita Tarr. *J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006. Print.

64. Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. New York: Wildman Press, 1983. Print.

65. Zipes, Jack. *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and their Tradition*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.