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"This Journey Through the House"

Re-Centring the Domestic Space in the Storytelling of J.M. Barrie

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## Abstract

This thesis discusses the representation of domesticity in the fiction of J.M. Barrie. It concentrates on the ways in which the home space in novels and plays produced by Barrie between 1896 and 1920, is designed to facilitate a transgressive storytelling which works within – and against – the central narrative of each text.

In fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the domestic sphere is overwhelmingly cast as the domain of women. It is commonly associated with ideas of knowability, security, comfort, and a heteronormative family structure comprised of benevolent patriarch, gentle mother and beloved children. These associations have been deeply ingrained in critical readings of Barrie's fiction, in which the spaces of home are superficially aligned with a set of conventional values in opposition to the seductive chaos of fantasy lands. Existing Barrie scholarship has concentrated its attention on the composition of these fantasy worlds in general, restricting its focus to *Peter Pan* and Never Land (1904) in particular; this approach has resulted in flawed and reductive conclusions about Barrie's professional treatment of subjects such as women, childhood and the development of identity.

As a consequence, this thesis will address multiple texts and genres in its analyses. Furthermore, by prioritising discussion of the inherently feminine spaces of 'home' in his novels and plays, it will reveal the existence of a proto-feminist dimension to Barrie's writing. In each of these texts – *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), *Peter Pan* (1904), *Dear Brutus* (1917) and *Mary Rose* (1920) – the realistic spaces of domestic life are juxtaposed with fantasy worlds. This thesis will examine such fantasy realms as its secondary focus, purely insofar as

they illuminate and refract the concerns of home; that place from which characters seek to escape, and to which they must, in some form, return. My research will interrogate each text's relationship to their respective home-spaces, using Gaston Bachelard's treatise on the intersection of selfhood and domestic landscapes, *The Poetics of Space* (1958) as an approximate theoretical framework.

Chapter One will offer a brief biographical and social context for Barrie's creative interest in the spaces of home, with a particular focus upon the relationship between women and domesticity. Chapters Two and Three are dedicated to the exposition of identity within the urban and rural home spaces of *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* which, for the purposes of thematic fluidity, will be discussed together. Chapter Four will trace the maturation of transgressive femininity in Barrie's work, by critiquing the figure of the mother-storyteller against the domestic environment of the night nursery in *Peter Pan*. Chapter Five argues that the plot, imagery and set architecture of the *Dear Brutus* drawing room supports an intertextual reading of the play which places it in a dialogue with *Peter Pan*. Under this interpretation, *Dear Brutus* exonerates the figure of the non-maternal woman by absolving Alice Dearth of unjust blame in the disintegration of her marriage. Additionally, it challenges romanticised literary presentations of the eternal child by tracing an affinity between the identities of the mysterious Lob, and Peter Pan. Chapter Six will position *Mary Rose* as apotheotic in Barrie's portrayal of the relationship between the domestic world and individual autonomy. Furthermore, in the play's climactic scene between Mary Rose and her son Harry, this thesis will assert that – contrary to critical consensus - Barrie effects

a triumphant liberation of woman from the home-space within which she is routinely silenced and oppressed.

Finally, the concluding section of this thesis will question the legacy of 'home' in Barrie's novels and plays, as well as summarising its relationship to concepts of identity, autonomy, and communication. As protagonists return from their respective fantasy realms, Barrie appears to align their restoration to the domestic world with the re-establishing of a social status quo. Yet this thesis will contend that within the parallel narratives conveyed symbolically through each text's depictions of cottage, farmhouse, nursery, or drawing room, Barrie enables a subversive storytelling which affords agency to characters marginalised, or altogether disempowered, by texts' 'official' plots.

## Lay Summary

This research discusses representations of home in the fiction of J.M. Barrie between 1896 and 1920 (*Sentimental Tommy* [1896], *Tommy and Grizel* [1900], *Peter Pan* [1904], *Dear Brutus* [1917] and *Mary Rose* [1920]). Previous criticism in the field of Barrie studies has prioritised isolated scrutiny of Never Land over meaningful analyses of magical realms in his other works, or indeed any analysis whatsoever of the domestic spaces from which characters seeking fantasy-land adventures depart, and to which they must return. By deconstructing close-readings of the spaces of home in each of these primary texts, it is possible to interpret a parallel, symbolic – often subversive - storytelling at work beneath their 'main' plots. This parallel storytelling is suggestive of important and hitherto untapped dynamics of gender, identity and family in Barrie's fiction, and is not only at odds with the more obvious themes in his works, but with dominant socio-political discourses in Britain at the time of their publication. As its secondary focus, this thesis explores how these spaces' correspondent fantasy worlds enable and amplify parallel narratives originating in the domestic sphere. Finally, this thesis will evaluate the overall implications of the presentation of domestic worlds in Barrie's fiction. Taken together, these novels and plays spanning nearly a quarter of a century demonstrate Barrie's evolving preoccupation with disrupting or re-energising notions of home as a safe and knowable space.

Declaration of Own Work

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Date: Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019

Signed:

Rosaleen Angela Nolan

For Tony and Carmella, who have developed my own powers of demonic motherhood.

And for Mum and Dad, who would always read me one more story;

and in whose home I have always felt

heard

<b><u>Contents</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Abstract	2
Lay Summary	5
Declaration of Own Work	6
Dedication	7
Acknowledgements	9
List of Abbreviations	10
Prefatory Note	11
Introduction	12
Literature Review	18
<u>Chapter One: Home: A Social Context</u>	34
1.1 Selfhood and the Domestic Space: Barrie and Bachelard	59
<u>Chapter Two: Tommy</u>	72
2.1 Instability of Identity and the Urban Milieu	78
2.2 Symbols of Storytelling and The Tommy Myth	101
<u>Chapter Three: Grizel</u>	119
3.1. Framing Grizel as Domestic Creative	134
3.2 "A Perfect Lover After All:" Grizel's Reclaimed Selfhood and Narrative Subversion	157
<u>Chapter Four: Beautiful Mothers? Angels as Mermaids in <i>Peter Pan</i></u>	164
<u>Chapter Five: Keeping the Window Open: Intertextuality and the     <u>Second Chance in <i>Dear Brutus</i></u></u>	209
<u>Chapter Six: Beyond the Veil: Liminality and Defiance in the     <u>House of <i>Mary Rose</i></u></u>	241
Conclusion	291
Works Cited	297

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List of Abbreviations

ST – Sentimental Tommy

TG – Tommy and Grizel

LWB – Little White Bird

PP – Peter Pan

PPKG – Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens

PW – Peter and Wendy

DB – Dear Brutus

MR – Mary Rose

WEWK – What Every Woman Knows

## Prefatory Note

1. Use of italics, except where indicated, are as in original text.
2. In older editions of Barrie's works (such as his collection of plays or the *Tommy* novels) I have used page numbers as well as the numbers of Acts or Chapters so as to provide for the reader a more accurate sense of placement in text. For more recently reissued primary texts, I have used only page numbers.
3. I have attempted to distinguish between material directly quoted from a source, and generalised concepts (which do not express my critical opinions) or paraphrasing, with the use of double quotation marks for the former, and single quotation marks for the latter. Please note that this is not an inadvertent stylistic inconsistency!

## Introduction

"I fancy I try to create an artificial world to myself because the one I really inhabit, and the only one I could do any good in, becomes too sombre" (Barrie qtd. in Meynell 21).

Much has been written about J.M. Barrie's prodigious talent for escapism. He has been repeatedly described as a whimsical<sup>1</sup> writer, renowned for crafting fantasy worlds in which the rules, restrictions and responsibilities of reality lose all purchase. Most memorable of these realms is of course Never Land, synonymous to this day with the imaginative liberty of childhood, and without question one of the most captivating aspects of *Peter Pan* (1904) - the play with which Barrie's legacy both literary and personal has been, for more than a century, inextricable. Whilst it is inevitable that any discussion of space in his literature will, therefore, invoke his creation of Never Land, it is crucial to acknowledge that for Barrie the appeal of a make-believe realm neither started nor ends with the birth of Peter Pan. Each of the primary texts included in this thesis attests to a recurrence of fantasy worlds across a selection of his works, penned over a period of more than twenty-five years.

Writing here in 1909, half a decade after the inaugural performance of *Peter Pan*, Barrie continues to muse on his need for an "artificial world". He locates in this imaginary space not only an antidote to the harsh immutability of reality, but the potential to effect the "good" that he fails to accomplish in the world he "really inhabit[s]". Discussing the "dark side" of fairyland in Barrie's plays, Wiggins

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<sup>1</sup> See Bernard Shaw's 1937 obituary to Barrie (153); see also Blake (83); and Hudson (66)

identifies a causal connection between real and imaginary lives as one of the foremost attractions of magical realms in fiction:

Fantasy is timeless and essential to the creation and understanding of reality. Dealing as it does with the great conflicts of the human condition, it can often speak to us on a more fundamental level than literature that is slavishly tied to the modern "realistic" world (80).

Although on the one hand it offers escapism, unlimited potential, and a romanticised perspective upon a reality which can be anything from dull to unbearable, part of the appeal of fantasy clearly lies in the indelible relationship it bears to the lives it leaves behind. Wiggins contends that the inclusion of fantasyscapes in Barrie's storytelling offers readers a more palatable and "fundamental" commentary on the "great conflicts of the human condition" than is presented in strictly realistic or naturalistic fiction. Her perspective – implying that it is from the fantasy worlds of literature that the most profound insights into real life can be gleaned - echoes the majority of modern academic research on Barrie. Yet her essay and others like it neglect to dissect how the appearance of magical spaces across Barrie's works in fact elicits the refocusing of critical scrutiny - to incorporate the spaces of home to which they are (in some form) attached. In the ritualistic mythmaking of Thrums' green locales (*Sentimental Tommy* [1896]; *Tommy and Grizel* [1900]), the metamorphic vibrancy of Never Land (*Peter Pan* [1904]), the pseudo-Shakespearean mystery of Lob's Wood (*Dear Brutus* [1917]) and the folkloric eeriness of Mary Rose's Hebridean island (*Mary Rose* [1920]), a popular, inter-generational desire for fantasy lives is repeatedly fulfilled. However, the

enduring need for escapism in his fiction – alongside Barrie's self-proclaimed reliance upon "artificial worlds" in 1909 - demands that we more closely examine the realities that these worlds refract or illuminate.

Indeed, whilst professionally Barrie has been most popularly associated with the cultivation of a make-believe land, a fascination with the domestic sphere is patent both in his private correspondence and his published work. The very title of this thesis is taken from his preface to the first printed edition of *Peter Pan* in 1928, in which Barrie contends that the development of identity can be mapped onto the model of domesticity that embodies our life's story: the house. Defending himself against his own "suspicions"<sup>2</sup> that he did not author the play, Barrie metaphorises the different phases of his own maturation as both writer and man as rooms in the house which symbolises the wholeness of his selfhood. He traces in the distinct compartments of his memories evidence that his experiences consciously or subconsciously influenced his writing of *Peter Pan*, summarising that, "[t]his journey through the house may not convince any one that I wrote Peter, but it does suggest me as a likely person" ("Dedication" 79). Barrie's "journey through the house" in 1928 is an explicit comment on the symbiotic relationship he perceives between identity, storytelling and the complex intimacy of home; a relationship which is cultivated in much of his personal and professional writing. As the following literature review will argue, significant energy has been expended in interrogating

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<sup>2</sup> Barrie's defence of his authorship is playfully argued, so as to emphasise the organic development of the *Peter Pan* story as it passed between the Llewelyn Davies brothers throughout their childhood. He notes that, "[y]ou had played it until you tired of it, and tossed it in the air and gored it, and left it derelict in the mud and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed some of it together with a pen-nib" ("Dedication" 76).

ways that the geography of Barrie's childhood finds expression in Never Land.<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite a lifelong and very visible preoccupation with the spaces of home in his letters, notebooks and creative writings, no parallel explication of domesticity in his works has been undertaken.

It is indisputable that popular and biographical interest in Barrie has maintained a determinedly myopic focus on *Peter Pan*, Never Land and its related literature.<sup>4</sup> Critical engagement with fantasy worlds featured in his other writing is negligible, and still more significantly (at least for the purposes of this thesis) academic discourse has hitherto neglected any meaningful study of the domestic milieux which are present in each of these works before the 'adventure' begins, and after it has ended. For this reason, although this thesis will address the interrelated narrative properties of both domestic and fantasy worlds as they appear across Barrie's *oeuvre*, it will concentrate its attention upon renderings of the interior, realistic spaces of home. As points of departure and return, these spaces are structural necessities. More importantly, however, they offer glimpses into the social, political and cultural environments within – or against - which Barrie was working.

The primary texts I have chosen for their portrayals of domestic space are: *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), *Peter Pan* (1904), *Dear Brutus* (1917) and *Mary Rose* (1920). In each of these novels and plays, Barrie exploits the tangible components of the home – windows, doors, placement of items of

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<sup>3</sup> R. Green (5-6)

<sup>4</sup> Other texts in the *Peter Pan* universe of course include the character's first appearance in *The Little White Bird* (1902), *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) and *Peter and Wendy* (1911).

furniture – to enable his own storytelling as well as the parallel storytelling in which individual characters partake. Domestic spaces are established as arenas in which social standards concerning issues such as gender and parenthood are displayed, with the interiority of the house representing a more general enclosure within society. Inside this sphere, characters are customarily compliant with predominating attitudes of the period, their behaviours and dialogue at least superficially accordant with the 'official' discourses of moral, religious, governmental and legislative authorities. However, it is within the domestic worlds of these texts - redolent of the knowable, the secure and the accepted – that Barrie threads traces of the problems characters must confront in the fantasy realm. These supposedly reassuring spaces to which protagonists are in some form restored, are in fact where the tensions and troubles central to their inner lives are engendered. Each chapter of this thesis will address an individual primary text,<sup>5</sup> dedicated to the exposition of their different spaces of home. I will analyse each work's relationship to the domestic/realistic/interior world from which the plot departs and to which it eventually returns, using Bachelard's treatise on the intersection of selfhood and domestic landscapes, *The Poetics of Space* (1958) as an approximate theoretical framework.

Although the focus of this thesis will be Barrie's writing of domesticity, the juxtaposition of the home space's mundanity with its magical other is an important aspect of plotting in each of the primary texts I have included for study. Fantasy

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* which – for the sake of continuity – will be discussed together as part of two longer chapters.

worlds present characters with the opportunity to transgress the hierarchies and mores of the homes they have left behind; just as the domestic or realistic space is aligned with interiority as a reflection of its operation *within* cultural norms, the fantasy realm is generally situated at some distance from the home, outdoors, on the margins of terrain marked by traditional social structures and activities. Using this formula Barrie facilitates his characters' participation in scenarios which constitute reversals of "normal" life. The fantasy worlds of his fiction thus expose the frailties of the existences protagonists have discarded; it is self evident that each of these make-believe landscapes is interesting and deserving of critical attention in its own right. However, their inclusion in this thesis will be limited to their utility insofar as they reflect, reject or parallel specific aspects or instances of the domestic worlds with which they are connected, and to which protagonists invariably retreat.

Indeed, in closing many of his stories with this idea of returning to the home,<sup>6</sup> some critics have identified Barrie's overarching faith in the prudence of abiding by an admittedly imperfect status quo.<sup>7</sup> However, it is my argument that

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<sup>6</sup> There exists a strong literary precedent – from Renaissance drama through to children's stories produced by Barrie's peers in the first decade of 1900 – for romance, comedy or fantasy narratives to close with the idea of a world restored to its previous state. This righting of an inverted reality often projects some social or moral lesson, disguised as the restoration of a necessary hierarchy or order.

<sup>7</sup> Coats describes Never Land as "a treacherous place" (3) containing "thrills always linked to violence" (4), summarising the stark ultimatum offered by the text thus: "[Never Land] induces a careless forgetfulness and irresponsibility to others that Wendy finds disturbing. Her sense of values, her sense of humanity, is strongly linked to home and family, and if that means going home and accepting the responsibility of growing up, then so be it" (4). For Coats, Wendy's attitude is both "necessary and desirable" (4) as an example to other children both within and beyond *Peter Pan*. Similarly, Roth argues that *Peter Pan* confronts audiences with, "a chain of girlish mothers punished and dismissed for the reluctant but inevitable loss of their youth"(65). Generations of Darling girls excitedly embark upon Never Land adventures with Peter, where rebellion against Edwardian social norms is commonplace. Roth posits that, in returning Wendy and her descendants to the nursery as soon as they 'betray' the conditions of their stay by showing signs of maturation, Barrie is reminding his

formerly-overlooked aspects of symbolism and intertextuality are apparent in Barrie's presentation of domesticity in these texts, offering visions of rebellion and renewal entirely at odds with the conservatism detected in his writing by much of the academic community until this point.

### Literature Review

As indicated in the general introduction to this thesis, the main issue with extant criticism in the field of Barrie studies is the limitation of its scope, and an apparent consensus about the author's conservative literary agenda. With relatively recent exceptions – upon which I will expound throughout this section – academic and biographical thought has revolved around *Peter Pan* and Never Land, largely to the detriment of progress in the study of those domestic worlds across Barrie's fiction from which escape into fantasy realms seems necessary.

A secondary issue with the body of research in this field is the overwhelming tendency to analyse Barrie's fiction through a biographical lens, with critics labouring to draw analogies between elements or episodes of his personal history and the themes which appear in his work. In 1971, Geduld published *Sir James Barrie* which stands as perhaps the foremost – and hence, deeply influential – instance of this practice. The discussion is not biographical in structure, concentrating instead on the distinct phases of Barrie's professional evolution from journalist to playwright, and critiquing the major works he produced within each

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audience that the fantasy transgressions of Never Land cannot be translated into social revolution in the real world of adulthood responsibilities. Equally, in *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose* critics including Jack, Ormond and McGowan have each interpreted the plays' plots as treating punitively those characters who are unable or unwilling to relinquish the lure of fantasy.

period. However, Geduld relies heavily on biographical information to develop a psychoanalytical framework through which he attempts to decipher Barrie's writing – a tactic which underestimates and over-simplifies the complexities of narrative, imagery and origins by which such writing is characterised. Although Geduld's is not the earliest nor the most recent critical perspective to approach Barrie's work in this way (others are discussed later in this review) *Sir James Barrie* stands as perhaps the foremost example of the distortive readings generated by the conflation of authorial history and creative intent.

A contentious example of this is the alignment of Barrie's difficulties with women<sup>8</sup> and the supposed absence of convincing, complex or sympathetically 'unconventional' female characters in his fiction. Disproportionately, secondary criticism addressing Barrie's writing of women misses or minimises the nuanced ironies of his characterisation, identifying instead a series of martyred heroines whose maternity is idealised (Mrs Darling and Wendy Darling), deferred (Grizel and Alice Dearth) or thwarted (Mary Rose Morland); or whose agency is constructed solely in relation to a male protagonist.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Dunbar is particularly guilty in this regard. She asserts that Barrie's unhealthy maternal attachment results in lack of nuance when writing female characters: "The one subject which he never treated very successfully was women, or, as he called them, Young Ladies . . . They came out of his pen as romantic, self-possessed, sexless beings, set apart from common humanity, completely unreal" (51-2). Similarly, R. Green extrapolates the idealisation of the Darling women from Margaret Ogilvy's weighty influence on the young Barrie, simultaneously disavowing and confirming the evidence in his work of "a 'mother complex' . . . the streak of sentimentality which Wendy only just avoided, which Mrs Darling did not quite avoid, and which engulfed the Beautiful Mothers" (4). Along similar lines, Jack alludes to Barrie's reinterpretation of his own marital problems in the relationship between Tommy and Grizel: "Barrie as man must have known that it was cruel to let the world know of the sexual failures within his marriage to Mary Ansell, yet as artist he deemed them essential, so Tommy Sandys outlines them in *Tommy and Grizel*" (*Road* 200).

<sup>9</sup>In each of the texts discussed in this thesis – as well as being a more explicit aspect of plotting in *What Every Woman Knows* (1908) – female characters appear to exercise or develop ingenuity in response to, or within the parameters of, a patriarchal prism of femininity. Their power appears

Such misinterpretation has resulted in a relative imbalance of scholarship locating in Barrie's work any trace of what today may be loosely-termed as a feminist sensibility; notably, works by Jack, Nash, Morse, Roth, and Clark stand as invaluable exemptions in this regard. Jack's essay, "Barrie and The Extreme Heroine" argues persuasively that Barrie's beliefs about gender and sexuality combine the concept that "[w]oman. . . has naturally a complex mind which she controls and uses to manipulate the simple male" with the observation that her "under-privileged social position has forced her into additional manipulative roles" (Jack "Extreme Heroine" 140). Indeed, Jack's essay goes further; he asserts that this relationship between innately superior biology and an oppressive cultural environment which necessitates additional resourcefulness places Barrie's "'feminist' position" in dialogue with "Judith Butler's arguments on gender as performance in *Gender Trouble*" (140), and is, as such, inherently progressive. Through his multi-genre analysis of a selection of Barrie's female protagonists, Jack claims that Barrie demonstrates a consistent commitment to the exposition of woman's nuanced and multiplicitous agency.

Similarly, Nash's essay, "J.M. Barrie and the Third Sex" – by rehabilitating

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reactive as they twist undesirable situations to their advantage with a conspiratorial nod to acceptable 'feminine wiles' – we see this in Grizel's mothering of Dr. McQueen, Mrs Darling's cossetting of her husband, Wendy Darling's acquiescence to Peter Pan, Alice Dearth's simultaneous disdain and tolerance for her husband Will, and in the girlish pleas directed by Mary Rose Morland at both her father and fiancé. Jack argues that Maggie in *WEWK* exemplifies this strategic seizing of control, noting that: "Woman, for Barrie, was not only cleverer than man by nature but also more practical in defining where best she could manipulate his simplicity" (Jack "Extreme Heroine" 139). However, this thesis will contend that Barrie's rendering of female characters, although cleverly exploitative of such sexual stereotypes, does not rely upon them exclusively, and produces instead a host of women whose power is more deeply embedded, further-reaching, and significantly more dynamic than even critics such as Jack have suggested in their exposition of Barrie's feminist tendencies.

Barrie's largely-neglected journalistic work of the late 1880s – locates in his non-fiction writing not only an engagement with contemporary socio-political questions of sex and gender, but a clear (if characteristically sardonically framed) support for the expansion of women's freedoms as well as for the liberation of maleness from prescriptive late-Victorian conceptions of virility and reproduction. The essays of Roth ("Babes In Boy-Land: J.M. Barrie and the Edwardian Girl"), Morse ("The Kiss: Female Sexuality and Power in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*") and Clark ("The Female Figure in *Peter Pan*: The Small and the Mighty") in White and Tarr's centennial collection, *J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100*, offer, additionally, important revaluations of femininity and girlhood in Barrie's most famous work. Whilst Roth's thesis misidentifies the tragedy of Wendy Darling, her argument that Barrie always intended the girl figure to be the focus of his play at least recentres the pre-pubertal female child subject in a work broadly supposed to represent the veneration of eternal male youth and irresponsibility. Similarly, Morse's close reading of Mrs Darling argues for the restoration of critical attention to an oft-overlooked character in its suggestion that Peter Pan is a projection of her own deviant psyche.

In this thesis, I argue for the necessity of close-reading Barrie's novels and plays to locate this proto-feminist sensibility, illustrating that, although some of his works do sympathetically address 'the woman question',<sup>10</sup> the majority do not espouse any particular ideology. As stated above, however, Barrie's non-fiction

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<sup>10</sup> See p38, FN27 of this thesis.

work – particularly his mid to late-1880s journalistic writing in *The Nottingham Journal* and *The Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* as explored by Nash in "J.M. Barrie and the Third Sex" – evinces a consistent and nuanced engagement with contemporary debates surrounding issues such as suffragism, marriage, bachelorhood and the New Woman, and constructions of gender. Additionally, in his Appendix to *The Road to the Never Land*, Jack acknowledges that Barrie's *Nottingham Journal* journalism – as leader writer and (under the pseudonyms "Hippomenes" and "A Modern Peripatetic") regular columnist – constitutes, "an area of research ignored by almost everyone" (Jack *Road* 262), despite conversing on such widely-ranged topics as: Darwinism and religion (262), Napoleon, medicine and the turmoil of Irish politics (263) and what might be termed 'celebrity culture' and ladies fashions (264). Whilst Barrie's journalism will not be analysed alongside the primary texts in this thesis, its existence is crucial in establishing his awareness of, interest in, and sympathy towards many of the socio-political issues which are symbolically or covertly addressed in the *Tommy* novels, *Peter Pan*, *Dear Brutus*, and *Mary Rose*. Indeed, by exploiting the domestic – or traditionally feminine – sphere as a locus for a parallel storytelling within these works, Barrie destabilises gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, as well as empowering previously marginalised female voices, in ways that are innately coherent with the ideas of his journalistic writing.

Whilst biographical critiques of Barrie have been shown to be reductive and misleading, it would be disingenuous (not to mention misguided) of any scholar to entirely renounce the influence exerted upon Barrie's career by such events as the childhood loss of his brother, the adultery and divorce in his relationship with Mary

Ansell, his adoption of the Llewelyn Davies boys and the traumatic deaths of Llewelyn Davies siblings George and Michael. As such, whilst Barrie's intent as the author of these texts still carries significant weight with regard to the conclusions at which this thesis arrives, it will endeavour to separate as cleanly as possible those instances in which Barrie himself acknowledges this influence – for instance, in notebooks, correspondence, or prefaces to his works - and those in which academic arguments endeavour to discern a tenuous consonance between his art and his personal life. To this end, Meynell's collection of Barrie's correspondence (*Letters of JM Barrie* [1942]), and Birkin's online archive of Barrie's notebooks, correspondence and early works ([jmbarrie.co.uk](http://jmbarrie.co.uk)) have proved to be particularly useful resources, illuminating his stance on social, personal, and political issues as described in his own words. Importantly, these sources also provide insights into his professional writing over a period of more than four decades.

When examining the history of Barrie scholarship, it becomes apparent that in his lifetime a mere handful of authors dedicated entire books or chapters to contemporaneous studies of his writing;<sup>11</sup> criticism of his work was reserved largely for press reviews of his plays in production, or literature he had recently published. Of the more comprehensive studies, volumes published after 1904 discuss his career with a broadness of scope perhaps surprising to those who, in the twenty-first-century, are thoroughly acclimatised to the idea of Barrie as creator of one

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<sup>11</sup> I refer here to those titles filed on [archive.org](http://archive.org) under J.M. Barrie criticism; the most comprehensive text published before the first production of *Peter Pan* in 1904 is Hammerton's *J. M. Barrie and His Books: Biographical and Critical Studies*. Published in 1900, his book focuses on Barrie's upbringing, relationships, writing style and the treatment of Scottishness in his kailyard works.

monstrously successful work of drama.<sup>12</sup> In the years following Barrie's death in 1937, biographers - with the exception of Mackail's "fully and admirably"-written 1941 biography<sup>13</sup> (R. Green 3), *The Story of J.M.B.* - perceive a specific quality in that work warranting its elevation from his other publications. Green's *Fifty Years of Peter Pan* (1954), is self-explanatory in its focus, endeavouring not only to illuminate the theatrical, cultural and literary impact of Peter Pan in the half-century

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<sup>12</sup> In 1914, Presland Howe includes Barrie in his *Dramatic Portraits* series, using the chapter to praise Barrie's prowess through a brief summation of his plays dating from *The Wedding Guest* in 1900, to his *Half Hours* selection (1914). Howe identifies Barrie as simultaneously an innovative playwright wholly embraced by London's theatrical establishment, and an artist who delights in consistent subversion of that same establishment. Interestingly, although Howe commends Barrie's vision in his adventurous production of *Peter Pan* ("who else of the theatre's workers has conceived a 'silent part' so intimately exciting as that of Miss Tinker Bell in the Christmas play?"[120]) he reserves greater admiration for the playwright's satirical treatment of play-going convention in *Alice Sit-By-The-Fire* (123), and, ultimately, makes an unexpected proclamation about which of Barrie's plays will enjoy long-term success: "If the comedy of Barrie is not the really strongest comedy, it is a comedy which is perfectly expressive and worthy of the contemporary theatre, and a comedy of which one example at least - *The Admirable Crichton* - is quite certain to be keeping its theatre open in a hundred years. Of how many plays of our generation are we able with an equal confidence to say that?" (129). In 1922, Walbrook's *J.M. Barrie and the Theatre* offers a similarly all-encompassing account of Barrie's theatrical opus in eighteen concisely-written chapters (approximately one for each play produced up until that year); but interestingly, Hammerton's 1929 biography (*J.M. Barrie: Story of a Genius*), which stands as the last source of secondary literature on Barrie published before his death in 1937, occupies a place slightly apart from its predecessors. Each of the texts mentioned previously positions *Peter Pan* as merely one instrumental component of Barrie's varied, consistently successful panoply of drama and literature- no greater significance is invested in Peter's contribution to Barrie's reputation than might be awarded to Tommy Sandys, Will Dearth or Mary Rose Morland. Hammerton's volume, however, is divided into sections according to chronological periods of Barrie's life, such as "His Edinburgh Days 1878-1882" or "The Author Arrives 1889-1890". His departure from this format in the tenth chapter is striking: by dedicating an entire section to "Peter Pan's First Twenty-Five Years", that play, its contexts and its associated literature of 1902, 1906, 1911 and 1928 has a precedence conferred upon it. Furthermore, it occupies an extended, privileged temporal space within the biography (we may compare the fifteen-year span allotted for the discussion of the majority of Barrie's other dramas in Chapter 11: "The Triumph of the Theatre: 1905-1920"). In a decision that anticipates the direction Barrie scholarship would take for the next eight decades, Hammerton designates *Peter Pan* to be, quite literally, a chapter of Barrie's life more individually definitive to his professional and personal legacy than anything else he produced.

<sup>13</sup> Mackail's account stands as one of the more well-informed written portraits of Barrie as an entity distinct from his texts, grounded as it is by the authors' personal acquaintance during Barrie's life. Jack finds fault with Mackail's stance, remarking that he is "wholly sympathetic", and even "sycophantic" where Barrie is concerned (*Road* 8, 129). Similarly, Hollindale notes the "fierce loyalties" and "partisan" nature of Mackail's writing (ix). However, R. Green acknowledges the contribution that the "crowded and sparkling pages of Denis Mackail's biography" (10) has made to the field of Barrie studies.

since his stage debut, but to build a case demonstrating that Barrie was destined from infancy to produce such a play: "the present outline of Barrie's life is intended merely to connect the incidents and influences which have any bearing on *Peter Pan*" (3). As with Hammerton's *Story of a Genius*,<sup>14</sup> Dunbar's 1970 memoir *J.M. Barrie: The Man Behind the Image* reserves a chapter for *Peter Pan* in an account which otherwise refrains from in-depth commentary on individual texts. Birkin's 1979 edition of *J.M. Barrie and the Lost Boys* – despite being a sophisticated and comprehensive biography – is, as the title suggests, primarily designed to elucidate the complicated bonds between the author, the Llewelyn Davies brothers and their fictional counterparts (Peter Pan and the Lost Boys of Never Land).

In 1984, Rose published *The Case of Peter Pan: Or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, in which she intrepidly traces the "ultimate fetish" (4) of childhood innocence and sexuality as it is related to, and represented by, literature "for children". Stating that "*Peter Pan* is the text for children which has made that claim most boldly" (1), she argues that Barrie's play has grown to embody many more general social complexities embedded in modern attitudes surrounding the issue of relating to children: "*Peter Pan* stands in our culture as a monument to the impossibility of its own claims: that it represents the child, speaks to and for children, addresses them as a group which is knowable and exists for the book" (1). Indeed, *The Case of Peter Pan* all but elides Barrie from the discussion of his own text ("the problem is not, therefore, J.M. Barrie's – it is ours . . . [a]ll Barrie ever did

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<sup>14</sup> See p23, FN11

was to write *Peter Pan*, and even that can be disputed" [4-5]). Admittedly, Rose's refusal to "analyse" (5) Barrie exempts her from censure on the biographical grounds to which this literature review has already alluded, yet her analysis finds redirection in her plea for readers' own self-reflexivity. In severing Barrie from her discussion of *Peter Pan*, Rose stresses the universal resonance – across a huge range of audiences – of the story itself. Thus, by the 1980s, not only does *Peter Pan* overshadow Barrie's other creations but, in taking on multivalent significance within western society more generally, has begun to eclipse even its creator. Rose's arguments for its monolithic status as a piece of literary history are valuable, and indeed iconic in the field of literary criticism; yet for the purposes of this thesis, her sole focus on *Peter Pan* as a paradigm of how we as a culture fail to engage the child-reader, is not directly relevant. In 1991, Jack's *The Road to the Never Land: A Reassessment of J.M. Barrie's Dramatic Art* offers a deeply insightful and sophisticated commentary on Barrie's career, although the "dramatic art" it purports to reassess rather predictably occupies space in the book largely with the objective of providing context for Jack's ultimate topics of interest: the origins of Peter Pan and Never Land itself.

In 2006 and 2015, Dudgeon authored 'biographical' volumes mining the familiar territory of interplay between *Peter Pan*, Barrie and the Llewelyn Davies family.<sup>15</sup> Stirling's 2012 publication, *Peter Pan's Shadows in the Literary Imagination*,

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<sup>15</sup> Respectively, *Captivated: J.M. Barrie, the Du Mauriers and the Dark Side of Never Land* and *The Real Peter Pan: The Tragic Life of Michael Llewelyn Davies*. It is worth noting that *Captivated* (reissued in 2011 with an amended title – *Never Land: J.M. Barrie, the Du Mauriers, and the Dark Side of Peter Pan*) has been criticised by Birkin on his website for being inaccurate, misleading, opinion-based and

constitutes one of the most all-encompassing modern discussions of the 1904 play itself: its theatrical origins and social and literary influences; its performance conventions; its explicit multi-media sequels and – crucially – the more implicit 'sequels' crafted by Barrie himself in the intertextual iterations of Peter Pan's story across later works. As such *Peter Pan's Shadows* (despite its concentration on the text which has been most extensively scrutinised when it comes to the study of Barrie's writing) has proved to be a valuable point of reference in relation to how Barrie's practice of revising and reimagining his stories and their characters is expressed at other stages in his career.

In 2006, 2009 and 2012, three separate collections on the topic of Peter Pan were published,<sup>16</sup> exploring ideas ranging from the play's engagement with racial stereotyping, to its commercialisation by Disney in 1953, to its own liminality as a story fluctuating between literary forms.<sup>17</sup> Undeniably, many of the essays featured put forth invigorating arguments about previously unexplored aspects of the text – particularly interesting for the purposes of this thesis are chapters on gender, sexuality and the fairy tradition by Roth, McKinney-Wiggins, and Morse; Clark, Kavey and Tuite.<sup>18</sup> However, the collections' sporadic allusions to related works

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salacious. [jmbarrie.co.uk](http://jmbarrie.co.uk) contains vast amounts of original archival material donated to Birkin by Nico Llewelyn Davies, some of which, Birkin claims, was misused by Dudgeon.

<sup>16</sup> J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100* Ed. White and Tarr; *Second Star to the Right: Peter Pan in the Popular Imagination* Ed. Kavey and Friedman; *Barrie, Hook, and Peter Pan: Studies in Contemporary Myth* Ed. Corcuera and di Biase.

<sup>17</sup> Respectively see Kinchen-Smith, Ohmer and Vericat

<sup>18</sup> Respectively: "Babes in Boy-Land: J.M. Barrie and the Edwardian Girl" (Roth); "More Darkly Down the Left Arm: The Duplicity of Fairyland in the Plays of J.M. Barrie" (Wiggins); "The Kiss: Female Sexuality and Power in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*" (Morse); "The Female Figure In J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*: The Small and the Mighty" (Clark); "I do believe in fairies, I do, I do": The History and Epistemology of *Peter Pan*" (Kavey); "Shadow of [a] girl": An Examination of *Peter Pan* in Performance" (Tuite).

such as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*,<sup>19</sup> *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose*<sup>20</sup> serve only to accentuate the narrowness of focus in Barrie studies.

In inverse proportion to both academia and popular culture's interest in *Peter Pan*, indeed, the twenty-first century has largely witnessed a declining regard for works written by Barrie which are distinct from that fictional universe. Although discussion of his body of work within the context of Scottish literature and the 'Kailyard' canon has indeed been substantially and fruitfully reinvigorated in such scholarship as Anderson's essay "The Kailyard Revisited" (1979) in Campbell's *Nineteenth Century Scottish Fiction*, and Nash's *Kailyard and Scottish Literature* (2007), in relative terms it is still a disappointingly small number of writers who have elected to expand critical scope beyond Peter Pan and Never Land – especially when it comes to work produced or published by Barrie after 1904. Among those who have done so, Hunter's article, "J.M Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy" (1978) positions *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* in dialogue with *The Little White Bird* (and, to a lesser extent, *Peter Pan*) as it interrogates the importance of fantasy and the role of the narrator in these works. Published two years subsequently, "J.M. Barrie's Islands of Fantasy" (1980) explores the maturation of Barrie's understanding and development of fantasy as a volatile artistic conceit which must be isolated on either physical or metaphorical 'islands' within the plotting as well as within the structure of his stories. Hunter once more discusses the intertextual relationship fostered between the *Tommy* novels, *The Little White*

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<sup>19</sup> See Wasinger's discussion of sexual hybridity in *Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens* and Kavey's tracing of the *Pan* story through various incarnations in "History and Epistemology".

<sup>20</sup> See Wiggins' essay on Barrie's 'left-arm' plays, including *Mary Rose*.

*Bird* and *Peter Pan*, adding – still more relevantly for the purposes of this thesis – further explication of the functions and manifestations of fantasy in *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose*.

Ormond's short 1983 essay on *Mary Rose* preceded her more wide-ranging study of Barrie as part of the Scottish Writers Series in 1987; this volume deftly combines incisive analysis of individual texts (*Sentimental Tommy*, *Tommy and Grizel*, *Peter Pan*, *Dear Brutus*, *Mary Rose*, *Farewell Miss Julie Logan* and *The Boy David*) with biographical material and condensed accounts of individual periods of Barrie's career. In 1984, McGowan examined a selection of Barrie's fantasy plays – including *Peter Pan*, *A Kiss for Cinderella*, *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose* – against the formal structure proposed by Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), with chapters addressing "the imaginary worlds which Barrie creates in the plays of his twilight years" (82).

More recently, Nash's essay, "Trying to be a Man: J.M. Barrie and Sentimental Masculinity" (1999) locates in the *Tommy* novels the development of themes expressed in Barrie's earlier non-fiction writings. In the protagonist of *Tommy*, Nash persuasively argues, Barrie reinvigorates the negative sexual and cultural nineteenth-century connotations of sentimentality, creating a new standard of a deeply-feeling and introspective male that not only confronts the toxicity of a Victorian masculinity idealising stoicism, aggression, virility and conquest, but anticipates a crucial motif in modernist art (Nash *Sentimental* 124). Again, in relation to *Tommy*, S. Green's 2012 MA thesis and related article considers the aesthetic dimension of space in the *Tommy* novels, both by weighing the narrator's

visual relationship to the characters, and by positing Tommy and Grizel respectively as oppositional yet intersecting embodiments of "art" and "social morality" (2). The final chapter of Green's thesis – "Mother and Eternal Boy" – also examines the conceit of maternal absence that is prevalent, yet critically disregarded, across Barrie's other literature. As such, whilst her work does not deal *per se* with domestic spaces within the *Tommy* novels, Green's exposition of Barrie's most ambitious prose works in relation to the aesthetic movement of the late Victorian era stands as a welcome departure from an academic discourse which has, for more than a century, been fixated on Tommy's magical successor.

Finally, *Gateway to the Modern: Resituating J.M. Barrie*, edited by Bold and Nash (2014) is a collection of essays which shares the goal of this thesis; in endeavouring to "do justice to the extraordinary range of his literary achievement" (vii) it makes a case for a renewed appreciation of Barrie and his work outside of *Peter Pan*. Its research proposition is admirable, and admittedly of its three sections, the book devotes two to the diversity of Barrie's professional achievements. Part One encompasses his career in drama and film, with nods to influences such as the Victorian dramatic tradition, or Shakespearean romance,<sup>21</sup> whilst Part Two investigates Barrie's interest in the prose-writing which bracketed his career.<sup>22</sup> However, in spite of purporting to "challenge" (vii) the perception that

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<sup>21</sup> See: "The odd, odd triangle': Barrie's Metatheatrical Critique of the Victorian Dramatic Tradition" (Farkas); also "Barrie's Later Dramas: The Shakespearean Romances" (Jack)

<sup>22</sup> "Barrie's Farewells: The Final Story" (Gifford) discusses the last work published in Barrie's lifetime, the supernatural novella *Farewell Miss Julie Logan*, whilst "'Frae Anither Window in Thrums': Hugh MacDiarmid and J.M. Barrie" (McCulloch) studies the kailyard aesthetic which characterises some of Barrie's earliest fiction. "Barrie, Sentimentality and Modernity" (Nash) repositions Barrie's *fin-de-siecle* prose writing in a context alongside Hardy and Lawrence.

"J.M. Barrie's critical reputation rests on one work: *Peter Pan!*" (White, Tarr vii), *Gateway to the Modern* ultimately goes some way towards disproving the very hypothesis it hopes to confirm. Whilst essay contributors in Parts One and Two address multiple works drawn from across Barrie's career, Part Three is dedicated entirely to the discussion of *Peter Pan* and is also the book's fullest section – boasting five essays to Part One's four, and Part Two's three. The problem of *Pan* when it comes to Barrie and critics is, apparently, pervasive and ineluctable.

As has been established by this brief review of the literature presently available, there is a conspicuous absence of research which places emphasis on the analysis of domestic worlds in the works of J.M. Barrie. Meanwhile, scholarship focused upon fantasy worlds in fiction outwith the *Peter Pan* canon is cursory and generalising (where it exists at all). For those writers who have expanded critical focus beyond Peter, Wendy and Never Land, there emerges an interconnected and mutually illuminating narrative at work within and across a range of Barrie texts: a narrative encompassing two genres and three decades; a narrative simultaneously delineating and disavowing the limits of reality; a narrative concerned with the stories threaded through the spaces of our everyday lives, and the consequent development of individual selfhood.

Chapter One of this thesis provides a brief social and biographical context for Barrie's fascination with the narrative properties of the domestic space. It outlines the building and subsequent fragmentation of a cultural association between women and domesticity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as exploring the changing socio-political connotations of the

'home' throughout this period. Chapters Two and Three each address the formation or disintegration of identity in the domestic locales of *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel*. In the interests of thematic fluidity, the novels will be discussed together; however, Chapter Two is dedicated specifically to Barrie's explication of a symbiotic relationship between Tommy Sandys and his domestic environment, whilst Chapter Three focuses on the development of his interest in the relationship between Grizel as 'unconventional' woman and the world of home. Chapter Four traces the maturation of the theme of transgressive womanhood in Barrie's work, by critiquing the figure of the mother-storyteller against the domestic architecture of the night nursery in *Peter Pan*. Mrs Darling, Wendy and their heirs are rendered as morally-ambiguous mothers, whose expulsion of their children from the home into the magical terrors awaiting them Never Land is a necessary act of insurrection. This conscious defiance of a protective maternal instinct represents their opportunity to pass down the stories which guarantee their creative immortality. Chapter Five argues that the plot, imagery and set of the *Dear Brutus* drawing room supports an intertextual reading of the play which places it in dialogue with *Peter Pan*; under this interpretation, *Dear Brutus* exonerates the figure of the non-maternal woman by absolving Alice Dearth of unjust blame in the disintegration of her marriage. Additionally, it challenges romanticised literary presentations of the eternal child by stressing the existence of affinity between the nefarious Lob and his 'earlier' self, Peter Pan. Chapter Six will position *Mary Rose* as a climactic moment in Barrie's exploration of the relationship between domesticity and individual autonomy. In the play's reuniting of the ghost mother with her son, this thesis will

assert that – contrary to critical consensus - Barrie effects a triumphant liberation of woman from the home-space within which she is routinely silenced and oppressed. Finally, the concluding section of this research will question the legacy of 'home' in Barrie's novels and plays, as well as summarising its relationship to concepts of identity, autonomy, and communication. In examining the narrative function and interpretative potential of domestic space in works of prose and drama produced by J.M. Barrie between 1896 and 1920, the following research will seek to occupy a clear aperture in the field of Barrie studies.

## Chapter One – Home: A Social Context

The house was at once a symbol of wealth and class to be displayed to the public and at the same time a private sphere. Similarly, the house was viewed both as a place in which the family could be pictured living together harmoniously and as a building in which the family were constantly regulated and separated. The division of space and ordering of the house became increasingly important in the nineteenth century . . . [t]he family home is a complex mixture of private and communal, and issues of power and control are consequently inevitable subtexts (Alston 17; 23)

As has been established in my introduction, when discussing the function of space in the literature of J.M. Barrie, the realistic or interior worlds of his stories are not an obvious choice for analysis. However, as Alston points out, the home stands as a uniquely conflicted and internally-contradictory territory in fiction throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Correspondingly, the domestic locales of Tommy's claustrophobic bedroom, the Darling nursery, Lob's drawing room, or Mary Rose's attic, are as suffused with coded meaning and social commentary as the analogous fantasy realms that appear in each of these texts. In the Barrie works that I will consider throughout this thesis, the home-space is simultaneously figured as refuge from cares of the world and as microcosm of worldly problems located in the most intimate (and supposedly 'free') space imaginable. Problematic sexual and class hierarchies are not confined to life beyond the walls of the family home, but embodied in the relationships of parents to children and staff, while – as Alston astutely notes – the ideal of communal living as a family unit is belied by the socially-weighted, physical boundaries of the house's interior.

Certainly, Alston's analysis concentrates upon examples of children's

literature set in middle and upper-class Victorian or Edwardian households.

Although the early years of Barrie's career, inclusive of his kailyard prose and the *Tommy* novels, are concerned with predominantly working-class characters and milieux, a shift in subject matter and intended audience is discernible in Barrie's work from 1904 onwards. Whether it was the comfortable relatability of the Darling family's shabby-genteel aesthetic which dictated his texts' class-placement thereafter, or perhaps his transition from books which could be obtained and read anywhere to the necessarily more exclusive physical space of London's theatres; between *Peter Pan* in 1904 and *Mary Rose* in 1920, Barrie's works overwhelmingly cast affluent families with at least one member of household staff, situating their socioeconomic status as determinedly middle-class. Indeed, Holloway attests that: "[I]n 1899 the social investigator Seebohm Rowntree took the keeping of servants as the dividing line between the working classes and those higher up the social scale, thus setting out a clear demarcation between those who carried out the dirty, monotonous, low-status work and those who aspired to something better" (Holloway 6).

Whilst the children's texts selected for close-reading in Alston's article feature upper middle-class or even aristocratic individuals who have, as a necessity of plotting, temporarily fallen from grace,<sup>23</sup> this is no reason to discount her discussion of the power dynamics of the home-space as unsuitable in relation to the

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<sup>23</sup> Some of the examples cited by Alston include: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1886); *The Railway Children* (Edith Nesbit, 1905); and *The Wind in the Willows* (Kenneth Grahame, 1908). All of these children's novels utilise in some way the plot-thread of middle or upper-class characters being subjected to a period of domestic displacement.

pre-1904 texts under consideration in this thesis. Alston's arguments about the specific positioning of characters in the home according to age and gender certainly bear the more universalised application with which I will approach the topic throughout my discussion.

Indeed, the particular relationship gender bore to the home infused many aspects of British life in the nineteenth-century. Rhetoric extolling the nurturing, essentially feminine qualities of a functional house and family had been "dominant . . . in nineteenth-century British culture" (Morse 285) since the early 1800s, with the paradigm of angelic middle-class domesticity permeating a wide variety of literary forms for decades afterwards.<sup>24</sup> Morse, discussing Mrs. Darling, alludes to her place

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<sup>24</sup> In his 1865 essay, "Of Queen's Gardens", Ruskin proclaims that for a "true wife" and "noble woman", home "stretches far around her" and provides for her husband and children, "shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos in the stormy sea" (*Sesame and Lillies* 108-9). Ruskin's comments are indicative of the social discourse concerning sexually-specific roles and spaces, or 'Separate Spheres' in this period – principally, it must be noted, in relation to middle and upper-class families. Along with Sarah Stickney Ellis – whose mid-century writings on Victorian women, wives, mothers and daughters argue that it is a sacred feminine duty to provide a shining example of morality at home for the betterment of society as a whole (1844 onwards) – Ruskin advocates the fittedness of woman to the domestic hearth. "Plainly, both writers meant that, enshrined within her home, a Victorian angel-woman should become her husband's holy refuge from the blood and sweat that inevitably accompanies a 'life of significant action', as well as, in her 'contemplative purity', a living *memento* of the otherness of the divine" (Gilbert and Gubar 24). Despite the fact that towards the end of the nineteenth-century 'woman's place' across class boundaries was becoming an increasingly fluid concept, the long-held association between a virtuous wife or mother figure and a blessed, happy home was deeply culturally ingrained. Gilbert and Gubar note that from the 1700s onwards, "conduct books for ladies had proliferated, enjoining young girls to submissiveness, modesty, selflessness; reminding all women that they should be angelic" (23). Charles Dickens, arguably the most prolific and widely-circulated novelist of the nineteenth century, also venerated the angel-woman character type throughout his career. Whilst he introduced more nuanced figures in the form of Esther Summerson (*Bleak House* [1853]) Louisa Gradgrind (*Hard Times* [1854]) or Estella Havisham (*Great Expectations* [1861]) as his writing matured, the ubiquity of submissive, self-sacrificing angels such as Rose Maylie (*Oliver Twist* [1839]), Agnes Wickfield (*David Copperfield* [1850]), Amy Dorrit (*Little Dorrit* [1857]) or Lucy Manette (*A Tale of Two Cities* [1859]) over decades of Dickens' writing contributed to a cultural conception of angelic womanhood as an attainable, desirable standard. Furthermore, nineteenth-century fairy-tales enshrined an idealised relationship between woman and domesticity. One need only consult Edgar Taylor's 1826 translation of the Grimms' *Kinder und Hausmärchen* to find numerous examples of heroines ("Snow Drop"/Snow White; "Ashputtel"/Cinderella), whose domestic acuity is rewarded with romance, wealth and social

in a social climate which celebrated the spatial division of the sexes as a sign of female virtue:

Women were believed to be more naturally responsive and therefore more receptive to the teachings of religion. As a result, the Victorian woman found herself perceived as man's moral superior and awarded the role of spiritual leader of the family. . . Ostensibly preoccupied with the public world, bourgeois husbands had, as a whole, allowed the home to fall under the dominion of their wives. Women found themselves in control of the rituals and practices of domesticity, which by Barrie's time, had become highly rigid (285; 287)

By the turn of the century, however, a growing maelstrom of factors was causing this idealised association between beatific wife and mother and functioning home-space to fragment. The very meanings of terms such as 'wife', 'mother', 'woman', and 'home' were subject to increasing scrutiny and interrogation, with the aesthetic and practical influence of the financially-independent, sexually-autonomous (and often childless) 'New Woman' pervading everything from literature to legislation.<sup>25</sup>

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elevation. Correspondingly, female protagonists who demonstrate slovenliness and poor domestic management ("Mother Holle", or the wicked sisters in "Ashputtel") are punished or humiliated.  
<sup>25</sup>Examples of the New Woman surface across late-nineteenth-century fiction, with some of the best known instances appearing in Ibsen, Shaw and Hardy. In legislative terms the Married Women's Property Acts of 1881 and 1882 (Scotland) addressed the necessity for a wife (*feme covert*) to be awarded equal status with an unmarried woman (*feme sole*), including recognition of a legal identity separate to that of her husband. In practice, this allowed married women to manage property and assets in their own name for the first time, giving them an unprecedented level of access to financial and social independence. The Acts awarded wives the right to claim, as their own, spaces in which they had previously existed only under the auspices of a husband, thus signifying a challenge for the ideology of 'separate spheres'. No longer a figure consigned to a domestic space presided over or owned by a man – husband, father, brother - in relation to whom her own existence was in some way defined, the association between woman and household could now take complex and multiple forms; culminating in that most authoritative (and traditionally masculine) relationship of owner and property. Politically, Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh's 1876 publication and circulation of information about effective birth control enabled British women to gain a measure of agency over their reproductive rights (McDonagh p176-8), whilst multiple suffrage campaigns and groups endeavoured to expand women's presence and power in the public sphere as an alternative to – or even replacement of – their traditional maternal and domestic roles.

McDonagh summarises the motif of New Womanhood in relation to her examination of the symbolic potency of infanticide in Britain:

The invention of *fin-de-siecle* culture, the New Woman is a fascinating symptom of the times: Janus-like, she is a scandalous throwback to primeval states, but also the harbinger of change, and the model for the new, autonomous individual. . . Her modernity is sometimes registered through her association with child murder through both her associations with birth control, and the fact she refuses maternal roles in her quest for autonomy (9).

As McDonagh articulates here, for British women at the turn of the century to reject child-rearing – whether through the practice of family-planning methods promoted by Bradlaugh and Besant,<sup>26</sup> or through the prioritisation of self-oriented pursuits outwith the domestic sphere – was often enough for them to be positioned alongside those who actively and intentionally harmed children. Caught up in overlapping discourses surrounding feminism, eugenics and sexuality, this chapter will demonstrate that the New Woman is significant, too, in the world of Victorian child-centred philanthropy; vitally, as a figure who – redolent of the "Janus-like" duplicity to which McDonagh refers – is equally exemplative of hope and fear.

Barrie's own cognisance of these emerging socio-political complexities, insofar as they are related to contemporary questions of gender and sexuality, is explicit in several of his plays as well as in his journalistic writing.<sup>27</sup> However, his

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<sup>26</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>27</sup> *What Every Woman Knows* (1908) is concerned with a female protagonist whose independent spirit worries her family, prompting them to coerce a man into marrying her; she is later revealed as the invisible intellect behind her husband's success. *The Twelve Pound Look* (1910) is set against a context of the British suffrage movement, and involves two female characters in a refreshing dynamic wherein they reinforce one another at the expense of a fragile and petulant man with whom they have each been romantically involved. In *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916), a female doctor presides over Cinderella's

specific exploration of the relationship between woman and domesticity is given symbolic and largely non-verbal expression across a much broader range of his work than has previously been acknowledged. By the beginning of the twentieth century, as the complexities discernible in woman's relationship to the domestic sphere were intensifying apace with the dissolution of popular conceptions of 'home' itself, Barrie's work can be seen to reflect a mounting social anxiety about the sanctity of family life. This anxiety, diversely expressed in aspects of each of the primary texts in question in this thesis, was propelled by the mid-century profusion of child-saving charities and initiatives which sought to preserve the innate 'innocence' of the child endangered by unsuitable living or working conditions. By the end of the century, however, this cultural discourse positioning the salvation of childhood innocence as a national moral responsibility was both augmented and problematised; embedded in the proliferation of new legislative and institutional measures designed to protect such innocence was the concomitant concern of the corrupted child herself constituting a threat to the stability of British society at - and within the – home.

S. Taylor delineates the progression of child-focused philanthropy in Britain, identifying 1866 as the year when, "efforts shifted from evangelical work designed to improve the position of children to endeavours aimed at rescuing them from vice-infested working-class communities" (159). He continues:

This year marked the establishment of Lord Shaftesbury's training ships for boys, a severe outbreak of cholera, economic depression, and the arrival of both the famous child rescuer Thomas Barnardo and William Booth, the

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recovery in a rehabilitative veterans' hospital. Nash and Jack have each produced illuminating discussions of how Barrie's journalism engages with topical debates on sex, gender, marriage and bachelorhood (see the Literature Review section in this thesis).

founder of The Salvation Army, to London. The scale of philanthropy during this period was certainly staggering . . . in 1885 donations made to charities in London exceeded the national budgets of countries such as Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. Of these charities there were numerous organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1889), Barnardos Homes (1867), the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society (1881), the Society of St Vincent de Paul (1847) who helped Roman Catholic children, numerous homeless missions and shelters, and Ragged Schools (1844) that focused specifically on the children of the poor. These were driven by middle-class men and women who challenged working-class notions of parenting in the late nineteenth century. Eventually they reached the conclusion that the only way poor children could prosper was if they were removed from inadequate parents and living conditions (159).

This mid-century investment in the "rescuing" of children from morally (and physically) unsuitable environments not only marked a departure from an earlier evangelical didacticism in approaching the wellbeing of Britain's youngest citizens, it contributed to a national conversation in which class was the pre-eminent factor in determining the safety or danger of the domestic space. Listing the diverse and numerous organisations which set up these institutional 'homes' towards the end of the nineteenth-century, Taylor demonstrates the increasing emphasis placed by "middle-class men and women" upon rescuing "poor" children, whose familial circumstances were deemed incompatible with healthy or wholesome child-raising. However, McDonagh offers insight into some additional social concerns propelling the child-saving movement:

Some middle-class women, those who by the 1890s would be called the 'New Women' were also cast in the role of child murderer. . . what if the child murderer was not an outsider, and could not be exiled to the peripheries of empire? What if instead she lodged in the bourgeois home, threatening the lives of innocent babies, and subverting cherished notions of domestic order and social harmony?. . . [t]he Angel in the House was

transmogrified into a murderer – the eugenic handmaiden of social Darwinism (157-9).

As such, while child-focused philanthropy throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was largely directed at the working class home's proximity to vice and squalor, the middle-class maternal eulogising which resulted in the figure of the Angel in the House came to confront an equally middle-class cultural product: the New Woman who rejected domesticity and maternity as defining elements of her personhood. Through this rejection, the New Woman became conflated with the eugenicist mother espoused in *fin de siècle* social Darwinism, the "queen bee" (161) who kills her young to preserve the integrity of the species. The Queen Bee of New Womanhood is thus summoned into the arena of nineteenth-century child philanthropy as simultaneously a predator hostile to mercy even for her own children, and as sacrificing saviour of a generation of humanity condemned to degeneration if those with moral, intellectual and physical weakness are traits permitted to reproduce.

Jack touches on Barrie's engagement with social Darwinism in *Road to the Never Land*, and his essay, "Barrie and the Extreme Heroine" accentuates Barrie's interest in such debates in relation to women specifically: "[He] viewed the gender questions as a Darwinian battle within which the naturally superior sex (woman) was gradually freeing herself from the delimiting restraints imposed upon her by a patriarchal society and male-dominated institutions" (Jack *Extreme Heroine* 138). Whilst this thesis will concur that even Barrie's superficially acquiescent female characters fulfil this trajectory of seeking to escape or undermine patriarchal

restraints, the influence of a more sinister social perception of the New Woman pervades his primary texts. In Chapter Four of this thesis, Barrie's exploration of Mrs Darling's suspension between the 'angel' and 'mermaid' feminine stereotypes of nineteenth-century art obliquely addresses the disturbing ambiguity of the implicitly infanticidal New Woman who knowingly endangers her children. Chapter Five's discussion of *Dear Brutus* introduces the lesser-known figure of Alice Dearth, whose refutation of motherhood appears to position her as the instigator of the catastrophic decline of her marriage, her husband, and of herself. More explicitly, Grizel and Mary Rose (in Chapters Three and Six respectively) are framed as potentially murderous mother figures who either openly attempt to harm their children (Barrie *MR* 295) or are suspected of it. Grizel, in her adult mania, hastens Corp and Gavinia's baby to Double Dykes where they find her, deluded, "sitting by the burn side, and she said we should never see him again, for she had drowned him" (*TG* 379; ch. 31). It is telling that Barrie prefigures this plot revelation by having Tommy soothe an anxious Corp with the seemingly casual assurance that Grizel, "is always an angel with the child. His own mother could not be fonder of him" (378). Thus, Barrie's tacit inclusion of tropes of New Womanhood in the female characters discussed in this thesis glorifies their pursuit of new agency within and against structures of patriarchal dominance even as he acknowledges their unsettling duality. This thesis will argue that the New Women of these texts absolutely evoke, "a yet more chilling world in which the distinctions between maternal love and hatred are obliterated" (McDonagh 161).

Regardless of whether the domestic risk posed to British children was

perceived as emanating from primarily working or middle class families, growing formal recognition of crime against and involving children in the dying years of the nineteenth century - as well as in the first decade of the twentieth - contributed to the swell in both religious and non-denominational 'homes' that has been identified by S. Taylor, McDonagh and Jackson.<sup>28</sup> As an example of this formal recognition, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 responded to increasing social disquiet about the legal status of the child,<sup>29</sup> with one of the Amendment's most actively utilised new powers being its provision for children to be removed from situations in which their exposure to inappropriate or premature sexual activity had been ascertained. The Amendment of 1885 fed into a *fin de siècle* rhetoric of sexual, racial and moral crisis in which nature and nurture were routinely scrutinised as factors carrying significant weight in the formation of future citizens. Although this chapter will later touch on 'nature' debates surrounding eugenics and social Darwinism specifically in

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<sup>28</sup> There are various charities and philanthropic organisations whose missions gained momentum with the impetus towards 'saving' at-risk children; however, those with the most profound historical impact include: Dr Barnardo, who set up his first 'Home' for destitute children in London in 1867 (Batt 5); the NSPCC, which between 1883-1889, founded various British regional branches, culminating in the renaming of the organisation to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1889 (Behlmer); and the Salvation Army which, in 1895, extended its social welfare activities to include the founding of The Nest in Clapham, an institution for girls who had been sexually abused, and the opening of a home specifically for boys in need of behavioural reformation and training for the workplace (Jackson 66). Furthermore, sensationalist treatment of cases of infanticidal British women in the 1850s-60s, "provoked the creation of various philanthropic societies for the care of children, such as the Infant Life Protection Society (1870)" (McDonagh 156). Alongside the NSPCC, the ILPS, "mounted successful campaigns for the introduction of laws to enable a much higher degree of policing of working class families than ever before. The registration of births and deaths, the regulation of child care through the establishment of a register of nurses, and the Prevention of Cruelty Act of 1889, the so-called 'Children's Charter', which for the first time made it possible to convict parents for cruelty to their own children – all were measures set in place to protect children from dangerous parents."

<sup>29</sup> Jackson explores the nuances and impact of the Act, pointing out the inherent gender bias in its linguistic and actual differentiations surrounding definitions of child abuse and victimhood. Young girls were constructed as more visible, and therefore protected, victims in the provisions of the Act.

relation to constructs of gender and sexuality in Barrie's war-era work, the interplay of child welfare and the home space – whether familial or institutional - is crucial to any examination of the role played by 'nurture'. Indeed, in 1901, the founder of the Church of England-affiliated Waifs and Strays Society, Edward Rudolf, asserted the superior influence of environment over heredity in the reformation of vulnerable children (Jackson 135). Jackson explains:

The downward spiral of corruption and degeneration could be broken if the child was placed in a 'healthy' and carefully controlled setting. Changes in child custody law gradually gave philanthropic institutions the means to remove children from parents (135).

These very "changes in child custody law", stemming from the 1885 Amendment and designed to protect vulnerable children, were too often employed over-zealously. Child victims – rather than abusers – could be forcibly removed from their houses, separated from their families and ensconced in institutional group homes managed by medical professionals in efforts to reclaim their 'moral purity', perceived by such philanthropic institutions as compromised by their domestic environments.

Possibly the most memorable aspect of the 1885 Amendment was that it - imperfectly, and amongst clauses imposing more severe criminal penalties for child abduction and the solicitation of underage women into prostitution - enshrined in law a rise in the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen, thus re-demarcating which citizens could be considered children. Not only was 'The Child' from this moment forth rendered a different entity in terms of legal discourse, previous definitions of

victimhood, complicity and culpability were immediately obfuscated by the new terminology around sexual autonomy and consent. This is well-illustrated if we interrogate the murkiness of those same child custody laws which, in permitting the removal of victims from their homes into philanthropic institutions, appear to place an onus on rehabilitating the corruptive potential of the child rather than pursuing or punishing their abusers.

Indeed, Jackson's remarks illuminate this public fear about the child who is both abused and dangerous. She notes that the long-term risk to the respectability, health, and functionality of British society posed by 'fallen' or criminalised children, justified (in child savers' eyes) their removal to reformatory institutions. Whilst cooperative, 'reformed' children could be re-initiated into society, allowing those at the helm of their recovery to garner the cultural plaudits, the negative effects associated with institutionalisation were for the most part lesser known. Children - especially young women - who were placed in charitable group homes in many instances found themselves occupying an unclear territory between victimhood and the suspected perpetration of further harm. Jackson quotes from the testimony of journalist F.A. McKenzie who visited The Nest, a Salvation Army home for sexually-abused girls, in Clapham in 1908:

There is always someone with them, helping them to play, helping them to work or teaching them. . . A girl brought from evil surroundings might bring with her ways or speech that would act like poison among the others (142 -3).

Girl residents of institutional homes who had been victims of trauma were thus also framed as capable of harm; their speech, specifically, was potentially "evil" or "poisonous" in that, even by therapeutically recounting their experiences in order to heal or reclaim some measure of power over their suffering, they would be corrupting the innocence of fellow children. This specific "policy of silence" (143) adhered to in *The Nest* was also in evidence across the *Waifs and Stray* homes, with "all children. . . forbidden to talk of their former lives" (142). Such institutional erasure of victims' former lives demonstrates the increasing complexity in public consciousness surrounding concepts of innocence and childhood, at the same time as stressing the perceived parallels between 'healthy' living environments, and 'healthy' new identities. Moreover, when considering the problematic relationship between the child-saving movement and health – particularly mental health - there exists multiple layers of nuance in terms of classification of conditions and the avenues of care available to families. S. Taylor discusses the establishment and progression of lunatic asylums as spaces of care for children afflicted with everything from mania ("applied to the impulsive and thoughtless") to melancholia ("a state of depression that could range from. . .mild to suicidal" [Taylor 28]) to seizures or puberty (37-8); he concludes that the myriad inadequacies in diagnoses and treatment of "[t]he mentally defective child posed a specific concern for Victorian philanthropy. The responses to these children were varied and at times reveal the dark underbelly of nineteenth-century charity" (159).

Admittedly, Barrie does not directly address the idea of the institutional home in the works examined in this thesis. However, the convoluted dynamics of

victimisation and power - particularly in reference to the 'corrupt' or 'insane' child-woman, coupled with the competing influences upon these child-women of heredity and environment – are present in the characterisation of many of his female characters. Moreover, the textual possibilities posed by an unsuitable home-space and the trauma engendered in its inhabitants are explored in many texts produced by him between 1896 and 1920.<sup>30</sup> The misplaced philanthropy of child-saving movements is memorably satirised during a charity banquet scene in *Sentimental Tommy*, whilst Grizel's abuse at the hands of her mother, the Painted Lady, is entwined with questions of her own sexual precocity and the mental illness she develops in adulthood across both *Tommy* novels. The emotional needs of orphaned or poorly-parented children are the basis of Never Land's existence in *Peter Pan*; similarly, *Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens* (1906) metaphorises the narrative of abandoned infants and adoption in characters such as Solomon Caw ("You can't think what a lot of babies Solomon has sent to the wrong house [Barrie PPKG 177]), and transgressive runaways like Maimie Mannering. The three Grey children in *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire* (1905) operate an inverse hierarchy whereby their mother and father desert them at home for long periods, yearn to be babied upon their return and exhibit irrational fear and hatred towards their offspring (the baby is variously referred to as a "contemptible child" [Barrie *Alice* 258; Act 1] and a "wretch" [267; Act 1], whilst Alice slaps her young son around the face "*in sudden wrath*" [261; Act 1]). Both *A Kiss For Cinderella* (1916) and *Dear Brutus* feature

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<sup>30</sup> Listed here are a selection of works published by Barrie throughout this period, including but not limited, to those used as primary texts for study in this thesis.

characters with such significant instability in their domestic realities that they escape – either mentally or physically - to dream-worlds where their fantasies are corporealised.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Mary Rose is portrayed as an unnervingly ageless child-woman whose disappearance in infancy from a mysterious Hebridean island is readable not merely as a figurative representation of an act of trauma but as trauma made manifest in the ghostly mannerisms of the house she leaves behind: "[I]f a photograph could be taken quickly we might find a disturbing smile on the room's face, perhaps like the Mona Lisa's, which came, surely, of her knowing what only the dead should know" (Barrie MR 241). Evidently, as the nineteenth century segued into the twentieth, the disintegration of the concept of home - a place supposedly embedded with notions of familial closeness, moral rectitude and safety from dangers of the world – exerted a major influence upon J.M. Barrie, even in his most supposedly playful of works.

More disruptive to the delineation of domestic space than any other single socio-economic factor, however, was surely the issue of war – something with which Britain as a nation had not been directly confronted for more than a century. Despite its involvement in numerous military campaigns throughout the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (including, probably most significantly in

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<sup>31</sup> In *A Kiss for Cinderella*, Cinderella's domestic premises are divided rather chaotically between her work as a seamstress, and her own living-space. Although very poor herself, she harbours wartime refugee children from Britain, France, Belgium and 'Switzerland' (although it is implied that this child is German) and seeks a fairy-tale change in her fortunes by sitting on her doorstep in London's thick mid-winter to await the arrival of her "Godmother, beautiful in a Red Cross nurse's uniform . . . looking benignantly at the waif" (428; Act 2). Similarly, *Dear Brutus'* cast of characters brings together individuals whose covetousness of a second chance at life – and implied dissatisfaction with their current life choices - is so compelling that it prompts them to tempt fate by venturing into Lob's Wood, despite repeated warnings: "Go into the garden, if you like. The garden is all right . . . I wouldn't go farther, not tonight . . . Above all, ladies, I wouldn't go into the wood" (472; Act 1).

terms of chronology, the Boer Wars of 1880-1, and 1899-1902), not since the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) had Britain found itself under imminent threat from an invading power. As Marlow concludes, "the shock of wide-scale involvement in a horrific war largely taking place just across the Channel was consequently seismic" (7).

Although the Second Boer War in particular complicated Britain's ability to cast itself as the world's civilising imperial benefactor, the fact that this conflict took place far from Britain's own shores necessarily limited its impact upon national consciousness. By way of contrast, the First World War involved more familiar cultures, countries and people with whom Britain's social history had been closely linked - to the point of genetic relationships existing between antagonistic countries' heads of state. This, alongside the possibility of being endangered on home soil, would have presented most British citizens with a situation of unparalleled domestic jeopardy. Grayzel remarks the insidious linguistic gendering of the application of 'home' as a metaphorical and literal space in wartime discourse, observing that:

The term 'home front' entered into common English usage during the First World War, intensifying the identification of the battle or war front as exclusively feminine. This association of men with the front lines and women with the home, of course, has a history as old as war itself. . . [d]espite the separation implied by this new language, the boundaries between home and war fronts were often porous (*Women's Identities At War* 11).

The feminine connotations of the domestic sphere offered a convenient shorthand for constructing the 'home front' as the domain of war's women and children; the supposedly safe antithesis of trench warfare, which was nevertheless inextricable from its masculine opposite of the front line. The term's cultural currency as an invention of war rhetoric embodied this internal contradiction; the 'home' hearkened back to Victorian ideals of domestic sanctity, even as its terminological newness as a battle 'front' gestured to the First World War as an unprecedentedly impactful force in the desecration of home as a safe, family-oriented territory.

Similarly, the women of Britain were simultaneously liberated and limited by parameters of their home front obligations. The outbreak of war in 1914 marked the beginning of more than four years of unforeseen international devastation, but it also signalled the potential implosion of long-established social and sexual power structures which affected the equilibrium of the home environment. Much historical study has justifiably been devoted to women's critical contribution to maintaining the functionality of war-time Britain. Grayzel records, in the first year of the war, an increase of women in paid employment of more than 400,000 (*Women and the First World War* 27), encompassing "their entrance into a wide range of occupations, some of which had never before included women" (27). Equally, there was an "abundance" of voluntary work organised and undertaken by women as "a means of serving the nation" (48). Overall, women effected their integration into a variety of professional environments formerly helmed, if not exclusively run, by men, entering, "not only wartime factories but also banks and places of business and government as clerks, typists and secretaries. They were found running trams

and buses, delivering milk, and even joining newly created armed forces' auxiliaries and becoming police officers" (27). Finally, Britain's women were "successfully mobilised . . . both in rural communities and from urban areas to help maintain the food supply" (42) as part of the Board of Agriculture-administrated "Women's Land Army" (1915).

The extensive long-term contribution that these collective social changes as part of the war effort would make towards the extension of the franchise to women, as well as their more general societal emancipation after peace was declared, cannot be overstated. Yet alongside the perception that the Great War necessitated and rewarded increased female agency, there could be detected a mounting moral panic over its disruption of traditional gender roles (101).

Regardless of women's willingness to meet the challenge of providing labour within and across a range of new fields throughout the war years, there endured an expectation that they would concurrently honour their fundamental responsibilities within the domestic sphere. Not only was there a "concern that such new roles or new incomes" might malign "their 'essential' nature" (28), "the home and the care as well as the production of its inhabitants . . . was construed as a vital part of the women's war effort"(50). Indeed, governmental, charitable and at times commercial (*Women's Identities at War* 15) propaganda in Britain unrelentingly pushed the message that women were wives and mothers first and autonomous individuals second. They alone could supply, "the raw ammunition of war" (86) and so - even as their wartime horizons were by necessity expanded far beyond the domestic space – women of Britain were further imprisoned by the incessant

cultural "emphasis on motherhood as [their] primary patriotic role and the core of their national identity" (3).<sup>32</sup>

Such a discourse coalesced with widespread agitation about the demolition of traditional sexual hierarchies within individual homes and in society more generally. The removal of millions of British fathers, husbands, lovers, sons and brothers necessarily upended the dynamics of authority within the domestic sphere, their absence opening up obligatory roles to be occupied and tasks to be completed that bestowed upon the women of the house an unparalleled practical and moral power. Socially, this presented a disconcerting prospect: "[W]artime mobilisation upset traditional gender arrangements. This was partly because it was seen as removing 'rational' male heads of households and placing 'irrational' women, however temporarily, in charge" (77).

Of the primary texts included in this thesis, only *Dear Brutus* (1917) was produced during the Great War, whilst *Mary Rose* (1920) alone makes any overt reference to the conflict.<sup>33</sup> Even this is achieved almost incidentally, in the

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<sup>32</sup> Grayzel references an advert for dried baby milk placed by the pharmaceutical company then known as Glaxo in a 1917 issue of *The Woman Worker* magazine; "Ad copy such as 'deep down in every woman's soul there lies the vision of the dream child which will be a reality one day – when all this war and strife are over and done with' sought to reassure women that the real calling of their 'soul' – a baby – would be answered if they produced the tools of war now, which would hasten a British victory. . . War temporarily displaced women from their 'preferred, dream roles' and deprived them of the precious gift of children; however, all mothers, like all children, were necessary to the state" (Grayzel *Women's Identities At War* 117). This 'dream-child' rhetoric thus appears to have been commonly used in wartime propaganda, lending additional socio-political relevance to Barrie's introduction of Margaret Dearth, the 'dream-child' of Alice and Will in 1917's *Dear Brutus*.

<sup>33</sup> Throughout the period encompassing and immediately preceding the Great War, Barrie did produce a wealth of other theatrical work including: in 1914, his *Half Hours* series of plays consisting of *Pantaloon*, *The Twelve-Pound Look*, *Rosalind*, and *The Will*; *The Legend of Leonora*; *Der Tag*; in 1916, the plays *A Kiss for Cinderella* and *Shakespeare's Legacy*; and in 1918, the four play series *Echoes of the War*, including *The New Word*, *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, *A Well-Remembered Voice* and *Barbara's Wedding*.

uniformed figure of Harry Morland Blake – an Australian private, and Mary Rose's long-lost son. Yet with his uniform and his knife (salvaged from "trench warfare" [Barrie *MR* 244]), Harry embodies the violence which is shown to 'complete' – even as it insidiously invades - the uneasy peace of a home space redolent with the essence of oppressed womanhood. Emblematising a war which had destabilised British notions of national glory, Chapter Six of this thesis will contend that Harry's presence in the Morland household reflects the "porous" nature of the home front (Grizel *Women's Identities at War* 11) in its amplification across domestic thresholds of a narrative which disrupts longstanding ideas of patriarchal, and imperial, invincibility.

Indeed, just as the home space synonymous with maternity, safety and idealised femininity was experiencing a continual and radical process of redefinition from the late nineteenth-century onwards, traditional ideas of masculinity faced a crisis in the years enclosing the First World War. Hynes identifies an inherent ideological conflict between the generation of British men claimed as the war's active participants and those prohibited from fighting because of their age, with the latter generation of "Old Men" (Hynes *A War Imagined* 19) condemning: "[T]he softness into which England had fallen in the pre-war years. . . Englishmen had abandoned the high ideals of conduct that had made the Empire great, and had sunk into a too-comfortable, too-prosperous Edwardian decadence" (19). Somewhat ironically, given the elision of Scottishness in Hynes' anglocentrist conflation of Britain and England, Barrie was grouped with these same Old Men and compelled to produce (along with other notable "middle aged and old writers" [27])

an "'official' war literature, a literature that articulated the government's version of the causes and moral issues of the conflict and supported the government's determination to continue the fighting".<sup>34</sup>

In the war-era texts that this thesis will address, Barrie rather deliberately undermines such a summons to propagandise. The "softness" of Edwardian masculinity that was deemed as socially repugnant as it was directly responsible for the outbreak of conflict is, Nash argues, illustrative of a set of attributes that Barrie was advocating as early as 1890. In contrast to the athletic imperial hero personifying ideas of a moral yet red-blooded and outward-gazing 'muscular Christianity' (Nash "Sentimental Masculinity" 116),<sup>35</sup> Barrie in his journalism was

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<sup>34</sup> Hynes describes a pivotal moment in the outbreak of the First World War as being a meeting called in early September 1914 by Liberal politician and Head of the British War Propaganda Bureau, C.F.G. Masterman. "[Masterman] summoned a number of writers to the department offices at Wellington House. . . [he] had identified the pillars of the Edwardian literary establishment and had mustered them, conscripted them almost, into government service" (*A War Imagined* 26). Amongst these "pillars of the establishment" were dramatists and authors including Barrie, John Buchan, Arthur Conan Doyle and H.G. Wells as well as artists who could visually propagandise Britain's case and conduct in war.

<sup>35</sup> The concept of muscular Christianity was popularised in the mid-nineteenth century by authors Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley, becoming associated in common usage with the boys' public-school ethos of patriotism, athleticism, stoicism, adventure, 'fair play' and imperial exploration (if not explicitly imperial conquest). Mangan notes that British culture's absorption of muscular Christianity as an achievable and desirable standard of turn-of-the-century masculinity turned it into a "widespread social imperative. It was severely damaged by the holocaust of the Great War, but the ideal proved remarkably resilient, surviving well into the twentieth century; into an age qualitatively different from the Victorian world which had been its inspiration and cradle" (*Manliness and Morality* 6). Barrie's own awareness of the diffusion of muscular Christianity from the English public school into society more generally, is evinced in Captain Hook's lineage as well as his obsessive courteousness; not only does Hook benefit from a public school education and possess "*indomitable courage*", "[h]e is never more elegant than when he is most polite, and the elegance of his diction, the distinction of his demeanour, show him one of a different class from the rest of his crew" (Barrie *PP* 108). Stewart's essay, "Captain Hook's Secret" traces the evolution of Hook's incognito through facets of British monarchic history and the English public boys' school, as well as linking the development of his character to the Tommy novels' Jacobite leader-hero, Captain Stroke (at various points, in Tommy's shifting imaginative landscape, an heroic alias for Bonnie Prince Charlie, and a character onto whom the villainy of Tommy's real-life nemesis, Cathro, is projected [Stewart 47]). Stewart acknowledges that Hook's heritage is full of "contradictory ideas" (48), which are nevertheless in constant communication with one another – something which, this thesis will argue, is characteristic of Barrie's interest in intertextuality.

repeatedly stressing the importance of emotion, sensitivity and introspection in men. In this remarkably progressive example,<sup>36</sup> he seems to pre-empt even twenty-first-century constructions of a detoxified masculinity in which men are encouraged to be vulnerable amongst their peers:

Young men who can talk readily with each other about their books and their pipe are still shy about their feelings, which they consider too sacred to mention in ordinary conversations. Often when they would like to blurt out little bits of sentiment they are tongue tied, lest derision be the result – which is a pity, for their friends (if worth their salt) would like to unlock their bosoms too, and the exchange would be mutually beneficial.  
(Barrie, qtd in Nash "Sentimental Masculinity" 117)

By the time of this meeting of Old Men writers in late 1914, these aesthetic and moral principles were, if anything, more firmly rooted in Barrie. Chapter Five of this thesis will discuss the intertextual resurrection of Peter Pan in *Dear Brutus*' Lob; Chapters Four and Five establish that Peter is a character who epitomises hybridised notions of masculinity and sexuality. These themes are extended and amplified in Lob as an 'adult' incarnation of Peter, who emphatically and quite physically rejects the 'Old Men' alternately symbolised by Mr Darling and Matey the butler. Debuting in 1917, *Dear Brutus* is a play steeped in the shock of unimaginable losses occasioned by a war which had been presented to generations of young British men as their national and moral duty. Rather than even implicitly reinforcing that rhetoric, Barrie subverts his role as documentarian of an "'official' war literature" by having Lob end the play as arguably its sole wholly fulfilled character, resplendent in

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<sup>36</sup> J.M. Barrie - "Young Men I have Met. I - The Sentimentalist", published in *Young Man*, vol. IV (1890), p6.

the luxury of choosing his destiny.

In *Mary Rose*, Barrie distances himself further from the wartime values with which history has supposedly aligned him. He microcosmically parallels the inter-generational frustrations between the young war 'hero' and the Old Men of the British establishment in the fractured relationship between the returning soldier and prodigal son, Harry, and his bluff, blustering father Simon. By avoiding on-stage interaction between these men as adults, direct confrontation between the symbol of repressed late-Victorian masculinity and its softer, traumatised post-war counterpart is side-stepped; yet Barrie's allusions to Simon's "harshness" (MR 287) to his son, coupled with Harry's estrangement from the remaining Morland family after running away to sea as an adolescent, is more powerful in its implication of an irresolvable divergence between generational standards of manliness.

In contrast to the irrevocable break established between father and son, Chapter Six will dissect the 'twinning' of experience between Harry and his mother, Mary Rose. Indeed, the concept of a trauma uniquely shared and understood by the figures of mother and soldier throughout World War One is well-established throughout historical and medical discourse. Grayzel articulates this specifically, pointing out that, "one counterpart to the soldier – the mother – remained his gender-specific equivalent, as childbirth provided her with another type of embodied, authentic, pain-ridden and even life-risking experience" (*Women's Identities At War* 7). Mother and son are united, too, through the suffering of air raid and shell shock respectively, with the supposedly dichotomised and distinctly gendered experiences of war at the home front and in the trenches belied by both

civilian and soldier's exposure to shelling (46). Whilst in the mother figure, air raid shock was known to have resulted in, "a total breakdown", "fear-induced insomnia", and "insanity" leading in at least one case to a mother murdering her own children (48), in the case of the shell-shocked soldier, symptoms included a need to forget "equal to and sometimes stronger than the desire to remember and share their experiences, which also seemed in a way unspeakable" (Gibelli 64). Furthermore, soldiers commonly sought "refuge in childlike behaviour and memories, almost as a way of fleeing the unbearable experience of the present" (67). Mother and soldier-son may thus access a heightened plane of trauma, which – though necessarily gendered and distinct – is exclusively communicable between them. The intense psychological and physical suffering of either fighting in a war on the one hand, or losing a child to it on the other, binds them to one another – a bond reflected in Barrie's depiction of the mirroring relationship between Mary Rose and Harry. If we amalgamate the symptoms listed above of air raid and shell shock into what might be termed a global 'war shock', the boundaries separating mother and soldier appear eroded. Mary Rose retreats to girlish behaviour when fearful, and driven apparently insane in the search for her baby, considers using the violence of Harry's own trench knife against him; Harry submits to the tangible "memories" of the home space, retreating from the "unbearable" present. Perhaps the most persuasive symptom through which the maternal bond is stated, however, is the play's exploration of "unspeakable" experiences, with both Mary Rose and Harry framed as receptacles of untold, or silenced, stories.

Hynes asserts that, "[t]o many English artists, the coming of the war was

initially felt as a sudden and catastrophic end to the life of art and thought. . . a kind of paralysis of the imagination" (10). In this case, the divided national consciousness at the mercy of which Barrie as an artist regularly found himself actually worked in his favour. History assimilates Barrie – a writer imbued with alterity by virtue of his Scottishness - into a British establishmentarianism which both officially promulgated the glory of war and suffered a "paralysis of the imagination" when it came to articulating its most devastating losses. As a consequence, in *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose* - by avoiding overt references to conflict – Barrie was well-situated to present widely-consumable narratives which challenge the patriarchal and imperial ideals that many artistic representations of the Great War were prompted to reiterate.

The texts under consideration in this thesis span 1896-1920, encompassing a period of both extreme tumult and extraordinary innovation in British history. Throughout those years the concepts of 'home' and 'domesticity' mutated to envelop definitions distinct from the values formerly associated with such private spaces. Across this near quarter of a century, British society witnessed: the disruption of traditional ideas of gendered space within the household, as well as beyond its threshold; the undermining of the home as a safe haven; a national re-appropriation of domestic language that replaced values of sanctity, quietness and femininity with the ubiquitous yet peripheral threat of invasion and mass slaughter on 'home' soil; the dissolution of longstanding ideas about femininity, masculinity and children; and the increasingly widespread application of 'home' to locations with no connotations of familial ties, intimacy, security or togetherness. Taken

together, these social factors provide a historical context to the portrayal of interior space in works from ranging from *Sentimental Tommy* to *Mary Rose*. I will argue that Barrie's writing utilises this context both directly and indirectly as a means of disordering, destabilising and, in some cases, re-energising notions of the domestic world.

### 1.1 Selfhood and the Domestic Space: Barrie and Bachelard

Barrie's own sense of place in the world had been a topic of personal contention for him since childhood. Raised in the provincial weaving community of Kirriemuir, he witnessed his older brother, Alick, pursue academic ambitions which led him far from the town's traditional industries and into the comparatively metropolitan settings of Aberdeen and Glasgow. Ever conscious of his siblings, Alick – first as a teacher, then as a school inspector (Dunbar 26) – encouraged their parents to allow him a hand in the young James' education. Consequently, by the time of his eventual matriculation at the University of Edinburgh in 1878 (38) Barrie had divided nearly half of his young life between the familial homes in Kirriemuir and Forfar, and a number of educational residencies in Glasgow and Dumfries. Although Alick generally attempted to ensure his younger brother's comfort and safety by arranging accommodation with himself and their sister, Mary (also "teaching part time and house-keeping for him" [30]) changes in the elder brother's career, coupled with school holidays and home visits, meant that Barrie's living arrangements during his adolescence were somewhat inconsistent.

Space acquired an artistic significance throughout Barrie's formative years.

His "Dedication to the Five"<sup>37</sup> which prefaces the 1928 publication of the Uniform Edition of *Peter Pan*, alludes to how Barrie's childhood in Kirriemuir exerted a lasting influence on his writing as an adult; he concedes that a "tiny old washing-house . . . is not only the theatre of my first play, but has a still closer connection with Peter. It is the original of the little house that the Lost Boys built in the Never Land for Wendy" ("Dedication" 78). Additionally, while the fourteen-year-old Barrie (at this point a pupil at Dumfries Academy) was enjoying relative security during "his longest spell at a single school" (Ormond *Scottish Writers* 3), he was also nurturing his ability to create spaces existing within and alongside - but not of - his reality. As R. Green reflects:

Legend has it that in Moat Brae garden, Dumfries, are the very trees which gave Barrie the idea of the Lost Boys' many entrances to the Home Underground; again, a slender thread on which to hang inspiration. Certain it is, however, that in this garden, that belonged to Henry Gordon the Sheriff Clerk, Barrie played at pirates and redskins with Gordon's sons Hal and Stewart and others of his contemporaries (5-6).

The vulnerabilities of Green's rather impressionistic history of *Peter Pan* are exposed in such instances. His determination to discern the influences of Barrie's early life upon his 1904 play betrays an anxiety often culminating in his prioritising of poeticism over fact. Despite Green's admission that legend is a "slender thread" on which to base an analysis linking Barrie's Dumfries surroundings specifically to

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<sup>37</sup> Hollindale's notes to the 2008 Oxford University Press edition of *Peter Pan and Other Plays* assert that this dedication, though not precisely dated, was written "at the earliest in 1920, a date established by its reference to *Mary Rose*, and more probably for the 1928 edition" (307) – meaning, of course, the first time the play text of *Peter Pan* was published.

the Lost Boys' Underground home, such biographical information is, in fact, more generally useful in illustrating Barrie's incorporation of familiar spaces across the broader body of his fiction. Whereas a more fruitful analysis would identify the legitimacy of spatial influences across examples of prose and drama spanning his whole career, Green's account is flawed by its concentration on crafting an association between the picturesque stimuli of Barrie's childhood and Never Land alone.

Creating such playscapes within public, adult-governed spaces is a universal characteristic of childhood development. There is nothing geographically precise or even very artistically special about the young Barrie's tendency to incorporate familiar locales in the fantasy narratives of his juvenile games. Yet the grown-up Barrie's reliance on images from and of home speaks to something much less universal. The youngest-but-one child of eight surviving children,<sup>38</sup> his childhood was marred by the death of his older brother David in 1867 in an ice-skating accident. A traumatic event that understandably shook the entire family, Barrie's response was an attempt to comfort his distraught mother by effectively impersonating the dead child – an instance which is reproduced fictionally in *Margaret Ogilvy* (1896). Seeking out his mother in her sick-room, Barrie's narrator believes she called to him in the hope that he is David, returned to her: "I thought it was the dead boy she was speaking to, and I said in a little lonely voice, 'No, it's no him, it's just me'" (Barrie, qtd in Dunbar 22). Traceable in many of his later works'

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<sup>38</sup> In total, Margaret Ogilvy had ten children, two of whom died before Barrie was born.

anxieties about lost children, maternal abandonment, and the hope of a second chance,<sup>39</sup> it is possible to recognise that such an exchange with his mother – even as readers encounter its artistic, rather than strictly-biographical, representation by Barrie the author many years later - was foundational in the young Barrie's emotional investment in the fluidity of identity. Convinced that even a partial resurrection of his brother may help to heal his mother's broken heart, Barrie developed a fixation with "the intense desire to become so like David that his mother would not see the difference" (22). Whatever Margaret Ogilvy's private feelings about this behaviour, their evolving relationship was instrumental in fostering another of Barrie's professional interests. As Dunbar intimates:

A dichotomy was slowly forming in this little boy; there was the world outside, the world of reality, and the shadowed home where fantasy was being woven. For Margaret Ogilvy was at last finding some relief from her desolation by talking to this eager son who was proving to be a splendid listener. She began telling him about her own childhood . . . she carried the listening Jamie along with her, firing his lively imagination in such a way that he relived that childhood with her . . . the present had no reality for him when he was with Margaret Ogilvy (23-4).

The therapeutic dichotomisation of space, alongside the reality-shaping properties of storytelling, are thematically crucial to an understanding of Barrie's work.

Moreover, it is what differentiated him from other children whose fascination with imaginary realms had not been shaped by tragedy. With his sense of self-possession destabilised from an early age by his assumption of David's identity, the world of

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<sup>39</sup> Nearly all of the works examined in this thesis contain these elements, but it is in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* – a text I will be referring to peripherally in this thesis - that Barrie relives the incident most explicitly.

imagination became for Barrie not only conflated with home, but emerged – and remained for the duration of his life – as an unexpected source of solidity. Carrying with him into adulthood the knowledge that make-believe and reality were concepts separated only by perception, he recognised in writing an opportunity to exchange roles, disrupt hierarchies, and award agency and charisma to a character-type with whom he had much sympathy: that of the nomadic outsider able only to peer through the window of family existence.

Barrie thus embarked upon university life as an unusual hybrid creature. The considerable portions of time spent away from home at boarding schools in the company of richer, more worldly young men meant that upon his visits to Scotland he would never feel completely fulfilled by the 'quaintness' he latterly perceived in Kirriemuir life.<sup>40</sup> Yet, city-dwelling for him was - at least during his first serious experience of doing so, as a student in Edinburgh – terribly isolating. Dunbar notes that Barrie's "innate shyness had become intense, and he made no friends during those first terms" (40). With a sense of his physical self-consciousness strangling any enjoyment of social outings, Barrie devoted his time in the city to "long walks . . . studying his notes or writing for the *Courant*" (47). The necessity of remaining in

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<sup>40</sup> Both Dunbar and Jack allude to Barrie's internal conflict in reconciling the conservative, Calvinist – arguably provincial - influences of his upbringing in Kirriemuir with the more worldly influences he encountered in Dumfries, Edinburgh and, later, London. Dunbar notes that, in 1877, the adolescent Barrie, "long conditioned by his mother to guard against impure thoughts, was filled with distaste and fear when any of his schoolfellows indulged in a coarse joke . . . [a]t home, his sisters had been rigidly trained never to appear except when they were fully covered; washed undergarments were hung out to dry well away from the eyes of the males, or were looped in anonymous folds over the high pulley below the kitchen ceiling" (37). Jack, disputing the "most bitterly advanced" (*Road* 18) criticism levelled at Barrie's professional legacy, acknowledges that: "the idea of large theatre audiences doubling up in laughter at witty depictions of Scottish stereotypes . . . alienates many people from Barrie"(18).

Edinburgh for the duration of his studies reignited Barrie's enthusiasm for creating and inhabiting other worlds; with "[i]deas teem[ing] in his brain . . . what he wanted to have, more than anything else was time – time to write, and write, and write" (47). Frequent contributions to the *Edinburgh Courant* as its freelance dramatic critic were, thus, not motivated solely by financial interest. His increasing exposure to theatre of the late 1800s was beginning to engender in J.M. Barrie the realisation that a sense of place – and with it a sense of belonging - was something that he was capable of writing, and writing, and writing, into physical existence.

After graduating from the University of Edinburgh in 1882, Barrie relocated to England; first, to Nottingham where he worked predominantly as a journalist, before moving to London in 1885 to pursue a wider-ranging writing career, interspersed with a brief return to life in Kirriemuir. Throughout the closing decade of the nineteenth century Barrie's own opinion of his relationship with the city - the partial setting for three of the five texts discussed in this thesis - is peculiarly ambivalent. Despite his marriage to the beautiful young actress Mary Ansell in 1894, and the significant professional success that had gathered momentum since the publication of his Thrums fiction in the late 1880s, Barrie was perennially ill at ease with London's penchant for society events and its literary culture of upper-class intellectualism. In December 1893, Barrie wrote to the Dutch author Maarten Maartens of his malaise with London living:

I was not sorry to leave London . . . they do slave in London, do they not? The gospel of work, work til you drop often means that you are to live a life bounded on north-south-east-and-west by the mighty trifles of your own

pen. As for the clubs, they are pleasant at intervals, but it might fit in somewhere as an aphorism that nothing good ever came out of a club (Meynell 29).<sup>41</sup>

Letters to his friend Arthur Quiller-Couch over the next fifteen months are similarly negative, with Barrie confiding that neither he nor his then-fiancée harbour any attachment to the city ("we are both against London life for permanency"[Meynell 6]).<sup>42</sup> This sentiment apparently intensifies over time, as Barrie records in March the following year that he, "wasn't very happy in London . . . it impressed me as a weary hollow place" (8).<sup>43</sup> Unsurprisingly, Barrie eschewed the traditional writer's circuit of club networking and industry soirees in favour of long, meandering walks in the city's parks with Ansell and Porthos, later to be replaced by Luath (their St Bernard dogs). This pastime and its resultant relationship with the Llewelyn Davies family proved heavily influential for Barrie throughout his writing of the germinal *Peter Pan* works, *The Little White Bird* (1902) and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) as well as the play *Peter Pan* (1904) itself. A surviving letter to from Barrie to Peter Llewelyn Davies recounts how greatly a bearable existence in the city came to depend on even momentary opportunities to flee from it:

Sometimes when I am walking in the Gardens with Luath I see a vision and I cry, Hurray, there's Peter, and then Luath barks joyously and we run to the vision and then it turns out not to be Peter but just another boy, and then I cry like a water cart and Luath hangs his sorrowful tail. Oh dear, how I wish you were here, and then it would be London again (Meynell 143).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Letter to Maarten Maartens, written at Kirriemuir, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1893.

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, written at Kirriemuir, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1894.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, written at Kirriemuir, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1895.

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Peter Llewelyn Davies, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1904.

More than just creative inspiration, these wanderings into London's parks offered Barrie an escape from the rigours and claustrophobia of urban living, functioning as a portal through which he could reconnect with the verdant imaginative worlds of his childhood. As exemplified in the correspondence with Maartens and Quiller-Couch, the discontent he feels at the prospect of full absorption into London life is, suggestively, manifested most strongly when he writes to them from Kirriemuir. Meynell's collection of Barrie's letters, (which he unfailingly annotated with his location at the time of writing) offers insight into the movements of a writer to whom geography became so narratologically important. Thanks to a number of factors including familial illness, a honeymoon, and the death of a prospective brother-in-law, the 1890s were a perhaps surprisingly turbulent period for Barrie, whose regular and protracted journeys between various bases in Scotland and England at this time could not have been especially conducive to building a strong professional presence in the theatres and salons of London. Together, the Maartens, Quiller-Couch and Llewelyn Davies letters portray a Barrie whose professed disdain for the city-space and its connotations of sleaze, disease, nepotism and vice stands in contrast to the creative liberation afforded to him by openness and greenery – arenas which seethed with imaginative potentialities, in which a "vision" would momentarily brighten his mood.

The feeling of restless discontentment which emanates from Barrie in much of his private correspondence has reverberations in his professional writing; each of the texts discussed in this thesis speaks to his anxieties concerning one's day-to-day surroundings and their impact on individuality and wellbeing. Barrie's

disillusionment with metropolitan life is symptomatic of an international, multi-disciplinary trepidation about the oppressive effects of the domestic space upon creativity. In his discussion of Parisian housing in his seminal work *The Poetics of Space*, the phenomenological theorist and philosopher Gaston Bachelard terms "big-city" urban habitation as "oneirically incomplete" (26); in other words, the spatial demands of urban architecture stunt the individual's psychic access to his or her primal idea of the profound intimacy of home, and therefore to one's first notions of selfhood:

The number of the street and the floor give the location of our "conventional hole" but our abode has neither space around it nor verticality inside it . . . They have no roots and, what is quite unthinkable for a dreamer of houses, sky-scrapers have no cellars. From the street to roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other while the tent of a horizonless sky encloses the entire city . . . here, where houses are no longer set in natural surroundings, the relationship between house and space becomes an artificial one. Everything about it is mechanical, and on every side, intimate living flees (27).

Bachelard's comments designate the urban existence as disruptive to the process of day-dreaming. Put simply, his theory posits that day-dreaming (as opposed to the sleep-dreaming which is the declared territory of psychoanalysis rather than his own phenomenology) is best described as a series of subjective images closely associated with memory. When seeking truths about the self (intimacy), these images become organically connected with domestic space, mapping themselves onto the "house we were born in" (14), that "privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space" (3). Bachelard's

topoanalytical approach prizes intricacy in the dream-house: multiple rooms representing repositories of different emotions and social interaction; verticality and depth in the form of attics and cellars respectively symbolising creative liberation and cares of the unconscious mind; and finally, the "nooks and corners of solitude" (15) as indeterminate, multi-functional spaces receptive to imaginative transfiguration, and as such uniquely suited to the spatial demands of the daydreaming child (14). Bachelard's theories – advanced approximately two decades after Barrie's death - are not an obvious choice of critical framework through which to examine these primary texts, especially when considered alongside the highly-specific socio-political context within and against which Barrie was writing. However, there is an irrefutable compatibility in both authors' ideas about the legitimacy of the domestic sphere as, equally, a site for art and a territory through which the organic development of selfhood can be traced.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard explores the influence of environment on the formation of identity in a starkly different register to the precise and clinical terminology which abounded within the social Darwinist debates of Barrie's time. Critically, Barrie was not only aware of these contemporary debates but actively engaged with them, mostly within his journalism;<sup>45</sup> yet, his creative writing repeatedly espouses a curiosity about the more fluid, nebulous interplay of self and domestic surroundings. Often using imagery or symbolism to present his own ideas about the inner life of the home space and its contribution to the human lives

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<sup>45</sup> See the Literature Review of this thesis.

therein, Barrie's fiction emanates an indeterminacy and a reliance on metaphorical explication which cannot be accommodated within a scientific binary of nature vs. nurture, but *is* resonant with Bachelard's phenomenological background. Moreover, Bachelard's investment in the symbiotic dynamics of dream-states, creativity and the intricate spaces of home are coherent with Barrie's expression of similar ideas. The primary texts addressed in this thesis repeatedly return to dreamlike or dissociative episodes as a means of locating or conveying meaning. Worlds outwith the temporal and the tangible are cultivated through play or mental illness in the *Tommy* novels, and through storytelling and the fluctuating textures of Never Land in *Peter Pan*. Much of *Dear Brutus* takes place inside a dream of unlived lives and alternative identities, and in *Mary Rose* characters' departures – both psychic and physical – from the spaces of objective reality enable their awakenings to essential truths of selfhood. The harmony of ideas between Barrie and Bachelard is fortified by the reliance of both upon the intricacies of the home space – architecture, furniture, ambience - as a means of accessing or translating these truths.

In his 1928 "Dedication to the Five" to which I have already alluded in this thesis, Barrie in fact appears to pre-empt Bachelard's theories as he frivolously attempts to determine *Peter Pan*'s "true author":

Some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives . . . I think one remains the same person throughout, merely passing, as it were, in these lapses of time from one room to another, but all in the same house. If we unlock the rooms of the far past we can peer in and see ourselves, busily occupied in beginning to become you and me . . . This journey through the house may not convince any one that I wrote Peter, but it does suggest me as a likely person (78-9).

A theme dominant across Barrie's work is the tension between stasis and change; indeed, it is expressed in everything from major plot points (the transition between parallel lives in *Dear Brutus*) to incidental details (the physical maturation but essential sameness of the protagonists in the *Tommy* novels). Here he suggests that the evolution of self is an illusion. People, he maintains, are essentially resistant to radical transformation, but adapt to new environments and life circumstances in the process of personal development. Moreover, it is possible to trace that development as if it is metaphorised in (momentarily borrowing Bachelard's terminology) that "privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space" – the home. Compare Bachelard's analysis, thirty years after Barrie's, in which he posits that:

At times, we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability – a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to "suspend" its flight (8).

Whilst it is therefore unlikely that a French philosopher and academic more than twenty years Barrie's junior was ever directly influenced by his writings either biographical or fictional, the correspondence between their ideas is evident. Like Barrie, Bachelard evinces a nostalgia for the essential self, who remains unburdened by inhibition or accepted societal mores, and simply 'is'. Although he refrains from specificity, the language of chronology suggests this self is most accessible in youth:

a "being who does not want to melt away" suggests that it pre-existed the current, older self who possesses the cognitive capacity to meditate upon his or her past. Similarly, in wanting "time to 'suspend' its flight", Bachelard's dreamer seeks an intermission from the process of living – a route out of that linear reality binding all humans to the inevitability of ageing. Not only do we begin to note in Bachelard a synchrony with the themes of time, maturation and identity-conflict explored in Barrie's works, but in uniting those ideas in his *Poetics* with the concept that the home world influences psychological development, he provides a critical structure for examining how the placing – or misplacing – of Barrie's protagonists affects their ability to know themselves.

## Chapter Two - Tommy

Structurally, a majority of both *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* (the first texts and the sole novels under consideration in this thesis) are located in realistic spaces, such as London streets, town halls, schoolrooms and the various homes inhabited by the main characters. Uniquely amongst their companion texts, the *Tommy* novels constitute the most extensive effort at prose-writing in Barrie's career;<sup>46</sup> an effort which, it must be noted, has been met with decidedly mixed reactions. Stylistically, they defy novelistic convention of the period; in the late 1890s, many of Barrie's contemporaries were still producing novels indebted to earlier Victorian tradition in which one can identify a robust plot organised into coherent sections of introduction, development and conclusion. *Sentimental Tommy* in particular sits at a (perhaps deliberate) distance from such a tradition, and has been denounced for its "rambling", heavily-episodic structure and lack of thematic unity (Ormond *Scottish Writers* 60). *Tommy and Grizel* follows a more linear romance plot that builds towards the mutually 'destructive' union of its titular protagonists, yet shares one important formal characteristic with its predecessor; an intensely visual investment in different spaces and the stories belonging to them. Building on his commitment to depicting the geographical and epochal particulars of nineteenth-century Scottish weaving villages in his earlier kailyard work, Barrie's meticulous descriptions of domestic locales are commonplace in the *Tommy* novels.

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<sup>46</sup> The *Tommy* saga, played out across two volumes, represents the zenith of Barrie's enthusiasm for prose-writing. After 1900, most of his creative energies are invested in drama, with the exceptions of the relatively short prose works: *The Little White Bird* (1902); *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906); *Peter and Wendy* (1911); and *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* (1931). His memoir, *The Greenwood Hat*, was published in 1930.

Indeed, though some of the examples addressed in this thesis invoke his writing of urban civic space, they each attest to Barrie's maturing interest in the potential of setting, with the action that unfolds within the controlled written environs of these novels anticipating in many ways the organic interactive arena of the physical stage in the plays which were to follow. This overtly theatrical flavour of the *Tommy* novels is evident from the opening of the narrative, as Barrie actually introduces his main character as if with the raising of a curtain:

The celebrated Tommy first comes into view on a dirty London stair, and he was in sexless garments, which were all he had, and he was five, and so though we are looking at him, we must do it sideways, lest he hurriedly sit down on them. That inscrutable face, which made the clubmen of his later days uneasy, and even puzzled the ladies while he was making love to them, was already his, except when he smiled at one of his pretty thoughts or stopped at an open door to sniff a potful (*ST 1*; ch.1).

Tommy's existence is stated from the outset as being conditional on there being an audience to watch him. He explicitly "comes into view" of the reader at the same time as he comes into narrative being. Barrie's conflation of being seen and existing mimics the language of conventional stage directions. Indeed, McGavock alludes to his obsessive revisionism of production notes for *Peter Pan*, noting that so reluctant was he to "fix his text in print because it was constantly changing" (200) that only in 1928 – nearly a quarter of a century after it was first staged – was the play transferred to a Uniform Edition script. Through nightly rewritings of his works, Barrie sought the symbiosis of a relationship with his audience in which their subjective responses to his art dictated its form thereafter. S. Green observes that

the reader's initial encounter with Tommy (see the section quoted above) provides a similar, audience-dictated commentary on his own "complex" (5) and ever-changing spatial properties:

The sentence draws attention to the relationship between narrator, reader and subject matter, while concealing, for the time being at least, that between narrator and author . . . There are many ways for a narrator to address a reader, and each alters the assumptions that can be made about both; a certain reader entails a certain narrator, and vice versa. Furthermore each refashioning of the narrator/reader relationship also involves the reimagining of the subject matter (the *raison d'être* for any relationship between narrator and reader) . . . It follows that the closer any character is scrutinised by this unstable narrator/reader, the more susceptible that character will be to instability and change (5-6; 7).

Tommy's capriciousness of character is physically paralleled in this dependence on being seen by the reader or narrator in a certain way so as to exist in an objective space. Moreover, his changing spatial properties are shown to significantly affect his sense of self. Such bodily and emotional instability is, however, seemingly countered by the epithetical fixity of the book's title. Inseparable from his sentimentality, in itself a symptom of his "tendency towards inconsistency" (S. Green 26) and an aspect of his personality with which he is later brutally imprinted by his teacher Cathro, Tommy is thus figuratively and literally prevented from evolving into a character possessing the depth needed to find common feeling with others. He is condemned by the narration of his own story to an existence in which he must always sit somewhere between the stasis of being forever 'Sentimental Tommy' and the unstable flux of identity of which sentiment itself is the cause and

the symptom.

I previously noted that this instability of Tommy's character anticipates Barrie's reluctance to commit to paper the essence of his next, rather differently-ephemeral boy hero during his obsessive re-writings of *Peter Pan*. Similarly, the *Tommy* novels' sustained preoccupation with visually setting a scene serves as a precursor to Barrie's conversion to a near-exclusively drama-centric professional output after *Peter Pan* debuted on the London stage in December of 1904.<sup>47</sup> Although my analysis of Peter himself will be minimal in this thesis, it would be remiss not to note, at this juncture, the mutually-illuminating relationship between his character and that of Tommy Sandys - particularly when it concerns their shared aptitude for manipulating the textures, shapes, and flavours of the spaces they occupy.

The existence of Never Land, according to the 1928 record of Barrie's staging instructions, is contingent on Peter's presence, in a reversal which recalls S. Green's critique of Tommy. For instance, the opening of Act Two in *Peter Pan* illustrates in barely-stageable depth the extent to which the island responds to Peter's creative mastery. He controls the rhythms of day and night ("Peter's star wakes up" while the sun "is another of his servants" [Barrie *PP* 105]), the elements are at his behest ("It is summer time on the trees and on the lagoon but winter on the river, which is

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<sup>47</sup> As previously stated, after the publication of *Tommy and Grizel* in 1900, Barrie concentrated on producing plays for the theatre. Between 1904 and his death in 1937, Barrie offered only four notable prose works - *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906), *Peter and Wendy* (1911), his memoir *The Greenwood Hat* (1930), and the unnerving novella *Farewell Miss Julie Logan* (1931). Throughout this time, we should acknowledge that Barrie did nurture his prose recreationally, through vigorously reciprocal correspondence with a variety of friends and acquaintances.

not remarkable on Peter's island" [106]) and "the whole island . . . everybody and everything know that they will catch it from him if they don't give satisfaction" (105). Conversely, S. Green proposes that Tommy's authenticity as a character is conditional on the dynamics inherent in the relationship Barrie constructs between narrator and reader. As such, while Peter's presence determines the existence of his fictional world, Tommy's 'existence' seems dependent on the presence of an audience. The manner in which *Sentimental Tommy's* narrator conflates this existence (something which is surely objective) and being seen (the act of 'seeing' being inherently perspectival and therefore, subjective) anticipates the fundamental concern of the stage directions which accompany *Peter Pan*; namely their enablement of a performance which exists objectively, that is nevertheless nuanced or framed by one subjective vision (the playwright's) and which will spawn a plethora of subjective responses (the audience). Barrie's renowned reliance on audience participation in *Peter Pan* further enhances this multivalent association between seeing and existing: the audience must put faith in the unseen Tinker Bell, clapping their hands so as to ensure her survival.

It is significant that this symbiotically-sustaining social order prevails in both the *Tommy* novels and *Peter Pan* between a boy protagonist and the fictive space he inhabits. Indeed, both Tommy and Peter are so minutely attuned to their respective surroundings that changes in the environment effect an answering change in the individual, or vice versa. Despite the inescapable influence of Tommy on Pan, nearly a decade elapsed before Barrie exchanged Tommy's figurative wings

for Peter's literal flight.<sup>48</sup> The intervening years allowed for the development of a style in which his pseudo-theatrical writing evolved into the structure of a real-life play. Moreover, the theme of environmental stimulus upon individual development that Barrie explores in the *Tommy* novels is wholly reversed in *Peter Pan*, with Never Land tangibly reacting and adapting to accommodate Peter and his visitors. Alone of the primary texts included in this thesis, *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* do not obviously adhere to the escape/adventure/return structure which so neatly enables a dialogue between domestic life and fantasy in *Peter Pan*, *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose*. Yet it is within the domestic worlds of the *Tommy* novels that Barrie builds a foundation for the revolutionary ideas surrounding gender and identity which are evinced in his later work. To derive some insight into how they shape the themes of *Peter Pan* most immediately – but, equally, the writing of the other primary texts in this research - it is imperative that we examine the spatial dynamics at work in *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel*.

In the following chapters, I will analyse the principal interior settings which appear throughout both *Tommy* novels. From the Sandys' cramped London lodgings to the charity banquet hall, or from the Thrums but'n'ben housing Aaron Latta and his warping-mill to Grizel and the Painted Lady's mysterious Double Dykes abode: the intricacies of these settings and their specific topography demonstrate how

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<sup>48</sup> In *Tommy and Grizel*, Barrie has the narrator and his two main protagonists metaphorise Tommy's talent for creation as his 'wings'. This imagery, applied in various contexts throughout the novel, foreshadows the ultimately tragic consequences of such a talent, but is most explicitly aligned with the liberation afforded by fantasy in a discussion between Tommy and Grizel before the former returns to London. Grizel remarks: "You know as well as I that the cause of this unhappiness has been – what you call your wings.' He was about to thank her for her delicacy in avoiding its real name, when she added, 'I mean your sentiment,' and he laughed instead" (TG 286-7).

spaces of 'home' can enshrine versions of a particular social narrative, enabling or disrupting a culture of storytelling that is intrinsic to characters' conceptions of self.

### 2.1 Instability of Identity and the Urban Milieu

The first half of *Sentimental Tommy*, save for occasional focalised narrative departures to Thrums,<sup>49</sup> is set exclusively in that most industrialised and populous of milieux: Victorian London. Tommy's somewhat frivolous penchant for submerging himself in imaginative adventures is set against the grim counter-narrative of an inhospitable, anonymous city in which domestic comforts are scarce. In Bachelard's terms, Tommy Sandys' capacity for imaginative dreaming should be impeded by the oneirically-incompatible locale in which he has been born. A native of rooms which "pile up one on top of the other" (Bachelard 27), his infancy is tainted with the unsought, artificial social intimacy born of proximity. "Through the wall", "in the rooms under them", "next door to" and "on the same floor as" (Barrie *ST* 38-39; ch.4) are just a handful of the prepositions employed to emphasise the Sandys' urban suffocation.

Furthermore, the hyperbolised register in which both Mrs Sandys and Tommy come to reference Thrums ("the wonderful place" [32; ch.3], "the enchanted street" [57; ch.5]) accentuates Barrie's developing binary of a stifling London reality versus the fantasy-land of a rural Scottish weaving community.<sup>50</sup> *Sentimental Tommy's* treatment of the cityscape evolves a dialectic wherein its domestic spaces

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<sup>49</sup> Mrs Sandys' stories recount her Thrums' maidenhood.

<sup>50</sup> This romanticisation of Kirriemuir life is something which had been characteristic of his earlier kailyard work.

are unnaturally impersonal. Tommy's home and those with whom he shares it are introduced as being hostile to description, because "one at least will be off, and another in his place, while we are giving them a line apiece" (38; ch.4). The narrator's explicitly theatrical language here enforces an impression of identity being simply a performed role, with residents of the building "given lines". Additionally, the essential instability of domestic life is emphasised by the continuous rotation of bodies both living and dead as they spill in and out of the drama via the essentially peripatetic device of the staircase linking their abodes.

Indeed, Barrie's emphasis on furniture both of the street and of the home throughout the *Tommy* novels gestures again towards his fascination with the non-verbal storytelling potential of setting – a skill which is, conversely, put to great use in the stage directions of his later plays, but rarely as fully articulated or exploited within the performance itself.<sup>51</sup> The physical composition of domestic spaces in London and Thrums thus designates them as performative sites capable of telling a story parallel to, and sometimes at variance with, the main plot. The opening chapters of *Sentimental Tommy* take place in London streets and houses and offer

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<sup>51</sup> Barrie's stage directions are famously impressionistic, especially when compared to the work of his contemporaries. In *Major Barbara* (1905) for example, Shaw opens Act One with a utilitarian description of the library, outlining furniture placement and décor. Maugham is still more sparing in his use of detail; the first stage directions of *A Man of Honour* (1903) describe only the physical necessities of the setting, and the outward appearance and positioning of Basil Kent. Contrast this with the extensive stage directions preceding Act One: The Nursery in *Peter Pan*, which stipulate that the Darling home is so familiar that, "if you think it was your house you are very probably right. It wanders about London looking for anybody in need of it" (Barrie *PP* 87) and that the nursery itself has been developed by Mrs Darling into, "the hub of her creation . . . [adorned] to match with a loving heart and all the scrapings of her purse" (87). It should be stated that these notes are from the Uniform Edition of the play in 1928, which was designed as a readable teaching text rather than a more straightforward set of stage directions. Nevertheless, the depth and detail with which Barrie envisages the domestic worlds of his plays is clearly instrumental in his conception of the stories enacted upon the stage; rarely can such ideas be communicated by actors to an audience in a way which sufficiently reflects his prodigious imagination.

glimpses of a 'set' littered with spatially-significant clues. These symbols at once map out the young Tommy's childlike mistrust of change and point to its inevitability – perhaps even desirability – as, relying upon the solid, stable textures and structures of his known surroundings, he experiments with the frontiers of reality. Still in the novel's opening pages, Barrie confides that "his little street . . . ended in a dead wall" (2; ch.1), a material detail in direct symbolic conflict with the stair on which Tommy is poised. Here is:

[T]he nursery to all the children whose homes opened on it, not so safe as nurseries in the part of London that is chiefly inhabited by boys in sailor suits, but preferable as a centre of adventure, and here on an afternoon sat two. They were very busy boasting, but only the smaller had imagination, and as he used it recklessly, their positions soon changed. (2; ch.1)

Perched on the stairs, exchanging exaggerated tales of adventure in their oppositional lands of London and Thrums and awaiting imminent domestic disruption in the form of "a kid or a coffin" (4; ch.1), Tommy and Shovel hover within an inherently transitional space. Indeed, in the pithy reference made to its near-purgatorial quality – suspended, as it were, half-way between new life and ended life – the space is the very definition of 'life-changing'. In contrast to the "dead wall" representing a limit to individual growth in particular and (as Tommy's story elaborates) social mobility in general, the staircase emerges as a nurturing space - a nursery, in fact - in which mobility is not only its literal purpose but a mere secondary benefit for a child such as Tommy, who exploits its status as a "centre of adventure" as a means of creating his own.

The narrator informs us via a series of focalised, oblique references that

even by the standards of this particularly faceless London townhouse, the Sandys are outsiders. Tommy's desperation to be accepted by the local children (Shovel "had often cuffed Tommy for sticking to him so closely" [ST 5; ch.1]) is countered by his mother's "standoffishness to her neighbours", as exemplified in her attitude to Shovel's mother "from whom she had often drawn back offensively on the stairs" (24; ch.3). Confused by the equally traumatic recent events of his father's death and his mother's pregnancy, Tommy relies upon invention in order to take some control of his own story, bolster his social position, and engage his peers. Perversely, he emphasises his Scottish 'exoticism' through a series of entirely imagined anecdotes in order to promote a sense of belonging:

The very first time Tommy had told him of the wondrous spot, Shovel had drawn a great breath and said, thoughtfully:  
 "I allers knowed as there were sich a beauty place, but I didn't jest know its name . . . p'raps I dreamed on it."  
 "That's it," Tommy cried. "I tell yer, everybody dreams on it!" and Tommy was right; everybody dreams of it, though not all call it Thrums (25-6; ch.3).

Commonality is established here by Tommy's innately empathic imagination. Not only does he correctly gauge what "everybody dreams of", he is receptive to the universal allure that a fantasy realm in particular holds for children. By fabricating Thrums' likeness in his tales for Shovel and other children of the streets, Tommy effects a schism in his identity that is simultaneously beneficial and devastating: his fantasy narratives earn him a niche in street hierarchy that no other child has the capacity to occupy, thus permitting him a route – albeit, for the moment, merely a fancied route - above and out of the spatial stagnation typifying the existence of the

urban poor. However, Tommy's utter immersion in fantasy comes at the expense of emotional stability. His life is a patchwork of fragmented true memories and complete falsehoods fed to him by his mother, resulting in a shaky conception of his personal history and a congruently uncertain destiny. Like the juxtaposition of stairs and wall, Tommy's ability to escape is illusory, a fleeting agency which only further entombs him in a longterm state of confused self-knowledge. Although Tommy as an atypical product of Bachelardian philosophy triumphs in his power to create *despite* the deeply unfavourable spatial conditions of his upbringing, he demonstrates from an early stage that his imaginative might is ungovernable and ultimately damaging.

The child Tommy is, in fact, such a consummate fantasist that his exuberant storytelling forces new realities into existence by sheer power of persuasion. Immediately following this episode in which he and Shovel loiter on the stair, a jealous Tommy attempts to lure a lost child away from his mother, believing that the little girl has arrived to replace him in her affections. Upon her demand for "'tories" (9; ch.1), he leads her away from his stairwell:

Never before had he had such a listener. "Oh, dagont, dagont!" he would cry over these fair scenes, and she, awed or gurgling with mirth according to the nature of the last, demanded, "Nother, 'nother!" whereat he remembered who and what she was, and showing her a morsel of the new one, drew her to more distant parts, until they were so far from his street that he thought she would never be able to find the way back (11; ch.1)

Admittedly, Tommy's intentions turn out not to be as sinister as this excerpt implies. When "against his judgment he fell a-pitying" (11), he unwittingly reunites

the child (Reddy) with her real mother - all the while assuming that it has been under his ministrations that her 'new' one has been found. For Tommy, this event allows him to marvel, perhaps for the first time, at the real-world consequences of his storytelling. Despite the fact that the restoration of Reddy to her home in the streets representing London's "acme of fashion" (11) is largely coincidental, and not a result of Tommy's genius at matching parentless children with childless parents, he is thereafter convinced of his own ability to shape realities, combine them, entice or evade danger, by harnessing the power of language. This assuredness feeds into the detrimental aspect(s) of Tommy's absorption in imagination, and is linked to an insecurity of self pre-ordained by his fractured familial relationships and the psychologically-constrictive nature of his domestic surroundings.

Having misidentified the now-successfully-banished Reddy as his unwelcome baby sister, Tommy is aggrieved to find "the little traitor" (18; ch.2) (his real sister) in bed with his ailing mother. The dynamics of the room, and with them, the emotional bases of Tommy's young life, have been irrevocably altered. The narrator observes that, "[h]itherto, he had slept at the back of his mother's bed" but on that night he "consented to lie crosswise at her feet" (20; ch.2). After a time, "[h]e opened his eyes stealthily, and this was neither the room nor the bed he had expected to see . . . the room took on a new shape" (20-21; ch.2). As darkness obscures the recognisable interior landscape of his home, Tommy's new position – both physically and within the family hierarchy – is engulfed in unfamiliarity. Discomfited, he finds himself dwelling on the first home he can remember, where he can "feel the presence," but lacks palpable memories, of his father. Nightmarish

fragments of a man's bristly face pressed against his own, running away and hiding (22; ch.2) from "someone" with his mother, and a deathbed ornamented with "the man's clothes lying on the large chair just as he had placed them there when he undressed for the last time . . . a man without a body" (22; ch.2) jostle in Tommy's mind as he falls asleep.

The narrator's practised lack of sympathy for Tommy is evinced through observations which stress the child's rather unbecoming resilience in the face of domestic upheaval: "when the boy woke, he did not even notice the change. . . it is distressing to have to tell that what was in his mind was merely the recovery of the penny" (23; ch.2). However, even without resorting to the findings of most branches of child psychology where this type of insecurity might be anticipated, textual evidence suggests a causal connection between the arrival of a baby sister, Tommy's half-waking recollections of a now-dead but frightening father (who is also father to Elspeth) and his physical displacement in a formerly intimate spatial relationship with his mother. The image of a faceless dying man, represented in posterity only by his cast-off "black coat and worsted waistcoat . . . light trousers hung over the side, the legs on the hearthrug, with the red socks still sticking in them" (22; ch.2) is integral to Tommy's first notions of where he comes from. Moreover, though the narrator seemingly expresses the return of Tommy's equilibrium through the language of returning domestic order – "while he slept, day came and restored the furniture that night had stolen" (23; ch.2) - his waking preoccupation with finding the clothes of the infant imposter ("they were nowhere to be seen") implicitly twins the new baby with the dead parent as a source of

terror and disunity in the domestic space. The arrival of Elspeth summons the spectre of Magerful Tam. Her appearance is disruptive to Tommy's sense of belonging in the home, and recalls to him a fundamental absence in the development of his own identity; a relic of paternity demarcated solely by the superficial, transient characteristics of his clothes.

Indeed, a recurrent symbolism in the ways that clothing is linked to the fulfilment of identity is fostered by Barrie throughout both *Tommy* novels, and is frequently used as one of various metaphors for the transformative nature of Tommy's storytelling. From the reader's introduction to the boy "in sexless garments" (indicating a mutable character already prepared to embark upon the first of his fictive adventures with Reddy [1; ch.1]) to his satisfaction at finally "getting into trousers" (49; ch.4) that he is so eager to display to her; from the reappearance in London of Tommy in ill-fitting Sunday blacks, determined to warp his skills to an apprenticeship in any career no matter how unsuited he may be (*TG* 4; ch.1), to the gauche literary dandy in a velvet jacket bought out of vanity, who nevertheless struggles to charm anyone apart from when presented with opportunities to envelop them in a concocted romantic narrative (22; ch.2); and culminating in Grizel's conciliatory gifting of Dr. McQueen's overcoat (70; ch.6) which eventually hangs him to his death: through all of these examples, clothing for Tommy is imbued with the properties of forming and ultimately, being sacrificed to, a given persona. The dual utility of clothes as an instrument through which identity can be alternately affixed and shed finds essential sympathy with Tommy's chameleonic personality, with the narrator teasing that as "a man now . . . *surely*

the sentimentalities in which he had dressed himself were flung aside for ever, like old suits of clothes' (74; ch.6: my italics) in the very same chapter that Tommy's sentimentality reasserts itself defiantly, much to Grizel's dismay, as the adult Captain Stroke.

Tommy's anxiety about his father's disembodied clothes pre-empts this long-running crisis of his own selfhood; taken alongside his surrendering of his place in the bed to Elspeth, this episode represents a turning point in his evolution as a storyteller. Moreover, it labours the presence of the fissure in his psychological development. Tommy's pathologically-fluctuating identity leads to his complete immersion in a series of fantasy lives, with this confusion directly linked to his disarrayed ideas about where he belongs, both physically within a domestic space and emotionally within the familial structure.

Alston, also referencing Bachelard's theories about the first home as a repository for the nostalgic components which make up an individual's early identity (Alston 16), observes that in nineteenth and twentieth-century children's literature the domestic setting is unexpectedly "heavily invested with issues of power and control . . . a complex environment essentially controlled by adults" (15). Citing textual examples spanning more than one hundred years, Alston demonstrates that there exists "a connection between identity and place"(18): the home increasingly becomes mapped with divisions and hierarchies, with certain areas claimed as the territory of parents, children, staff, or exclusively male or female members of the family (17-18). Alston focuses on the ways in which, in a general sense, these interlocking power relationships within the domestic space

prove deeply influential to the development of child characters, suggesting that since, "certainly in children's literature it is the adult, if not necessarily the male, who controls the space . . . identity is also implicitly controlled by the adult male" (18). In social rather than literary terms,<sup>52</sup> the absolute authority of the patriarch within the home space is certainly borne out by Victorian and Edwardian emphases on the importance of a nucleic family structure. Functional, morally-anchored families of any class would, in ideal circumstances, have featured two parents, with wife and children ultimately subordinate to the husband and father. Alston's argument that the evolution of identity within the home is finally attributable to the greatest source of authority within that space therefore logically points to the father as an arbiter of individual selfhood.

In contrast, Tommy Sandys' earliest conceptions of both domestic space and paternity are shaped by absence or displacement. His identity, we may argue, is based largely upon lack; his father is a cluster of sensory impressions and an empty suit of clothes, whilst for much of his childhood his mother has disguised from him her true history. The domestic spaces in which he has haphazardly found himself at the point of Elspeth's birth are, according to his own recollections, disjointed and transient. Such disruptions to his emotional stability during formative periods of his life manifest themselves in Tommy's attraction to the inherently impermanent and malleable nature of storytelling, in which the gap in his sense of selfhood can be filled time and again by his own imagination.

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<sup>52</sup> In much of the children's literature produced during this period, conventional hierarchies and traditional family structures are upended or challenged as a necessary element of plotting.

Barrie further illuminates the intersection between functional/dysfunctional domestic space and Tommy's gradually deepening immersion in fantasy lives through his description of the boy's next encounter with Reddy. Upon being ushered by Reddy's grateful mother into their house, Tommy is confronted with a vision of his parallel home. Marvelling at the fact the house contains multiple spaces purpose-designed for reading and recreation (rather than merely sleeping) Tommy accompanies Reddy, his alternative sister, into "a room prettier even than the one he had lived in long ago" (ST 29; ch.3) after which they are met by a "formidable man" behind a desk whom Tommy believes literally "ended at the waist". Tommy's enduringly piecemeal concept of the father figure, coupled with his recollection here of his room from "long ago", offers a none-too-subtle basis for comparison between Reddy's nurturing family and spacious surroundings and the implicitly abusive, unpleasantly confined flavour of his own domestic circumstances. Accordingly, his failure even to recognise himself in her parents' description as the "good kind boy [who] had found her" (30; ch.3) hints at a basic instability in Tommy's perception of reality, and his lack of self-awareness.

*Sentimental Tommy* labours this unreliability in Tommy's character, by demonstrating its presence at the heart of his earliest storytelling with Reddy as his audience. The narrator observes that Tommy "arranged with her that she should always be on the outlook for him at the window" (28; ch.3) so he could regale her with "tales of Thrums" (28; ch.3); a place he has at this point experienced only second-hand in anecdotes passed down to him by his own mother which are, in turn, either embellished or censured. Calling at a little girl's window to tell her

stories, their relationship clearly anticipates and reverses that of Barrie's most famous protagonists. Significantly, although the Darling women and Peter occupy an illustrious and (as I will argue) ultimately empowering place in the multi-stranded traditions of tale dissemination, Barrie implies an ill-fatedness in Tommy's aptitude for storytelling, and an accompanying ill-fatedness in Reddy's eagerness to indulge it. Not only is the relationship conceived in a moment of mistaken identity and mistaken belonging that is never fully resolved, but Reddy's death in infancy foreshadows the adult Tommy's catastrophic realisation of his own mortality. She is "a baby rose full blown in a night because her time was short" (28; ch.3) whilst he sees himself "in flower at twenty-two" (*TG* 293; ch.24) just as when a plant at Elspeth's wedding is seen to be flourishing in its youth because "it will never see next year".

In fact, Reddy's demise appears to cement the dissolution of any chance Tommy has at developing a secure sense of who he is. He visits her, proud in a suit of clothes with trousers and pockets that signifies a move away from the indeterminacy of his "sexless garments", only to discover that she has died a month previously. Reddy's death coincides with Tommy's first conscious step towards establishing a fixed social identity - finding boys' clothes which fit him. As such, her disappearance before he is given the chance to be validated by her gaze ("She can't not never see them now . . . and I wants her to see them" [*ST* 50; ch.4]) coupled with the fact he hears the news from her gentle father "on his knee in the room where the books were" (49; ch.4) constitutes a tacit admission that a fruitful and well-adjusted future for Tommy has been circumvented. Barrie builds a context in

which Tommy's achievement of "getting into trousers" - or finally accessing an identity which anchors him to the objective reality of working-class boyhood - and locating domestic security in a comfortable home with a loving father-figure, is subverted by his enclosure in a room "whose walls were lined with books" (29; ch.3), a room which takes its very *raison d'être* from the human desire for parallel worlds, alternative identities and fantasy. How, indeed, can Tommy's obsession with storytelling after Reddy's death be anything other than strengthened when he learns of that tragic reality in a room bearing testament to the lure of escapism?

Indeed, in London and in Thrums, Tommy's status as an outsider results in his lacking a convincing entitlement to space within either (or indeed any) community. After Reddy's death, he is tasked by his mother with extracting information from the residents of Thrums Street, a London sub-culture consisting of Scottish expats; soon he realises that to belong anywhere he must discard whatever lingering notions he still possesses of a stable, objectively knowable self. Re-inventing himself as "Tommy Shovel" with a patchwork of personal foibles, the narrator notes that, "as he gave them birth, Tommy half believed them also, being already the best kind of actor" (63; ch.6). Reliant upon his stories as a vehicle for alleviating the dullness and privation of reality, Tommy's usurpation of other people's identities climaxes in one of *Sentimental Tommy's* most brilliantly satirical manipulations of the spaces of Tommy Sandys' home: a charity dinner aiding the reclamation of juvenile delinquents. Taking place in "the splendour of [a] brightly lighted hall, which was situated in one of the meanest streets of perhaps the most densely populated quarter of London" (83; ch.8), the dinner is ostensibly an

opportunity for the "toffs" (79; ch.7) (London's aristocracy, religious figures and society-ladies) to exhibit their altruism by inviting the children of the city's criminal classes to repent in exchange for a hearty meal. The double-edged quality of the Victorians' penchant for 'child-saving' is documented in Chapter One of this thesis, and (as I shall explain below) reflected in the spatial dimensions of the hall in *Sentimental Tommy*.

Firstly however, it is necessary to somewhat contextualise the work of British charitable foundations around the turn of the century. In 1904, a testimonial from the Duke of Argyll in his foreword to a book about the work undertaken by Dr. Barnardo reflects a preoccupation with the spiritual rewards awaiting patrons of the child-saving movement: "Thus ministry fulfilled to needy children is the Christian's shortest way to God" (Batt 5). Similarly, Jackson points out a self-interest in philanthropic undertakings like the novel's charity banquet, noting that despite the fact that many child-savers were motivated by compassion, the efforts of disparate private organisations were "framed to a large extent within a social purity paradigm . . . 'fallen' children should be removed from their homes if possible, to be retrained and reformed in a specialist institution" (53).<sup>53</sup> As part of a bid to salve the moral decline of the nation, children at the end of the nineteenth century came under increased physical and emotional scrutiny. Philanthropic organisations as well as individual benefactors became greatly invested in preserving (or restoring) the perceived sanctity of childhood. Any potential menace to the sacred status of 'the

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<sup>53</sup> Although the charity banquet scene does not explicitly mention removing the 'criminal' children from their domestic environments, it exploits their basic human needs (food, shelter, and warmth) to elicit 'repentance', resulting in patrons' emotional validation.

child', including their entirely passive exposure to criminality and vice as victims, would result in rigorous attempts to 'reform' their behaviour, with unrepentant children remaining a "social threat" (Jackson 54). Yet, as Barrie elaborately displays in the banquet scene, such charitable endeavours were often less about helping socially-compromised children and more about soothing consciences, massaging egos, and affirming reputations.

Into such a context, Barrie introduces Tommy with his growing proclivity for mining the textures and characters of his immediate spatial surroundings to embellish his stories. Topographically, the space of the charity dinner reflects the artifice endemic to such endeavours; warmth and light spill from the banqueting hall windows, bathing the "rabble" (Barrie *ST* 84; ch.8) outside in the diffuse glory of charitable-giving. Nevertheless, theirs is an elitist philanthropy. With "several gentlemen in evening dress" attending "the lighted doorway" (83; ch.8) the physical frontier formed by the building itself in separating its privileged inhabitants from the populous streets, is supplemented by the symbolic barrier of class; these "fine fellows" (84; ch.8) are sequestering the event away from "ragged boys" within a "mob . . . [that] went round and round like a boiling potful" (84). With pithy jollity, the narrator notes that these men are "helping in a splendid work" (84) – an endorsement made hollow by the work in question being predicated on deception (in the case of Tommy and Shovel) and an emotional trade, where the human necessities of food and warmth are conferred only on the deserving and repentant poor.

Ironically, the most desperate of those poor have deduced that to gain

admittance to the dinner, they must swear remorse for fabricated crimes. Shovel, impressed with the "imagination that made Tommy such an ornament to the house" (79; ch.7) invites his friend to the banquet in return for a role in the drama of iniquity Tommy will weave for them both:

"But what was we copped for, Tommy?" entreated humble Shovel. Tommy asked him if he knew what a butler was, and Shovel remembered, confusedly, that there had been a portrait of a butler in his father's news-sheet. "Well then," said Tommy, inspired by this same source, "there's a room a butler has, and it is a pantry, so you and me we crawled through the winder and we opened the door to the gang. You and me was copped. They caught you below the table and me stabbing the butler." (82; ch.8)

Haphazard and more than a little ludicrous ("How long did I get in quod, then, Tommy?' 'Fourteen days'") the boys' contrived plight accentuates the vanity belying the charity's mission. It encourages immorality and a pretence of delinquency in order to assert its success in retrieving wayward children; at the same time, it gaily ignores the thronging masses of deprived innocents whose basic needs are so woefully unfulfilled that crime (in this instance, fictitious crime) appears to be their only recourse. Indeed, the society-lady who has appointed herself the boys' patroness "had come for a scandal" (86; ch.8). Though careful to qualify that she is the exception ("[m]ost of them were sweet women, fighting bravely for these boys" [86]) Barrie uses Tommy's gift for fantasy to adroitly point up the blistering hypocrisy underlying charitable giving: "So glad I came; I have discovered the most delightful little monster, called Tommy.' The clergyman looked after her, half in sadness, half sarcastically; he was thinking that he had discovered a monster also"

(86).

Meanwhile, Tommy's alter-ego presides "like a little king" (86) in the banqueting hall, having determined that the more outrageously wicked his supposed past, the more handsomely he will be treated by the adults clamouring either to save his soul, or to be entertained with salacious details. This double-instance of the infantilising "little" prefix in the space of two paragraphs lends weight to Jackson's contention that child-savers invested particular importance in the purity of pre-adolescents (the word "portrayed the child as delicate, defenceless and, through the suggestion of softness and malleability, open to impression and influence" [54]). Yet its application here gestures at an insincerity in their elevated rhetoric, suggesting that in their duality as little "monsters" and "kings" children are diabolical, over-indulged and, above all, dehumanised by the adults' convoluted agendas.

Barrie's description of the sumptuousness of the hall amidst London's "meanest streets" establishes a spatial dichotomy between impoverished reality and privileged pretence, which is extended in the text's description of the activity within the space itself. Whilst the "body of the hall was empty . . . its sides were lively with gorging boys" (86); these children are society's scavengers, their relation to the space suffused with the parasitic imagery of a passive, vacant "body" being feasted upon by a "lively" mass of ravenous feeders. The hypocritical fantasy underlying every part of the charity banquet is made manifest in the fact that the literally *central* purpose of the hall - as a space designed to enable the redemption of 'criminal' children - is utterly incidental; the children's focus is, again literally, on

its "side" or ancillary function as a means of satisfying their instinct for survival.

Tommy's importance in alternately embellishing and countering this façade with a fantasy of his own is stressed in his monopolisation of the interior space: he "had a corner to himself" and "was lolling in it" (86), being waited on by his patroness. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard characterises corners as a primitive (91) location, referring to their value as "refuges . . . in which [the dreamer] would like to hide away, like an animal in its hole" (30) and that "it gives him physical pleasure to do so" (91). Yet, in his commandeering of the corner of the hall as a locus of exhibition rather than retreat, the complexities in Tommy's relationship to space are expressed. Contradicting the individual's "primal" instinct to utilise corners as places of shelter where one can be hidden from the world's gaze, Tommy instead turns his corner into a place of spectacle, where his manipulation of reality assumes an unprecedented authority. Catering to his patroness, Tommy's performative monstrosity proves rewarding; the more overblown his "dark character" (Barrie *ST* 87; ch.8) the more he is feted with attention, money and sweetmeats. As his tale of roguery burgeons, Barrie specifies the ease with which his enactment eclipses truth:

Do you wonder that her ladyship believed him? On this point we must fight for our Tommy. You would have believed him. Even Shovel, who knew, between the bites, that it was all whoppers, listened as to his father reading aloud. This was because another boy present half believed it for the moment also . . . "Sure's death, Shovel," he whispered, in awe, "I was thinking I done it, every bit!" (87-8; ch.8)

Tommy's imagination has now attained the authenticity of the paternal voice, capable of convincing listeners as well as speaking into existence a feasible – if temporary – alternative reality in which even Tommy himself believes. Shaken from his fantasy, he monopolises the pulpit after dinner not to publicly repent of his sin, but to indict the hypocrisy of others. The fallacy of charity is exposed by the revelation of Tommy's own falsehood, just as the role he assimilates – that of the criminal child – unmasks the seditiousness of social roleplay in the adults who simultaneously preach and profess moral rectitude.

The banquet in aid of juvenile delinquency stands as a defining moment in the career of Sentimental Tommy, one in which the barriers of realistic street space and social pretension are alike breached by a boy whose imagination carries greater potency than everybody else's 'truth'. However, nowhere is Tommy's susceptibility to fantasy, or his character's disconnection between selfhood and space, more starkly declared than in his mother's deathbed exposition of her personal parallel-reality. Displaced from Thrums following her rejection of her first love, Aaron Latta, in favour of a scandalous marriage to Tommy's father ('Magerful' Tam Sandys), Jean Sandys quickly realises that her new life in London will never supply the emotional or financial fulfilment that she has expected. Loath to vindicate the warnings of the Thrums folk she left behind, she divests herself of the identity connected with her former life as young, single Jean Myles, referring to herself exclusively as 'Mrs Sandys'. She persists in regularly sending fanciful, boasting letters home to Scotland even after the death of her husband, so as to sustain her long-clung-to pretence that the Sandys family enjoys a life of grandeur in the sophisticated south.

So disassociated is the Mrs Sandys of London from the Jean Myles of Thrums that when Tommy happens upon the secret community of Thrums folk in the city, the tales he relates back to his mother, scandalised, tell her own story: "They wouldna tell me what it were she did . . . they said it was ower ugly a story, but she were a bad one, for they stoned her out of Thrums. I dinna know where she is now, but she were stoned out of Thrums!" (69; ch.6). Oblivious to his mother's dual-identity, Tommy's part in relaying the reductive, one-sided history of Jean Myles is saturated with dramatic irony. On a later occasion, he recites to her verbatim Aaron Latta's response to any mention of Jean Myles: "'Yes, they telled him,' Tommy replied, 'and he said a queer thing; he said, Jean Myles is dead, I was at her coffining . . . I wonder what he means, mother?'" (75; ch.7). Her former identity subsumed by marriage, the metaphorical death of Jean to which the estranged Latta refers foreshadows his involvement in her actual "coffining" some years later.

It is after dispatching her last letter to Thrums, begging her former lover to take care of her soon-to-be-orphaned children, that Barrie reveals something of what we can eventually expect for Tommy: "Mrs Sandys took Tommy into bed with her, and while Elspeth slept told him the story of her life . . . Tommy never recalled his mother's story without seeming, through the darkness in which it was told, to hear Elspeth's peaceful breathing and the angry tap tap on the wall" (105; ch.10). On the most literal level, this encounter allows Mrs Sandys to provide for her son a truthful account of how her twin personae of Jean Myles 'died' with the event of her marriage and her removal from Thrums: "'A carriage had been ordered for nine o'clock to take us to Tilliedrum, where we should get the train to London . . . they

had got out the hearse. It was the hearse they had brought to the door instead of a carriage." (114; ch.10).

This verbal elucidation of his mother's mythology serves as a cautionary tale for Tommy. Equally, Mrs Sandys' confession of her 'shame' at the Cuttle Well is one of the first examples in the novels which demonstrates the interpretative utility of non-verbal storytelling in the interactions between domestic and 'fantasy' worlds. With Thrums cultivated as a fairy-tale idyll both in Tommy's tales to his fellow street children and in the narrator's own language, the significance of the Den and its associated loci of the Cuttle Well and Double Dykes is threaded anecdotally through the London-based chapters of *Sentimental Tommy*. Long before Tommy encounters it in person, the reader is therefore primed for its status as a place embedded with the stories of the community by which it is surrounded. Sunk into a secluded, wooded glade bordered by a burn, it leads to the village's "trysting-place" (66; ch.6), and although figured in whimsical phrasing ("it is only a spring in the bottom of a basinful of water, where it makes about as much stir in the world as a minnow jumping at a fly" [67; ch.6]) the Cuttle Well's spatial dynamics betray something of the darkness readable in Mrs. Sandys' reticence about her role in its history: "The well is sacred to the memory of first love. You may walk from it to the round cemetery in ten minutes. It is a common walk for those who go back" (67).

A clandestine circuit of courtship and death, the "common walk" formed between the places where Thrums residents variously experience passion and heartbreak represents both a geographical and emotional contiguity between those very different human states. This final confession of Mrs Sandys in her

claustrophobic London living quarters, juxtaposed with the topological symbolism of the places in her story, emphasises that to embark upon the search for love is to make oneself vulnerable to misfortune. It sets in motion an inexorable journey towards, if not always literal bereavement, the sacrifice of something intrinsic to the innocence possessed before adult relationships – a catastrophic journey-cycle which is repeated in the next generation romance of her son, Tommy, and Grizel. The averred commonality of this route between the Cuttle Well and Thrums' cemetery suggests that the traveller's passage between them is inevitable; loss, adjacent to love, is an inevitable part of loving. Yet the "round" aspect of the graveyard suggests that the process need not be a linear trajectory towards tragedy. After loss, something of the self which pre-existed love is retrievable.

When, upon hearing his mother's tale, he is confronted for the first time with an account of this genetic predisposition to tragedy, Tommy is beseeched by Mrs Sandys to "[w]atch ower your little sister . . . and when the time comes that a man wants her – if he be magerful, tell her my story at once" (117: ch.10). Tucked close beside his mother, Barrie cultivates a space for Tommy that is both universal and specific. Returning to his point of origins, lulled by his mother's voice and "peaceful breathing" in the dark, the little boy seems to re-enter the womb, a space where our most primal and inviolable relationship is formed. This space is, however, encroached upon by the physical closeness of their neighbours. In Bachelard's terms, the imaginative, communicative impulse to dream, reminisce and share stories is hindered by an unhealthily cramped environment. Any insight gleaned by Tommy into his own destiny is disrupted by the "angry tap-tap on the wall" (105;

ch.10) compromising his ability to understand the stories of himself that his mother is indirectly passing down to him. Indeed, the significance of this incident in the tragic predestination of Sentimental Tommy emerges fully only in *Tommy and Grizel*, when Tommy finally registers how woefully 'mis-placed' in life he truly is:

What did he hear? He was a child again, in miserable lodgings, and it was some time in the middle of the night, and what he heard . . . was his mother coughing away her life . . . There was an angry knock, knock, knock, knock, from somewhere near, and he crept out of bed to tell his mother that the people through the wall were complaining because she would not die more quietly, but when he reached her bed it was not his mother he saw lying there, but himself, aged twenty-four, or thereabouts . . . Did he hear anything else? I think he heard his wings slipping to the floor.  
(TG 294; ch.24)

The adult Tommy experiences this epiphany at Elspeth's Thrums wedding reception, after her new husband Gemmell makes the afore-mentioned diagnosis of a plant in full flourish as blooming "prematurely because [it is] diseased" (293: ch.24). The fates of Tommy and the plant (similarly to the shared destinies of Tommy and Reddy) are symbolically intertwined thereafter, with Gemmell remarking to Grizel that a "fellow feeling" exists between the two (323; ch.26). The event of Tommy's blossoming is identified by the text and by Tommy himself as his magnificent capacity for creating spurious versions of himself, something he connects in his memory with the narratives of selfhood told to him by his dying mother. Similarly, the "disease" inherent in such precocity can be read as his corresponding failure to harness this creative power, or the "wings" that his sentimentality has bestowed upon him.

As much as the adult Tommy's successful London writing career is predicated on his talent for storytelling, he has inherited from his mother an unwillingness to distinguish fantasy from reality; an inability to know the true, rather than constructed, essence of his own character which is first apparent in the way he convinces himself of the truth of his criminal past at the charity banquet. Consequently, his publications ("Sandys on Woman", and a follow-up book on unrequited love) are the works of a fictional Tommy, products of an imagined life which are taken to be autobiographical volumes. Similarly, the creative power of the infant Tommy, honed in the oppressive streets of London and nurtured as a variety of fictional entities (Captain Stroke or Bonnie Prince Charlie) in the mysterious green spaces of Thrums, goes unchecked as he transitions from boy to man. His sentimental "wings" – unclipped - yield enormous artistic potential. Yet, through a combination of heredity and a city upbringing that constricts the performative exorcism of dream lives through play, the adult Tommy's inhabitation of alternative selves proves devastating for him, and for Grizel who – in the most literal sense – believes in him. Events in *Sentimental Tommy* thereafter build momentum towards his removal to Scotland with Elspeth; it is in the Thrums sections of both novels that the relationship between domestic space, selfhood and storytelling is most tellingly developed.

## 2.2 Symbols of Storytelling and The Tommy Myth

The death of Tommy's mother precipitates the uprooting of the Sandys children from their suffocating London environment, with Jean Myles' former lover spiriting

them off to her original home: the weaving community of Thrums. As the fictitious counterpart of Barrie's hometown of Kirriemuir, Thrums represents for Tommy's – and indeed Barrie's - London audience something of a magical anachronism. A skill demanding intricate craftsmanship honed over generations, weaving had, in late nineteenth-century Scotland, yet to surrender to the mass industrialisation which had begun its interminable march north in densely-populated English cities.

In the *Tommy* novels, the prominence of Aaron Latta's character revivifies the important social relationship between the Scottish weaving tradition and rural communities sustained by the profession for several generations. His romantic history with Jean, coupled with his adoption of Tommy and Elspeth, asserts anew the strength of the bond formed in such communities between industry and domesticity. The very real commodity of weaving is, in the village of Thrums and its literary and factual predecessors, inextricable from a collection of courtship rituals, conversation and communal living – something that is epitomised by the ubiquity of the Sleeping Beauty trope across nineteenth-century culture.<sup>54</sup> In the Grimm/Taylor version of the popular tale,<sup>55</sup> Briar Rose's curse as decreed by a malignant fairy is to

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<sup>54</sup> In discussion of Barrie's literary peer and occasional correspondent D.H. Lawrence, Farr notes a preoccupation across his work with "the tale (and central image) of Sleeping Beauty from the Grimms' story 'Briar Rose'" (197). She asserts that it is "doubtless" that Lawrence's interest in the tale is borne of the predominance of Sleeping Beauty imagery across Victorian artistic culture, both poetic and visual – "with which . . . Lawrence was familiar." We may surmise that, given each man's utterances of creative empathy for the other (in 1910, Lawrence referred Jessie Chambers to the *Tommy* novels as a cypher for expressing his own inability to love her fully [Worthen 264-5], whilst in the 1920s Barrie wrote of Lawrence that "[t]here are poetry and power in him as in few" [Meynell 200]) Barrie was aware of – if not as directly influenced by – the Sleeping Beauty imagery described by Farr.

<sup>55</sup> More than a decade after their publication in Germany, Edgar Taylor's translated editions of a selection of the Grimms' *Kinder und Hausmärchen* made their way into British nurseries with "immediate success . . . [f]rom that time on, there have been hundreds if not thousands of translations of the Grimms' tales in English" (Zipes *Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 867)

die by piercing her finger upon a spindle before she turns sixteen. Although the curse is ameliorated by the intervention of a benevolent fairy, the princess may be saved from eternal sleep only upon receiving true love's kiss. The curse and its salvaging blessing are both delivered at the feast celebrating Brier Rose's birth, at which the king's "relatives, friends and acquaintances" (Grimm 696) are all present; equally, the entire kingdom falls under the enchantment casting Brier Rose into impenetrable slumber. This short but iconic story would have exemplified for more general, increasingly literate late-Victorian audiences of all ages the traditional association between spinning and the fundamentally shared rhythms of domestic existence: celebration, commiseration, tragedy, romance, coming-of-age and – crucially - the dictation of individual destinies.

These same associations are manifested in Barrie's *Thrums*, although with a more basically logistical explanation; namely, the lack of dedicated working premises. As a cottage industry, weaving collapsed the distinction between domestic and public space (Holloway 16) consequently problematising the traditionally gender-driven delineation of public and private spheres. Barrie's introduction to Aaron Latta not only makes this liminality explicit, but instils within his audience an impression of weaving's broader symbolic significance in the art of storytelling:

When the smith opened the door of Aaron's house he let out a draught of hot air that was glad to be gone from the warper's restless home. The usual hallan, or passage, divided the but from the ben, and in the ben a great revolving thing, the warping-mill, half filled the room. Between it and a pile of webs that obscured the light, a little silent man was sitting on a box

turning a handle . . . he had the tattered, dishonoured beard of black and white that comes to none until the glory of his life is gone (*ST* 128; ch.11 )

The warping-mill's dominant position, "half-filling" the ben – customarily the inner, and more personal of only two rooms in traditional Scottish 'but'n'ben' cottages - speaks of its magnitude as part of the intrinsic functioning of domestic life. Yet Barrie hints at the dysfunction rooted in this particular house with the observation that the air "was glad to be gone" from the "restless home", implying not merely Aaron's physical seclusion in a building which has seen little movement for a substantial period of time, but that an internal contradiction – perhaps something rather discomfiting - consists in a man whose internal space is both restless and subdued. This dysfunction is evidenced in the conclusion of the passage as Aaron is gradually revealed as a husk of a person, his comparative youth ("barely five and thirty") belied by his traumatised appearance ("as if he had been caught for ever in a storm"). Thanks to Jean Sandys' deathbed revelation of her 'shame' previously in the novel, the reader is already somewhat acquainted with the possible reasons for Aaron's deterioration – namely, heartbreak compounded with the knowledge that he has been emasculated in his failure to challenge Tam Sandys for Jean's hand in marriage. However, the blacksmith's entry into Aaron's home precipitates the continued telling of that particular story, an activity which Barrie explicitly twins with the act of weaving itself:

"Aaron," [the smith] said awkwardly, "do you mind Jean Myles?"  
The warper did not for a moment take his eyes off a contrivance with pirns in it that was climbing up and down the whirring mill.

"She's dead," he answered.

"She's dying," said the smith.

A thread broke, and Aaron had to rise to mend it.

"Stop the mill and listen," Auchterlonie begged him, but the warper returned to his seat and the mill again revolved. (128; Ch.11)

The very act of weaving is a historically recognised allegorical conceit across fictional genres. Warner points to the classical tripartite paradigm of the Fates (15) which aligns the three mythical sisters with the temporal states of past, present and future. Just as each woman assumes her part in building a narrative of individual destinies on earth, she takes her part too in the literal process of constructing life's tapestry. Weaving is thus symbolically linked with the chronological and narrative ordering characterised by the art of storytelling. Similarly, Rowe offers a compelling history of the intertextual resonances of the act of weaving. Charting the practice's etymological progress from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* - in which tapestry is figured as an alternative vessel of communication for voiceless, wronged women<sup>56</sup> - right through to the later European fairy-tale tradition of figuratively "spinning a yarn" - in which oral dissemination of folk wisdom or legends invariably accompanied domestic gatherings - Rowe demonstrates how the conflation of literal and metaphorical spinning became a familiar connotatively-loaded literary device in texts of the nineteenth-century. Speaking at this point about French farming family culture of the late 1800s, Rowe observes:

The *veillées* in some parts of France became . . . often a gathering exclusively of women with their marriageable daughters, in which both generations

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<sup>56</sup> For greater detail on this, see Chapter Six.

carded wool, spun, knitted, or stitched, thus enacting the age-old female rituals . . . [w]ithin the shared esprit of these late-evening communes, they also fulfilled their role as transmitters of culture through the vehicle of "old tales" (63).

The Thrums sections of both *Tommy* novels find clear parallels with the *veillée* customs outlined here. Tommy and Grizel are each recipients of the species of morally-weighted "old-tales" Rowe discusses in her essay. The former is counselled by his mother to learn from her disgrace, and to in turn teach his younger sister (*ST* 116; ch.10), whilst Grizel learns from the anecdotes of her neighbours that she has inherited from her own mother an undesirable legacy which must be overcome in order to be accepted in the village (125-6; ch.11). As with the *veillée*, whilst Thrums' weaving industry forms a highly practical backbone to socialisation in its melding of public and domestic territories, its symbolic weight in the literary canon means that its additional interpretative properties should not be overlooked. The domestic space of the weaver's cottage is unmistakably a locus in which personal mythologies are recycled and reaffirmed through the compatible pastimes of spinning and storytelling.

Indeed, Barrie stresses this artistic confluence by positioning Latta at the loom for the duration of the blacksmith's reading of Jean's letter. Aaron's reluctance to revisit his affecting history, even through indirect conversation, is countered by his continued absorption in his work: as long as the "monotonous whirr of the mill" (130; ch.11) is heard, so Jean Myles continues to recite her story in the missive addressed to him. Warner, too, stresses an essential sympathy between the

customs: "Spinning a tale, weaving a plot: the metaphors illuminate the relation; while the structure of fairy stories, with their repetitions, reprises, elaboration and minutiae, replicates . . . the making of textiles from the wool or the flax to the finished bolt of cloth" (23). Storytelling and weaving – stories and Thrums - are thus, by Barrie and by literary tradition, unequivocally aligned.

Admittedly, Latta's humble but'n'ben seems an unlikely epicentre for the energetic, and at times engulfing, species of fantasising that drive the characters and set-pieces of the *Tommy* novels; however, by deconstructing portrayals of the space across both texts, it assumes a consistent geographical significance equalled only by Grizel's home at Double Dykes. An extensive description of the cottage in Chapter Twelve of *Sentimental Tommy* recalls, once again, the precision of interior appearance that might more commonly be associated with stage directions:

The chief pieces of furniture were a dresser, a corner-cupboard with diamond panes, two tables, one of which stood beneath the other, but would have to come out if Aaron tried to bake, and a bed with a door. These two did not know it, but this room was full of memories of Jean Myles. The corner cupboard had been bought by Aaron at a roup because she had said she would like to have one; it was she who had chosen the six cups and saucers with the blue spots on them . . . One day he had opened the door of the bird-cage, which still stood in the window, and let the yellow yite go. Many things were where no woman would have left them: clothes on the floor with the nail they had torn from the wall; on a chair a tin basin, soapy water and a flannel rag in it; horn spoons with whistles at the end of them were anywhere – on the mantelpiece, beneath the bed; there were drawers that could not be opened because their handles were inside. Perhaps the windows were closed hopelessly also, but this must be left doubtful; no one had ever tried to open them (Barrie *ST* 136-7; ch.12).

Presented to its audience through the eyes of two displaced and bereaved children, Latta's home materialises as a palace of eccentric treasures. They "thrill" and "exult

over" the peculiarities of his crowded kitchen, or romanticise the structural oddity of the rafters comprising the home's sole division between upper and lower storeys (136). In Bachelard's terms, the cottage certainly offers the complexity of composition, conducive to creativity, which has been so lacking in the children's London houses, and indeed the garret in which Tommy and Elspeth will eventually sleep is brought to mind in Bachelard's elegiac description of "the attic room" in which the dreamer "knows instinctively that this space identified with his solitude is creative" (10).

Alongside its poetic quirks, the cottage contains enough reassuringly traditional aspects to persuade the children of its solidity as the place in which their future is now rooted. Alston, discussing the "idyllic literary cliché" (16) of 'home' in the nineteenth century, could in fact be describing Latta's but'n'ben when she references the "hams hanging up, beamed ceilings, log fires and Welsh dressers" which commonly contribute to a child's conception of the ideal home-space.<sup>57</sup> Arguing that such ideals are merely assimilated representations of a domestic utopia in which adults possess ultimate control, Alston notes that:

[A]dult settings are the detailed descriptions and illustrations of homes that are presented in children's fiction: the tidy dresser, the tablecloth, the beamed ceilings; the signs of adult domesticity that border (engulf) the child protagonist who sits with their mess in the midst of adult order; in essence, the adult settings are made up of those nostalgic "interior architectures" referred to earlier. It would be useful to analyse how many of these domestic details escape the notice of the child reader, to consider if

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<sup>57</sup> Compare Alston's analysis with Barrie's earlier description of Aaron Latta's kitchen, in which there was "no commonplace ceiling, the couples, or rafters, being covered with the loose flooring of a romantic garret, and in the rafters were several great hooks, from one of which hung a ham" and amongst "the chief pieces of furniture [was] a dresser" (*ST* 136; ch.12).

they are just taken for granted as irrelevant and are therefore naturalised. Yet, whether noticed in a conscious fashion or not, these settings are important since they lay the foundations of a domestic ideal (18-19).

Whilst Barrie certainly labours the appearance of these "nostalgic interior architectures" in the but'n'ben, interestingly the child with its "mess in the midst of adult order" is neither Tommy nor Elspeth but is, in fact, Aaron himself. Upon closer inspection, this idealised home, childless until their arrival, exists in a duality of neatness and disarray. Embodying both ordering adult and chaotic child influences, as well as expressing Aaron's flawed attempts to fulfil both feminine and masculine roles, the interior dynamics of the cottage signify an obstruction within the weaver's sense of personal wholeness. Barrie elicits an emotional investment from his reader by opening the increasingly discordant description of Latta's cottage with a series of focalised observations from the orphaned children; the excited conclusions formed by Tommy and Elspeth about the magical quality of Latta's home are exposed as being a result of their necessarily partial perspective. In a narratorial aside that separates their feelings from the more objective 'reality', it is noted that, "[t]hese two did not know it, but the room was full of memories of Jean Myles" (Barrie *ST* 136; ch.12). Her own children, surrounded by the essence of their mother, are spectacularly ignorant of this domestic space's unfulfilled purpose. Even when submerged in the remnants of her old life, the children are oblivious to the questions embedded in the very textures of the cottage: where is the woman whose identity permeates its every corner, and what is the nature of their own complex relationship to this space?

In this light, Latta's "idealised" home assumes a different flavour. The corner cupboard, crockery, and "a razor-strop, now hard as an iron" (136) stand in dejected tribute to a wife who never crossed the threshold. Domestic ordering, where any exists, sits on a sliding scale of idiosyncrasy to chaos ("clothes on the floor with the nail they had torn from the wall; on a chair a tin basin, soapy water and a flannel rag in it; horn spoons . . . *anywhere*" [my italics]), whilst the defective nature of much of the furniture speaks not only of Aaron's lack of housekeeping *nous*, but to a deeper symbolic turmoil. In the stacked tables, "one of which . . . would have to come out if Aaron tried to bake" (136) and the "drawers that could not be opened because their handles were inside" (137), we may detect an obviously Freudian undercurrent of unhealthily repressed impulses or emotions (such repression being, after all, the reason for Aaron's bachelorhood).

More specifically, however, the language of drawers which is introduced in this excerpt proves to be a resurfacing motif within Barrie's fiction. As I shall discuss in Chapter Four of this thesis, the opening description of Mrs Darling in *Peter Pan* contains the observation that she declines Bloomsbury dinner party invitations, "*preferring when the children are in bed to sit beside them tidying up their minds, just as if they were drawers*" (PP 89), whilst the shadow of Peter himself is shown to be confined in a drawer of the nursery dresser. In these later examples, Barrie's awareness of the relationship between furniture of the home and individual psychology is clearly articulated. Bachelard's theory endorses this correlation, noting that: "Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life . . . Like

us, through us and for us, they have a quality of intimacy" (78).

Returning to Latta's cottage, the stacked tables which obscure the oven and the drawers which defy being opened are, therefore, conspicuous symbols of his deeply internalised devastation. The empty bird-cage which "still stood in the window" (Barrie *ST* 137; ch.12) is, furthermore, readable as a potent spatial emblem simultaneously of liberation and absence; in freeing the bird from its prison (an act he equates with losing Tommy's mother to Magerful Tam), Aaron believes he is bestowing upon it the salvation of a future beyond his own admittedly narrow horizons. Yet the cage remains on the window sill, a relic both of his personal loss and his continuing psychological incarceration. Tellingly, later in the paragraph, Barrie refers to the cottage windows as being, like the drawers, "closed hopelessly also, but this must be left doubtful; no one had ever tried to open them" (137).

Not only does this beg the rather sinister question of where the freed bird may have ended up, but the repeated allusion to the windows of the home recalls the bond established earlier in the novel when Tommy's meetings with Reddy revolved around her being "on the outlook for him at the window" whereupon he would entertain her with "his tales of Thrums" (28; ch.3). In that instance, as well as in later examples at Double Dykes, the Darling nursery and numerous other domestic spaces across the works discussed in this thesis, the window acts as a portal connecting the oppositional realms of delimited, interior, realistic home-environments and the unshackled sweep of imaginative fantasy-lands.

Moreover, the window for Barrie harbours an innate property of communication. Frequently, it is through a window that his characters glean

important non-verbal insights about themselves or others. For Barrie, the window – at once frontier and conduit between interior and exterior space - is both the means through which individual characters' stories can be shared and carried *beyond* the hearth, and a physical location that invites the overt act of storytelling; the crossing of one realm into another. In the case of Aaron Latta, the windows of his cottage are not only closed, they have never been opened. On both literal and figurative levels, the unopened windows represent a rejection of the reinvention central to the art of storytelling, and a shutting out of Thrums community life.

Aaron's self-imposed, timeless quarantine from the community beyond his home threshold is given another dimension when we again interpolate aspects of Thrums' 'fantasy realm' geography into the narrative of this domestic world. His historical relationship with Tommy's mother situates Latta on the courtship path passing by the Cuttle Well, yet upon her rebuff he gives up all claim to a fulfilled romantic life, and hews the story of his humiliation into the "Shoaging Stone" (thus named because "it could be rocked like a cradle, and on it lovers used to cut their names" [68; ch.6]). Carving the legend of his bachelorhood into the stone constitutes Aaron's statement of the finality of his fate - something which is reflected in the 'closed' nature of his cottage. Yet by the time of Tommy and Elspeth's arrival in Thrums:

The stone was no longer at the Cuttle Well. As the easiest way of obliterating the words, the minister had ordered it to be broken, and of the pieces another mason had made stands for watches, one of which was now in Thrums Street (68).

In his youth, Aaron engraves the physical landscape of the Den with an admission of his depleted identity (he writes that the stone marks the burial of his "manhood" [68]). That an account of how he "VIOLATED THE FEELINGS OF SEX ON THIS SPOT" (68) is carved into a stone so-called for its resemblance to a baby's cradle is no coincidence; Aaron's emasculation at the hands of Tommy's father in this very space corrupts the Shoaging Stone's symbolic position in the Thrums' mythic courtship cycle. Aaron's relationship with Jean Myles should have resulted in their baby, yet – thanks to a combination of Magerful Tam's intervention and his own cowardice – Aaron is deprived the chance of fatherhood and Tommy, a very different child, is born. The Shoaging Stone is destroyed in a literal eradication of the painful memories it evokes; however, Aaron's change of profession ("Aaron Latta ain't a mason now,' Tommy rattled on, 'he is a warper'"[68]) alongside the Stone's reincarnation, questions whether the adult Latta's sadness is truly an inevitability which is 'set in stone.' Rather, as with the bird who was released from its cage only to find itself potentially still trapped in the cottage itself, Aaron – though in effect freed from his attachment to Tommy's mother – in choosing to be perpetually confined within a home saturated with her memory condemns himself to an eternal re-weaving of the story which defines his life.

Within his cottage, the interior landscape is simultaneously representative of order and chaos, industry and inertia, authority and vulnerability, masculine and feminine energies. Aaron's aspirations to a traditionally paternal identity are both affirmed in Barrie's placement of him as the weaver whose loom dominates his living-space, and desecrated in the fact that this same living-space bears

overwhelming witness to the woman he lost and the familial story that languishes unfinished. Although the oblivious Tommy draws upon his own powers of mythmaking in an attempt to rebalance the sense of lack in Aaron's cottage (feeding Elspeth bedtime stories that their mother is with them in their garret room and that, "if yer cries, she'll see as we're terrible unhappy, and that will make her unhappy too"[149; ch.12]) it is not until the sequel novel that this particular domestic narrative is lent the façade of true completion.

Suggestively naming the chapter of Tommy's return to Thrums as a triumphant professional writer as, "The Tommy Myth" (*TG* 55; ch.5) in the second novel, *Tommy and Grizel*, Barrie frames this retelling of the Sandys siblings' entrance into Latta's cottage as an overt fiction. It is revealed that Aaron has converted the room housing his mill into a parlour bedroom for Elspeth during her stay – "the warping mill was gone, everything that had been there was gone" (*TG* 56; ch.5) – with Tommy resuming his garret. Though no mention is made of the kitchen - that part of the house described in great detail in the extracts above - the total excavation of one half of the cottage implies that Latta has attempted both domestic and personal rejuvenation since his last appearance "in the book of Tommy's boyhood" (55). More voluble in this extract than we have seen him through much of that preceding novel, Aaron scornfully tells Elspeth of the "'leddies that come here in their carriages to see the house where Thomas Sandys [now a published author] was born'" (57; ch.5):

"But, Aaron, he was born in London!"

"They think he was born in this house," Aaron replied doggedly, "and it's no

for me to cheapen him . . . I never was very fond o' him, but I winna cheapen Jean Myles' bairn, and when they chap at my door and say they would like to see the room Thomas Sandys was born in I let them see the best room I have. So that's how he laid hands on your parlour, Elspeth. Afore I can get rid o' them they gie a squeak and cry, 'Was that Thomas Sandys' bed?' and I says it was. That's him taking the very bed frae you, Elspeth."

"You might have at least shown them his bed in the garret," she said.

"It's a shilpit bit thing," he answered, "and I winna cheapen him."(57; ch.5)

Aaron's part in "the Tommy myth" attests to the interdependence of domestic space and stories of selfhood. Throughout his adult life, the cottage had become a physical manifestation of an identity fractured by loss; yet, in physically renovating at least part of the house Latta realises that it is possible to amend its – and his own – history. Whilst indulging Tommy's literary following in their efforts to discover more about the famous author, Aaron finds himself delivering a rescripted biography - one in which *this* is the house of Tommy's birth, wherein presumably, Aaron presides as his father. His mythologising serves as a personal exorcism, with the psychological reorganisation of the cottage as part of a series of Tommy's spatial conquests (the parlour room, the bed, the chair and the piano all become, artificially, Tommy's own) allowing Aaron to live the story he once envisioned. The reality of Jean Myles' absence, so acutely felt in the cottage's original state, is here replaced with the fiction of Tommy's palpable presence. The story of a lost lover which dominated Latta's very concept of self is pointedly substituted for a story in which he is father to her children and acquires the family he always wanted.

Importantly, this 'righting' of the Latta/Myles/Sandys saga is nevertheless an extravagant work of fantasy. As readers, we should normalise it no more than

the alternative futures offered to the characters of *Dear Brutus* as they cross from Lob's stately home into the neighbouring magical wood. Aaron conceives of his parallel life within an emphatically realistic domestic context, whilst, for the Darling children or Mary Rose, surreal geographical transitions mark the plot's movement into fantasy. Critically, however, Aaron is not the true author of his own illusion. As the chapter hints, it is Tommy – the consummate fantasist penning fictions for a living – around whom the myth revolves, and within whom the creative energy necessary for transforming real settings into imaginary worlds, consists.

Furthermore, if we take a moment to re-assess that same energy which is perceived as belonging exclusively to the *Tommy* novels' titular character, a discomfiting disparity emerges. To borrow the terminology of Gilbert and Gubar, a foundational and "all-pervasive" belief of Victorian culture was, "the patriarchal notion that a writer 'fathers' his text just as God fathered the world . . . so much so that, as Edward Said has shown, the metaphor is built into the very word *author*, with which writer, deity, and *pater familias* are identified" (4). Their quotation of Said's etymological exploration of the word "author" demonstrates the inextricability of the written word from concepts of masculinity, exclusivity, ownership and paternity.

Tommy's transition from the traditionally feminine (and historically denigrated<sup>58</sup>) oral form of storytelling as a child, to the commitment of words to a

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<sup>58</sup> The femininisation and consequent denigration of the oral storytelling tradition is inextricable from historical concerns of class, education, and misogyny: accounts dating from the seventeenth-century onwards indicate that female tale tellers were generally found amongst the working women of the household (Warner 23-4) in whose "authentic, artisan" voices (23) popular stories would be disseminated to the children in their care. The alignment of women and the oral tradition is likely

page in his adult life therefore becomes doubly problematic. Returning to Aaron's home as a successful, professional adult writer makes Tommy "the author/father" and additionally the "owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes and events . . . he has both incarnated in black and white and 'bound' in cloth or leather" (7). In the 'authorial' (or written) tradition, feminine power is, by definition of the word 'author', patronised and constricted. Equally, the child Tommy's increasing monopolisation of orally-disseminated stories usurps and displaces a conventionally feminine creative space both culturally in the canon, and physically at the hearth or in the home. Using the textual examples in this chapter readers can already attest to Barrie's cultivation of Tommy Sandys as a character who inflates his storytelling to overpowering extremes – in part, as I have argued, as a result of being deprived at a young age of his mother and the explicative, regulatory wisdom of her maternal voice. In a larger sense which speaks to the authorial canon discussed by Gilbert and Gubar, however, Barrie uses the *Tommy* novels to experiment with a thematic tension which becomes increasingly apparent as his career progresses.

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rooted in their centuries of exclusion from educational institutions enabling them to 'author' texts in written form. Warner further traces the historical conflation of oral storytelling, and the relationship established between 'good' womanhood and silence. She notes that; "Christian tradition held the virtues of silence, obedience and discretion as especially, even essentially, feminine, but this view spread far wider than the circle of the devout. The Silent Woman was an accepted ideal . . . 'Silence is golden' can be found foreshadowed in the pages of Aristotle" (29). The inverse association also holds true in literary tradition. Warner observes that, from connotations of garrulousness (30) to "the seduction of women's talk" (31), the "interdiction on female speech tolls down the years [as] a consistent refrain of misogyny that has acquired independent life" (30). Finally, she explains that although women's talk, or "'gossip" was perceived to be a leading element in woman's folly, and in the sex's propensity to foment riot", its meaning evolves throughout years and contexts, to "illuminate the influential part of women in communicating through informal and unofficial networks, in contributing to varieties of storytelling, and in passing on their experience in narrative" (33).

At the level of plotting, Tommy's verbose, hyper-descriptive authoring drowns out the non-verbal, non-focalised story of his fellow primary protagonist (and arguably Barrie's original main focus) Grizel.<sup>59</sup> At a thematic level, their relationship can be interpreted as a microcosm of Barrie's perspective upon a masculinised literary tradition in which he is, as a white male middle-class author, unavoidably, complicit. Under this reading, the *Tommy* novels become the authorial texts espousing a particular set of values and narrating a particular story of male heroic tragedy; yet, as I will argue, there exists beneath this a counter-narrative which not only confronts the power of the textualised masculine canon as a medium for storytelling, but which demonstrates Barrie's investment in the female teller and her creative legitimacy.

In the *Tommy* novels can be perceived the complicated, subtle germ of Barrie's interest in a non-explicit storytelling which defies or undermines the surface narrative of his texts; a storytelling of feminine origin and agency, rooted in the symbolic and phenomenological richness of the domestic space. In *Peter Pan*, *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose*, Barrie's investment in the narrative power of the home space becomes progressively more pronounced. Yet, with female progenitive agency in the *Tommy* novels clearly inhibited by Tommy's creative drive to "father" his own works, we are obliged to reassess the ways in which Barrie subverts the dominance of his supposed hero; beginning with his writing of a character whose need to "play the mother" (*TG* 228; ch.19) is so defining an aspect of her selfhood.

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<sup>59</sup> See following chapter, in which Ormond argues for Grizel being the primary character in these novels in Barrie's earlier drafts and notes.

### Chapter Three - Grizel

Both Ormond and Nash allude to significant alterations made by Barrie between the notes and manuscript version of *Sentimental Tommy* and the edition first published in 1896. Nash points out that the protracted genesis of the novel (originally slated for serialisation in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1893 [Nash *Phenomenally Slow Producer* 47]) was further delayed by, "other ideas in the notebooks (titles like 'The Illegitimate Child' and 'The Painted Lady' that would eventually be incorporated into *Sentimental Tommy*) which jostled for dominance in the author's mind" (46).

Ormond elaborates upon this observation, contending that Barrie's drafting revisions - as well as removing large portions of "explanatory material" (Ormond *Scottish Writers* 67) which provide context for both characters and plot-points - <sup>60</sup> originally hint at a rather different direction for the novel:

Ideas for Tommy were in Barrie's mind at least as early as the autumn of 1890, when he jotted down a number of apparently isolated phrases in a notebook: "Thrums in London", "Magerful = masterful", "The Double Dykes" . . . [b]y the end of the notebook, plans for the "Sentimentalist" novel are becoming confused with another, and older, scheme first taken up in 1888, and described as "The Illegitimate Child". The illegitimate girl, although delightful, is cursed with hereditary sexual impulses, too strong to be denied . . . The illegitimate child was eventually associated with another projected character, the alcoholic Painted Lady, who is sometimes the illegitimate girl herself, and sometimes her mother (56-7).

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<sup>60</sup> Ormond notes that in earlier drafts, Barrie wrote about the Painted Lady's relationship with Grizel's father and supplied "details . . . of her Thrums lovers" (67). Furthermore, she argues that the time which has elapsed for Tommy between the two books avoids clarification of the intervening events. After the ending of *Sentimental Tommy* sees its protagonist dismissed to work as a herdbooy, "when the story is taken up again in *Tommy and Grizel*, [Tommy] has arrived in London. The reader is left to construct his own picture of the effect of the bothie on the sensitive hero"(70). The removal of such material complicates the reader's ability to fully comprehend, and therefore empathise with, the behaviours and motivations of difficult characters like Tommy, and Grizel's mother.

Three things can be gleaned from Barrie's notebook. Firstly, the apparently isolated phrases" of his research are each individually concerned with place. "Thrums in London" is an obvious allusion to the community of Scots in Thrums Street, as well as the topographical makeup of the streets themselves. Similarly, the wordplay of "Magerful = Masterful" refers to the Thrums idiolect which follows Tam and Jean Sandys down to London (where his mastery continues). Both of these notes are, as such, linked to particular concepts of 'place'; whether as a physical location in the city, or through characters' nostalgic language. Finally "The Double Dykes" is, throughout both novels, a location of deep meaning to a variety of characters. It functions as the home of a deceased farmer to whom Tommy's mother writes about her fantasy life (provoking Grizel's redirection of her letters to Aaron Latta) as well as the home of the Painted Lady, Grizel and, for a short period, Tommy himself. Secondly, the notebook shows that Barrie had originally conceived of *Sentimental Tommy* as a novel wherein a woman's sexual identity was a driving aspect of its plot; and finally, it suggests that this same protagonist's involvement in the cycle of maternal heredity was so significant that mother and daughter identities became (in the novels' early stages) conflated. Barrie's preoccupation with the "illegitimate girl herself, and sometimes her mother," anticipates even the mention of Tommy in his notes by two years.

Furthermore, Ormond alleges that in the manuscript draft, "Reddy is Grizel, and the over-dressed woman with her is the Painted Lady. When Elspeth and Tommy meet Grizel in Thrums, she shows them the penny with a hole which Tommy gave to her in London" (63-4). Despite the fact that the roles of Grizel and

her mother had been pared back – limiting their interaction with the Sandys family to Thrums scenes alone - by the time of *Sentimental Tommy's* publication,<sup>61</sup> Barrie's interest in the relationship between an unconventional female protagonist and her domestic environment persists in the finalised novel, and is extended in its sequel. When Barrie's emphasis upon "The Double Dykes" in his 1890 notebook is yoked to his fascination with female illegitimacy (stemming from notes made in 1888), one cannot fail to acknowledge that the *Tommy* novels labour an indelible association between these same concepts. Double Dykes functions as the domestic setting for accounts of unsettling female experience that are suppressed, marginalised or ridiculed within the text's main dialogue and narration. Although superficially the bildungsroman of a boy, therefore, both *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* strongly suggest Barrie's commitment to the exposition of an atypically sympathetic female character forced to use the landscape of home as a medium for telling her own story.

From their first appearance in *Sentimental Tommy*, Grizel, her mother and the spaces with which they are associated are lent a patina of metafictionality.

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<sup>61</sup> Ormond notes that, "Barrie must have decided that the coincidence was too improbable, or that Reddy must be a separate imaginative creation" (64). Grizel-as-Reddy becomes, in the final version, yet another example of Tommy's reliance on fantasy to manipulate real-life situations to his advantage. In Elspeth's infancy, Tommy establishes an antagonistic connection between his sister, and Reddy's position in his storytelling – "it had become his custom to tell the tale of Reddy when Elspeth was obstreperous" (Barrie *ST* 56; ch.5). This hostility is later transmuted into Elspeth's relationship to Grizel during one of Tommy's spontaneous fantasies in the Den, designed once again to make people respond to him in a specifically controlled manner. Jealous of Grizel's closeness to her brother, Elspeth behaves coldly towards Tommy and, in an effort to appease her, "the right idea came to him at the right moment" (170; ch.15 ). "She seized his arm. 'Is it Reddy?' she gasped, for the story of Reddy had been a terror to her all her days" (171; ch.15) Tommy cements his cautionary fiction with the casual threat that, had Elspeth objected to their friendship, Grizel might have discovered the secret of their exchange at birth and "'ta'en your place here and tried to pack you off to the Painted Lady's.'" Thereafter, Elspeth courts 'Reddy's' friendship in order to escape Grizel's tumultuous home-life.

Returning from the fantasy world of Thrums Street in which inhabitants are variously referred to as wizards (Barrie *ST* 44; ch.4), fairies (45-6; ch.4) and "mischievous sprite[s]" (46), Tommy inserts the Painted Lady into his story as its malevolent element: "'Is it true she's a witch?' "(64; ch.6). Equally, the land around Double Dykes is made monstrous in the conversation of Thrums children, with "a fearsome lane" linking the farmhouse to Aaron's cottage and "creepy tales" exchanged about the fate awaiting those who fall victim to the Painted Lady's "blighting eye" (162; ch.14). Surprisingly, the crone of such fables is barely recognisable in the quaint, frail lady introduced by the narrator:

She was a little woman, brightly dressed, so fragile that a collie might have knocked her over with his tail, and she had a beautiful white-and-pink face, the white ending of a sudden in the middle of her neck, where it met skin of a duller colour. As she tripped along with a mincing gait, she was speaking confidentially to herself, but when she saw Dite grinning, she seemed, first, afraid, and then sorry for herself, and then she tried to carry it off with a giggle, cocking her head impudently at him. Even then she looked childish, and a faded guilelessness, with many pretty airs and graces, still lingered about her, like innocent birds loath to be gone from the spot where their nest has been (121; ch.11).

Figured through the narrator's adult rationality, the Painted Lady is not a witch but merely a pathetic embodiment of the Victorians' saccharine myth of femininity, valiantly protecting her self-delusion with "pretty airs and graces" and a haphazard application of rouge. A wide variety of academics have been instrumental in illuminating how and why such polarising of fictional feminine identities – witch or ingénue - endures across literary genres in works produced throughout the late-

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.<sup>62</sup> In this context, however, the Painted Lady functions merely as an unknowable entity onto whom various interpretations of female 'otherness' – whether magical or mundane - can be projected by her fellow characters. As well as being actively othered because of her sexual indiscretions and Englishness (Ormond notes that the Painted Lady is an "outcast mother . . . with a different vocabulary" from her neighbours [66]), discovering any objective truth about her identity is made virtually impossible by her own inability to divulge it:

"What made the Painted Lady take a house here, then?"  
 "I think it was because the Den is so like the place she used to meet him in long ago."  
 "What was his name?"  
 "I don't know."  
 "Does the Painted Lady no tell you about yoursel'?"  
 "No; she is angry if I ask."  
 "Her name is Mary, I've heard?"  
 "Mary Gray is her name, but – but I don't think it is her real name."  
 "How, does she no use her real name?"  
 "Because she wants her own mamma to think she is dead . . . I think it is because there is me. I think it was naughty of me to be born"  
 (Barrie *ST* 168; ch.15)

The childlike candidness of this exchange between Tommy and Grizel during the former's quest to "find out all about the Painted Lady" (166; ch.15) foreshadows, with incidental casualness, the importance of the relationship between female selfhood and domestic space. Grizel notes that the Painted Lady has made Double

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<sup>62</sup> Examples of scholars whose work I have studied for the purposes of this thesis include Gilbert and Gubar, Auerbach, Stone, Bottigheimer, Warner and Haase.

Dykes their home because of how it, and the nearby Den, fits with the fantasy romance she has rehearsed over years: "I think there was once a place like the Den at her own home in England, where she used to meet the man long ago, and sometimes she forgets that it is not long ago now" (167; ch.15). Unfortunately, the Painted Lady not only 'forgets' but is incapable of discerning the boundary between the narrative she has constructed – "She thinks he is there. He – he comes on a horse" (166; ch.15) – and the reality of life at Double Dykes.

As a consequence, Grizel's admission that her mother withholds from her the basic constituents of her identity (true maternal name, paternity) can reasonably be interpreted as an admission that the Painted Lady *cannot remember* them. Submerged in her own surreal fictions, misidentifying the setting of the love saga against which she has anchored her adult life, and becoming increasingly unintelligible as a result of both linguistic alterity and mental illness, the Painted Lady is invariably cast in one of two possible roles in the tales of those around her - malignant hag or fading innocent – because of her inability to articulate her own story. The Painted Lady even metaphorically kills her former self by burying it in the pseudonym of Mary Gray as "she wants her own mamma to think she is dead" (168; ch.15). Such denial of her lived experience might be expected to transfer to her daughter, especially since Grizel's very existence is shamed from the outset as a child who was, "naughty to be born" (168). Possessing little knowledge of either parent, Grizel has no access to her genetic heritage or extended family; equally, they know nothing of her birth. Socially and familiarly ostracised by the stigma attached to her mother, Grizel's dearth of personal history may reasonably be

manifested in a poorly-developed, if not utterly precarious grasp of selfhood. Conversely, a reading of the interplay between her character, that of her mother, and the interior architecture of Double Dykes, offers a rather different perspective.

Barrie's first description of the farmhouse is positioned within Tommy's mythologised universe, wherein the Painted Lady presides as witch. In pursuit of Elspeth, who has ventured to Double Dykes after dark and is "in peril", his route forces him to "[face] a fearful passage . . . with a heart that was going like a shuttle on a loom" (175; ch.15). Coming upon the cottage, Tommy finds Elspeth hiding amidst the shadows of the garden and, thus reunited, the two begin a hurried homeward journey; until, that is, Tommy takes a second glance at the house. Double Dykes is shown to exert a special magnetism upon the children, with Barrie exploiting the symbolic and perspectival properties of windows to excite the voyeuristic curiosity of Tommy and, indeed, the reader. The front of the building boasts two, with only one lit, whilst a "small east window" (176; ch.15) draws Tommy around to the side of the farmhouse. Elspeth pleads with her brother to hasten home, "[b]ut the window fascinated him; he knew he should never find courage to come here again, and he glided towards it, signing to Elspeth to accompany him" (177; ch.15). As the children "[approach] the window fearfully" (177), the reader at their back, a chapter-break disrupts focalisation, with narration resuming as if from within – perhaps even from the perspective of – Double Dykes itself:

It had been the ordinary dwelling room of the unknown poor, the mean little

"end" – ah no, no, the noblest chamber in the annals of the Scottish nation. Here on a hard anvil has its character been fashioned and its history made at rush-lights and its God ever most prominent. Always within reach of hands which trembled with reverence as they turned its broad page could be found the Book that is compensation for all things, and that was never more at home than on bare dressers and worm-eaten looms. If you were brought up in that place and have forgotten it, there is no more hope for you. But though still recalling its past, the kitchen into which Tommy and Elspeth peered was trying successfully to be something else (178; ch.16)

Cast as a scrubbed, earnest, intrinsically working-class dwelling in which generations of God-fearing Thrums folk have raised families, the main living space within Double Dykes is humanised by the attribution of "character" and "history" to its inanimate furnishings. The lighted east window functions as a threshold between perceptions: looking through it, the reader adopts the third-person focalised perspective of Tommy. Yet, once 'inside', we are privy to the self-consciousness of the room as the narrator contemplates the intangible "something else" that it is grappling to emulate. Bachelard recognises the distinctive appeal of a lighted window in a solitary cottage, or "hermit's hut":

In line with the distant light in the hermit's hut, symbolic of the man who keeps vigil, a rather large dossier of literary documentation on the poetry of houses could be studied from the single angle of the lamp that glows in the window. This image would have to be placed under one of the greatest of all theorems of the imagination of the world of light . . . The lamp keeps vigil, therefore it is vigilant. And the narrower the ray of light, the more penetrating its vigilance. The lamp in the window is the house's eye and, in the kingdom of the imagination, it is never lighted out-of-doors but is enclosed light, which can only filter to the outside (34-5).

Bachelard's personification of the lamp-lit window as watchful attendant of the home is congruent with Barrie's description of Double Dykes' sentience. Vigilance

here, however, is rather expressed as the cottage's self-awareness, its "still recalling its past" whilst "trying successfully to be something else" – a description which, we soon learn, is equally valid when applied to Grizel herself. At the same time, Double Dykes aligns with Bachelard's more traditional definition of vigilance, encircling the embattled inhabitants seeking refuge from the world within its protective "enclosed light". The homestead doubles as a fortress which physically protects the women from the scrutiny of their judgemental neighbours, yet in doing so, the secrecy of their lives serves to further exaggerate their roles in Thrums folklore. The mystery suffusing the existence of Grizel and her mother is both rooted and elucidated in this space, where the distinction between safe domesticity and the harsh world beyond is marked by the exclusivity of the lamp's glow. After all, the light - as with the concept of truth, with which light is symbolically and etymologically linked - can only "filter" to the outside world.<sup>63</sup> Double Dykes, when read as one of Bachelard's hermit's huts, is a duplicitous sanctuary: on the one hand, its spatial seclusion from Thrums life lends its inhabitants the protection of enclosure and distance. Equally however, its position on the margins serves to further ostracise the women within, whose separation from 'conventional' village customs and mores has already been firmly established.

As with the stage directions for *Peter Pan* and *Mary Rose* to which I have alluded earlier in this thesis, the animation of interior space is a tactic which Barrie returns to with frequency throughout his career. By turns comforting, humorous

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<sup>63</sup> Imagery in which light is representative of truth reappears across Barrie's works, most notably in *Dear Brutus* as a conceit which is integral to the plot.

and eerie,<sup>64</sup> the effect of this strategy remains the same: whilst the humanised room cannot speak as a character in the book or as a player in the drama, the conferring of consciousness upon furniture and walls and staircases transforms them into both witness and evidence in the stories that unfold around and within them. In the case of Double Dykes, the villagers' inability to truly 'read' Grizel and her mother apports still greater explicative power to the home itself:

[I]nstead of a real mantelpiece there was a quaint imitation one painted over the fireplace. There were some pieces of furniture too, such as were usual in rooms of this kind, but most of them, perhaps in ignorance, had been put to novel uses like the plate-rack, where the Painted Lady kept her many pretty shoes instead of her crockery. Gossip said she had a looking-glass of such prodigious size that it stood on the floor, and Tommy nudged Elspeth to signify, "There it is!" Other nudges called her attention to the carpet, the spinet, a chair that rocked like a cradle, and some smaller oddities . . . It might have been a boudoir through which a kitchen and bedroom had wandered, spilling by the way, but though the effect was tawdry, everything had been rubbed clean by that passionate housewife, Grizel. . . The watchers could not hear what [The Painted Lady] and Grizel said, but evidently it was pleasant converse, and mother and child, happy in each other's company, presented a picture as sweet as it is common, though some might have complained that they were doing each other's work (Barrie *ST* 179- 180; ch.16).

In contrast to the atmosphere of troubled unfinishedness readable in Aaron Latta's cottage, the oddities of Double Dykes' interior are superficially framed as loveable quirks. The tableau of blissful (if eccentric) domesticity portrayed by Grizel and her mother mitigates the surprising presence of shoes where plates should be stacked,

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<sup>64</sup> In *Peter Pan*, Barrie cultivates a sense of apparent familial well-being in the Darlings' night nursery, by stressing the spatial centrality of the children in the home. In *Dear Brutus*, the drawing room's anachronistic design and manipulation of lighting reflects the possibly playful, possibly sinister mystery in which the guests are immersed. Finally, the drawing room in *Mary Rose* is evocative of its occupants throughout time, oscillating between homely and spruce in the time of the Morlands' ownership, to decayed and disturbing decades later when it assumes the likeness of its 'ghost' - Mary Rose herself.

and purifies any ignominy in the fact a child's living space is part "boudoir". The harmony perceived by Tommy and Elspeth, however, shares the intrinsic artifice of tableaux. Captured in a moment, Grizel and her mother's presentation of idyllic feminine domesticity is belied by the symbols of transience and vanity by which they are surrounded. Not only does the Painted Lady's shoe collection take priority over the kitchenware mother and daughter must use to eat, but in endowing the looking-glass parallel physical prominence with Aaron Latta's loom (the latter "half-filling" the ben end of Latta's home (128; ch.11), whilst the former is "of such prodigious size" that it occupies much of Double Dykes' floor-space) its centrality to the rituals of their daily lives is unequivocally asserted. The looking glass's emblematic status is augmented by its surfacing within Thrums "gossip" about the Painted Lady and her daughter, with its existence apparently vindicating the villagers' assumptions of the mother's sexually-driven narcissism and immorally-obtained wealth.

Tellingly, that most axiomatic image of functioning domesticity – the hearth – is revealed as (at least partial) façade: the mantelpiece is a "quaint imitation . . . painted over the fireplace". Two-dimensional and lacking the substance upon which the hearth and its correspondent Victorian gender roles are built, Barrie's narrator calls attention to the painted mantelpiece so as to accentuate its suitability as the Painted Lady's figurative counterpart. The "picture as sweet as it is common" that is glimpsed by Tommy and Elspeth through the window may yield a momentary impression of maternal, homely warmth; yet the Painted Lady's lack of

psychological depth<sup>65</sup> – the absence of the layers of self-knowledge that come with the development of identity – will always prevent her from drawing upon her experience of the world as a foundation for the organic, dynamic and nurturing qualities of a mother and home-maker. 'Mary Gray' is herself a grey area, careening between maidenhood and motherhood, and incapable of distinguishing fantasy from reality. In lacking the complementary skills of creativity and eloquence that Barrie repeatedly identifies as being integral to the process of mothering,<sup>66</sup> the vision of domestic contentment glimpsed through the window of Double Dykes is nothing more than ephemera. Painted mantelpiece and Painted Lady thus emerge as twin motifs of artifice and superficiality within the domestic space.

In contrast to her mother, Grizel is depicted as a preternaturally maternal child, whose ascendancy to the 'angel of the hearth' role is all but complete in her pre-adolescence. As the scene within Double Dykes is played out, Grizel's housekeeping nous is repeatedly averred, though with ambiguous enthusiasm, as the narrator observes her "ca'ming the hearthstone" after having "rubbed clean" everything else in the room (179; ch. 16). Bachelard argues that housework – far from being simply part of a prosaic, inherently gendered daily routine - can be made into a "creative activity" (67) which actually empowers female members of the household:

From one object in a room to another, housewifely care weaves the ties that

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<sup>65</sup> See previous discussion of the Painted Lady's tactics of alternately obscuring and forgetting the truth of her own life - pp.109-111 of this thesis.

<sup>66</sup> The relationship between motherhood and the production and circulation of stories is explored to some degree in each of the Barrie texts in this thesis.

unite a very ancient past to the new epoch . . . In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside (68).<sup>67</sup>

"Housewifely care" is raised, under Bachelard's analysis, to a noble art-form equalling man's place in the domestic hierarchy. The husband and father may be (directly or indirectly) responsible for the physical existence of the house, but it is to the figure of the wife and mother – the woman under whose dominion the home is both beautiful and functional - that one's most intimate concepts of selfhood are attached. The women of the house are entrusted with the creative task of "weaving" a familial narrative in which home-life is safe and explicable, in which an "ancient past" coheres to a "new epoch". For the housewife, Bachelard argues, the very textures of the home – its "walls and furniture" - are glossed with a romanticism rivalling the stimuli of the world beyond the threshold. Even if not taken literally, much of the detail with which Bachelard fleshes out this particular aspect of his philosophy borders on the tenuous - particularly when he asserts that domestic artistry confers human qualities upon objects of the home:

And so, when a poet rubs a piece of furniture – even vicariously – when he puts a little fragrant wax on his table with the woollen cloth that lends warmth to everything it touches, he creates a new object; he increases the

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<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that the social context in which Bachelard originally produced this analysis (1950s Europe) takes a starkly different direction to feminist discourse of even the past three decades; as such, although his elevation of the housewife's chores to acts of creative labour is probably well-intentioned, the note it strikes today seems trite, if not condescending. Gilbert and Gubar similarly observe Bachelard's obliviousness regarding the issue of feminine autonomy in literature, noting that whilst the nineteenth-century female writer's work speaks overwhelmingly of a sense of incarceration, "for Bachelard, the protective asylum of the house is closely associated with its maternal features . . . such symbolism must inevitably have very different implications for male critics and for female authors" (88).

object's human dignity; he registers this object officially as a member of the human household (67).

Despite its dated rhetoric, in essence Bachelard's analysis remains valid. Historically, the domestic space's associations with ideas of privacy, docility and repose establishes it as the antithesis of the public sphere – a world connected with empowerment, self-expression and enterprise. Bachelard's argument liberates this spatial dichotomy, as it discerns and attributes creative vigour to traditionally domestic, or feminine, pursuits. In such capable hands as those of the female creative, "furniture that was asleep" (Bachelard 68) can be awakened to offer multivalent symbolic insights into the stories we tell and create for ourselves.

Indeed, Barrie was to make explicit his own interest in the role of the housewife-artist in *The Little White Bird* (1902). Chapter Three follows the *flaneuric* narrator as he views – as a prospective buyer – the home of a woman in whom he has formed an unusual interest:

I forget whether I have described Mary's personal appearance, but if so you have a picture of that sunny drawing-room. My first reflection was, How can she have found the money to pay for it all! which is always your first reflection when you see Mary herself a-tripping down the street. I have no space (in that little room) to catalogue all the whim-whams with which she had made it beautiful, from the hand-sewn bell-rope which pulled no bell to the hand-painted cigar-box that contained no cigars. The floor was of a delicious green with exquisite oriental rugs; green and white, I think, was the lady's scheme of colour, something cool, you observe, to keep the sun under. The window-curtains were of some rare material and the colour of the purple clematis; they swept the floor grandly and suggested a picture of Mary receiving visitors. The piano we may ignore, for I knew it to be hired, but there were many dainty pieces, mostly in green wood, a sofa, a corner cupboard, and a most captivating desk, which was so like its owner that it could have sat down at her and dashed off a note (Barrie *LWB* Ch. 3)

So invested is Mary in the role of literal home-maker that the "exquisite" furnishings and ornamentation of the room are not only personalised by, but *personifications of*, the woman herself. Moreover, as this episode progresses it is revealed that Mary has not, in fact, "found the money to pay for it all" but, with the ingenuity of the housewife, has created both the foundations and the fripperies of the home using clever artistry alone. The narrator finds that, having expected to view a, "'space to be sold'" (*LWB* Ch.3), Mary has produced a home by, and more intriguingly of, herself. As this thesis will discuss in relation to *Peter Pan* and *Mary Rose*, Barrie's attraction to the relationship between woman and domestic space that we may glimpse in *The Little White Bird* is later developed and refined into a discussion which is central to his re-energisation of the gender stereotypes that the housewife-artist seems to solidify.

However, preceding and perhaps prefiguring even Mary in the chain of domestic creatives is Grizel, in whose character the interplay of domesticity and creativity is channelled through a similar manipulation of items within the home. With Grizel, the domestic worlds she inhabits across both novels (namely Double Dykes and the house of Dr McQueen) offer various opportunities for her "housewifely care" to reveal a hidden narrative which is embedded in three specific items belonging to the home-space. It is therefore important to thoroughly explore Grizel's interactions with the literary tropes of looking-glass, key, and doll, which – as they appear throughout the *Tommy* novels – are intrinsic to the development of her creative and explicative powers.

### 3.1 Framing Grizel as Domestic Creative

In their seminal work on female Victorian writers, *The Madwoman In The Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar identify male authorship as the "mirror" in which nineteenth-century women are incarcerated as idealised or parodied entities:<sup>68</sup> "[K]illed into a 'perfect' image of herself, the woman writer's self-contemplation may be said to have begun with a searching glance into the mirror of the male-inscribed literary text" (15). As an instructive example, they draw upon the Grimm Brothers' version of the fairy-tale "Snow White", re-framing the emblematic battle between the Wicked Queen as monster-woman and Snow White as angel-girl as an externalised struggle of "self and self"(37). Arguing that this particular conflict between alter-egos or mirror-others is one that resonates across nineteenth-century writing by both sexes, they point to the appearance of literal mirrors (or other image-bearing devices such as portraits) as a textual device signalling the ambiguity of feminine wholeness.

It is perhaps surprising that Barrie avoids any such equivocation in his narrator's cultivation of the relationship between Grizel and her own mirror/mirror-

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<sup>68</sup>The introduction here of hypotheses and analyses introduced in *Madwoman*, as well as my own arguments in relation to Barrie which draw upon material therein, should not be interpreted as uncritical endorsement of Gilbert and Gubar's particular species of feminist theory; nor should it be interpreted as a lack of awareness that the landscape of feminist criticism has changed significantly since the book's first publication in 1979. Whilst the work is retrospectively maligned for (amongst other things) casually ableist terminology and white or exclusionary feminism, its iconic status remains intact. Homans argues that, "it did more than any other single work of its kind or era to launch the vibrant American scholarly field of feminist literary criticism . . . *The Madwoman in the Attic* continues to inspire, despite or because of its limitations" (459). Given its relatively minor theoretical role in this thesis, I have elected to concentrate on the core text of *Madwoman* whilst interrogating its more problematic arguments, rather than attempting to trace the evolution of its ideas in later critiques or responses.

self; one of the girl's few certainties is the acknowledgement and admiration she directs towards her reflection. When faced with Tommy's pity after the death of her own mother, Grizel retorts:

"I don't want you to love me . . . I don't think you know how to love."  
 "Neither can you know, then," retorted Tommy, huffily, "for there's nobody for you to love."  
 "Yes there is," she said, "and I do love her and she loves me."  
 "But wha is she?"  
 "That girl." To his amazement she pointed to her own reflection in the famous mirror the size of which had scandalised Thrums . . .  
 "I love her ever so much," Grizel went on, "and she is so fond of me she hates to see me unhappy. Don't look so sad, dearest, darlingest," she cried vehemently; "I love you, you know, oh, you sweet!" and with each epithet she kissed her reflection and looked defiantly at the boy (Barrie *ST* 367-8; ch.32).

Reiterated allusions to the mirror's 'fame' throughout *Sentimental Tommy* ensure that the controversial nature of its history – its ineluctable associations with the Painted Lady, promiscuity, adultery, illegitimacy and, finally, psychopathy – is never forgotten. In this light, Grizel's adoration of all that she sees in the mirror is refreshing, allowing her to emerge as a character who derives "barely respectable" (367; ch.32) comfort from loving and acknowledging all aspects of her selfhood. If one is to follow Gilbert and Gubar's hypothesis, in embracing the existence of her mirror-self the flesh-and-blood Grizel is fitted as the perfect female creative:

Although the woman who is the prisoner of the mirror/text's images has "no voice to speak her dread" . . . she has an invincible sense of her own autonomy, her own interiority . . . Just as stories have a habit of "getting away" from their authors, human beings since Eden have had a habit of defying authority, both divine and literary . . . women themselves have the power to create themselves as characters, even perhaps the power to reach toward the woman trapped on the other side of the mirror/text and

help her to climb out . . . Before the woman writer can journey through the looking-glass toward literary autonomy however, she must come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass (Gilbert and Gubar 16-17).

With a reaction to her mirror double that is equal parts defiance and acceptance, Grizel has undoubtedly, "come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass." Her insulation from the wider world's social mores in the haven of Double Dykes has instilled in her a need for creativity wholly separate from the claim to literary *authorship* pursued by Tommy. If he, as a professional author in adulthood, will publish a text which becomes the idealised "mirror" from which she must free herself, her early rejection of his approval – "I don't want you to love me" – emboldened by the accompanying statement questioning his capabilities ("I don't think you know how to love"), constitutes an unequivocal disavowal of the male-prescribed socio-literary prisms through which Grizel may or may not learn to define herself.

Like generations of dormant women creatives before her, Grizel is silenced within the story of her life, repeatedly mediated through the words of her male co-character, narrator, and author; however, there can surely be few more explicit examples of a female protagonist striving for the power to "reach toward the woman trapped on the other side of the mirror" - to literally, *reproduce* - than Grizel's rapturous declaration to her mirror-double. In *Madwoman In The Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar argue meticulously that authorship is paternalistic in etymology, and a male writer the "father" of the written text. However, they neglect to trace

the significance of the corresponding, exclusively female ability to create.<sup>69</sup> The uniting of divided selves – woman's liberation of her second self from the mirror of the patriarchal text - that Gilbert and Gubar perceive as being a necessary step in the process towards female reclamation of the literary arts, is both a reversal of birth and a birth in its own right; a *re-creation* of self, of which a woman-writer, uniquely, is capable. Grizel's creative instinct is thus, not merely to produce art but to produce living art, as a mother through whose children (or multiple 'selves') stories can be transmitted, mutated and elaborated *ad infinitum*.

Grizel's harmonious relationship with her mirror self remains unthreatened even in the context of her patriarchally-sanctified ending in *Sentimental Tommy*. 'Rescued' by the doctor from a life of independence that she intends to spend roaming a London "so big that no one could ever find her there" (ST 376; ch.32) , Grizel is instead installed in Dr McQueen's home as his precocious young housekeeper. The narrator develops the interaction between child and man as one centred upon the reformation of the previously defiant Grizel:

She sat on his knee, telling him many things that had recently come to her knowledge but were not so new to him. The fall of woman was the subject – a strange topic for a girl of thirteen and a man of sixty. They don't become bad in a moment, he learned; if they are good to begin with, it takes quite a long time to make them bad . . . He made no reply, so she looked up, and his face was very old and sad. "I am sorry too," she whispered, but still he said nothing (391; ch.33)

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<sup>69</sup> Gilbert and Gubar are at pains to demonstrate that the female writing tradition suffers from the "double-bind" (64) of a woman writer being forced "to choose between admitting she was 'only a woman', or protesting that she was 'as good as a man'". Although they argue for the emergence of a distinctively female canon which gradually defines itself according to a separate set of tropes and conventions, their original analysis of the integrally masculine, paternal architecture and terminology of writing is not balanced by a corresponding analysis of how women as textual 'mothers' are involved in an unambiguously female form of creation.

An initial reading of this passage may lead us to suppose that Barrie's narratorial voice endorses the masculine deliverance of Grizel that is insinuated by such an exchange. Indeed, it would seem that she submits to the paternal wisdom of McQueen by perching on his lap, and renouncing her self-love in order to be loved by him. Grizel's 'salvation' is underlined by her physical removal from Double Dykes – a domestic space wherein feminine transgression is acknowledged, unified and finally celebrated – to the notably more pedestrian residence of McQueen, with the the village doctor and his house being synonymous with standards of respectable conformity within small British communities around the turn of the century.<sup>70</sup>

However, an interesting paragraphical juxtaposition belies this retrieval of unconventional womanhood. Barrie follows the narrator's rather saccharine observation that, in McQueen, "Grizel knew that there was someone who loved her at last," (391) with an apparently unrelated comment: "The mirror was the only article of value that Grizel took with her to her new home; everything else was roused at the door of Double Dykes" (391). Grizel's story in *Sentimental Tommy* may be, ostensibly, resolved in a manner that appeases traditionalist sensibilities: the 'corrupt' child is rescued from a home of vice and dissolution to start a new life of healing and housework under the auspices of a professional older man, her creative vitality ploughed into becoming, "the most masterful little besom I ever clapped

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<sup>70</sup> In her book, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel*, Sparks notes that: "The doctor as hero of the courtship plot is a Victorian invention, made possible by the new respectability of the professional man"(14). Whilst the emerging eminence of the doctor as a main character within literature is Sparks' focus, her research establishes the status and innate respectability of the medical man in nineteenth-century British writing in a more general sense, discussing his profession and his lifestyle within Victorian communities.

eyes on" (399; ch.34 ). Yet Grizel's selection of the mirror as the "only article of value" (391) which will make the geographical transition from Double Dykes to her new home strongly suggests that she is far from fulfilled by the life of purifying domesticity on offer. Though she hurls herself into fussing over the doctor ("She discussed him with other mothers as if he were her little boy" [400; ch.34]) and is so "convinced of the sinfulness of sitting still" (401; ch.34) that she seldom allows her hands to be idle, Grizel's creative energies are woefully underserved by her stultifying existence in a house which stands as testament to patriarchal dominion.

Indeed, whilst McQueen may profess his benignantly improving love for her "fifty times" (399; ch.34) every day, Grizel's ambiguously-worded response – "That is not often, I say it all day to myself" – can arguably be read as a gravitation towards the girl in the mirror for whom she has avowed such devotion more than once before. The looking glass continues to fixate Grizel's attention in the midst of her newly perfect life, constituting a portal through which the connection with her imperfect other – the mother whose sexual legacy weighs upon her, the daughters she will never bear, the displaced second self in whom complete self-possession is possible – is revived.

Grizel is far from satisfied with being loved by others. She is consistently drawn back to wondering about her image in the looking glass as a symptom of her intellectual need to interrogate the nature of the female subjective experience. The narrative enclosure of Grizel as McQueen's adopted daughter, far from offering resolution to the tale of *Sentimental Tommy*, in fact reasserts the duality of which the mirror stands as a critical connotative symbol. Grizel's attachment to the

looking-glass could be superficially read as a sentimental gesture in and of itself; merely an orphaned girl clinging to a piece of furniture which reminds her of her mother and her only real home. Yet by positioning the mirror - such an unmistakable relic of female otherness - in the midst of a staunchly patriarchal household, Barrie endorses the sexual symmetry and creative agency of mother and daughter, self and self of which the looking-glass exists as the ultimate metaphorical statement. Merely following a pre-ordained script in which she wins the validation of paternalistic masculinity - McQueen desires to "make a lady of her" (401; ch.34) - will never satisfy the female creative, who is eternally drawn back to her mirror double as the only entity in whom she will ever know true completion.

Submerged in the business of caring for the ageing doctor, attending to practice affairs and managing McQueen's house, Grizel successfully balances the demands of her mirror-self well into her adulthood. Ominously, it is when she finally submits to Tommy the successful London author that a schism first appears in the relationship between Grizel and her beloved double. Huddled together with the adult Tommy in Caddam Wood, she confides that she is trying to erase an unhappy memory associated with the place:

"But to whom, then, is this memory painful, Grizel?"  
 Again she cast that glance at him. "To her," she whispered . . . "Yes, the child I used to be. You see, she never grew up, and so they are not distant memories to her. I try to rub them out of her mind by giving her prettier things to think of. I go to the places where she was most unhappy and tell her sweet things about you. I am not morbid, am I, in thinking of her still as someone apart from myself? You know how it began, in the lonely days when I used to look at her in mamma's mirror and pity her and fancy that she was pitying me and entreating me to be careful. Always when I

think I see her now she seems to be looking anxiously at me and saying, 'Oh, do be careful,' and the sweet things I tell her about you are meant to show her how careful I have become."  
(*TG* 208; ch.18)

Grizel's belief that Tommy loves her at last provides her with an assurance that her maternal instinct, her need to create and pass on her stories to children of her (and, potentially, their) own, will be satisfied. The anxiety she perceives in her mirror-self is, however, justifiable; Tommy has appropriated Grizel, chapters earlier, as just another of *his* fictions: "He so loved the thing he had created that in his exultation he mistook it for her" (158; ch.13). Consumed by Tommy as nothing more than a plaything in his current fantasy, Grizel's secretly-nurtured aspiration to create lives and stories of her own is quite literally overwritten. Tommy's undisciplined impulse to sentimentalise precipitates Grizel's disunion of self and self which, in its intact form, is so crucial to the female creative's coherent accounts of identity and her production of art.

As Gilbert and Gubar have artfully established, it is no coincidence that the metaphors of storytelling borrow so liberally from the language of procreation. In addition, both Rowe and Warner have forged persuasive linguistic connections between tale-tellers and childbirth. Together, their arguments build a European social context dating back to the twelfth-century (Warner 33) in which Italian and French traditions of baptism and birthing intertwine ideas of parenthood with the imparting of folk wisdom.<sup>71</sup> Not only could the female voice breathe life into stories

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<sup>71</sup> Rowe notes that the French phrase denoting female raconteurs who would normally preside at social gatherings to narrate tales of folk wisdom doubles with the medieval term for a midwife (64),

by telling them to the world, *les sages femmes, le commare* and the gossips came to represent the ultimate act of creation: human life itself.

Barrie extends this idea in the *The Little White Bird*, in which the embittered narrator-writer positions himself in 'competition' with new mother and aspiring author, Mary A. In the 'Dedication' of his finished text, the narrator writes with almost comical acerbicity:

"Madam" (I wrote wittily), "I have no desire to exult over you, yet I should show a lamentable obtuseness to the irony of things were I not to dedicate this little work to you. For its inception was yours, and in your more ambitious days you thought to write the tale of the little white bird yourself . . . It now appears that you were otherwise occupied. In fine, madam, you chose the lower road, and contented yourself with obtaining the Bird. May I point out, by presenting you with this dedication, that in the meantime I am become the parent of the Book? To you the shadow, to me the substance." (Barrie *LWB* Ch.26)

The narrator compares his production of the book to the birth of Mary's human child, with the caustic tone of his dedication implying her chosen avenue of creativity to be the less impressive (Stirling 15). He archly implies that woman is capable of true literary art yet 'contents herself' with mere maternity whilst the male author achieves an immortal substance through his fathering of the text.

*Tommy and Grizel* explores the genesis of this conflict between artistic and maternal creativity that Barrie later hyperbolises in *The Little White Bird*. Both species of creativity are alive in the character of Grizel, only to be thwarted by

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whilst Warner argues that the English word 'gossip' would be understood as a term "applied almost exclusively to female friends invited by a woman to the christening of her child . . . a baptismal sponsor, godmother" (33). Similarly, she picks up on the migration of the Italian terms '*compadre*' and '*commare*' (co-father/mother) to mean "godfather" and "midwife" respectively, before the feminine variant shifted once again in modern Italian to refer to women who "gossip" in the street (33).

Tommy's overwhelmingly 'virile' authorship. The narrator repeatedly draws the reader's attention to Grizel's desire to be a mother, at the same time as the novel's structural emphasis on the relationship between girl and mirror-self stresses her affinity for artistic creation. In the first chapters of *Tommy and Grizel*, upon our reintroduction to Grizel as a woman, she is rendered a "slave" to new babies anywhere (*TG* 45; ch.4) and, as a result of her overwhelming capacity for nurturance, her relationship with her adoptive father Dr McQueen has undergone a reversal: "Mother was his nickname for her, and she delighted in the word; she lorded it over him as if he were her troublesome boy" (46; ch.4). Their childhood friend Corp Shiach notes much later, during Grizel's decline into the psychosis that plagued her own mother that, "it will be a damned shame . . . if that woman never has no bairns o' her ain" (376; ch.31). Completing the trajectory is the convalescent Grizel herself, focalised through the narrator: "It was only sometimes in the night that she lay very still with little wells of water on her eyes and through them saw one, the dream of woman, who she feared could never be hers. That boy Tommy never knew why she did not want to have a child" (398; ch.33). In failing to achieve maturation emotionally, Tommy also avoids love that encompasses sexual union – an obvious prerequisite for the real babies in Grizel's "dream of woman" which will never be born to her. Tommy misinterprets Grizel's devastation at having her dreams of authenticity and creative power dashed, simplistically reading her anguish as rejection: "she did not want to have a child". Equally, in occasioning the separation of Grizel and her mirror-self by usurping the former as a part of *his* story, Tommy thwarts his fiancée's creative impulses once again. After their engagement

disintegrates, Grizel deduces with resentful clarity exactly what Tommy has taken from her:

Little cared Tommy what became of the rest of his luggage so long as that palpitating package [his new manuscript] was safe.

"And little you care," Grizel said, in a moment of sudden bitterness, "whom you leave behind, so long as you take it with you."

. . . But she kissed the manuscript. "Wish it luck," he had begged of her; "you were always so fond of babies, and this is my baby." So Grizel kissed Tommy's baby, and then she turned away her face (295; ch.24)

Faced with the product of Tommy's creative potency, the spawn of his need to be the sole progenitive force, Grizel is forced to confront her corresponding lack of purpose. In being denied the opportunity to reproduce versions of herself (either human or fictive) she retreats to the domestic space in which her mirror-self, mother and other can finally reunite.

Although she effectively assumes the "little housekeeper" (42; ch.4) role when she is invited into Dr. McQueen's home, Grizel's purpose there fluctuates between nurse, mother, adopted daughter and heiress. Investing tremendous joy in "sewing" and "dusting" (45; ch.4), the doctor's house is more wholly Grizel's territory than McQueen's, or even the incumbent Gemmell's. Barrie writes of the younger doctor that he, "fell into line at once" (84; ch.7) in seeking Grizel's approval, and, using an apparently casual selection of phrases, refers to a meeting between Grizel and Gemmell in McQueen's old house using female pronouns - denoting Grizel's absolute command of the space:

She had never liked Gemmell so little as when she saw him approaching her house next morning. The surgery was still attached to it, and very often he came from there, his visiting-book in his hand, to tell her of his patients, even to consult her . . . Yet as she received him in her parlour now – her too spotless parlour, for not even the ashes in the grate were visible, which is a mistake – she was not very friendly (83-84; ch.7)

Although McQueen's house is, thus, redolent of her influence and authority even before she officially inherits it from the doctor, Barrie is careful to articulate that the property with which Grizel possesses true affinity is actually Double Dykes. This relationship is insinuated primarily through mentioning Grizel's command of keys only in reference to the farmhouse, despite the fact that she is designated the legal owner of McQueen's property after his death. Grizel is framed as the custodian of Double Dykes, securing it against intruders when she follows her oblivious mother into the Den: "They heard a key turn in the lock, and presently Grizel, carrying warm wraps, passed very near them and proceeded along the double dykes" (ST 185; ch.16).

Similarly, on the night of the Painted Lady's death Grizel recounts how she came to find that, "her mamma was not beside her. It had happened before, and she was not frightened. She had hidden the key of the door that night and nailed down the window, but her mamma had found the key" (355; ch.31). Undeniably, the literary climate in which Barrie crafted Grizel's character is rich in its utilisation of the key as a symbol of intimate access – not only to private space, but to

privileged knowledge.<sup>72</sup> However, somewhat unusually Grizel's power as key-holder to Double Dykes is exercised, not to permit her entry into a secret physical or emotional space nor to free her from a space in which she feels imprisoned, but to keep the rest of the world *out*. As delusions begin to plague Grizel in adult life, it is the isolated sanctuary – the hermit's hut - of Double Dykes that she consistently identifies as the place in which she will locate meaning. She returns obsessively to the Dykes, distinguishing it from the other 'homes' she finds with McQueen, and Corp and Gavinia, by its innate connection to the nurturance of her own creativity:

You could never say that she was alone when her needle was going, and the linen became sheets and the like, in what was probably record time. Yet they could have been sewn more quickly, for at times the needle stopped and she did not know it. Once, a bedridden old woman, with whom she had been sitting up, lay watching her instead of sleeping, and finally said: "What makes you sit staring at a cauld fire, and speaking to yourself?" And there was a strange day, when she had been too long in the den. When she started for home she went in the direction of Double Dykes, her old home, instead (*TG* 287-8; ch.25).

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<sup>72</sup> Of the multitude of authors who developed everything from minor character traits to entire genres out of the symbolism of household keys and locks, some of Barrie's more notable peers and predecessors include: Edgar Allen Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who respectively contributed *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) and the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, *The Sign of The Four* (1890), *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* (1892) and *The Adventure of the Crooked Man* (1894) to the early sub-genre of detective fiction, 'locked-room mysteries'; Esther Summerson and her ubiquitous bunch of housekeepers' keys in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853) which are regularly referred to in a context of Esther's industriousness – she gives them "such a shake" to remind herself of her "Duty" (72), and "jingles" (207) them during periods of intense busyness – but which are synonymous, too, with intimacy; Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) featuring Rochester's maddened wife who lurks in a locked attic prison; Jane Austen's Gothic pastiche, *Northanger Abbey* (1816) in which the heroine faces regular melodramatic confrontations with a suite of locked rooms; and the seventeenth-century French folk-tale, *Bluebeard* by Charles Perrault, wherein the main plot symbol is the heroine's forbidden use of a key to enter her husband's murder chamber – a key which thereafter proclaims her guilt by preserving the stain of blood from within. Overarching all of the above is, of course, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic dream theory (1899 onwards), in which he posits that a locked door functions as a common conceit representing the sexual subconscious.

By occupying herself with the mundane business of tending to Gemmell's patients and other domestic chores, Grizel attempts to evade morally-corrosive thoughts. In her discussion of child-focused philanthropy in the nineteenth-century, Jackson attests that: "[a] large body of academic research demonstrated that belief in an unconscious aspect to the mind was widespread by the 1880s . . . [i]nner thoughts and emotions were to be carefully disciplined" (142) in child residents of charitable institutions so as to prevent rigorously suppressed emotions and memories resurfacing to complicate the 'rehabilitation' of fallen girls.<sup>73</sup> However, in a nod to both Bachelard and Rowe, Grizel's absorption in household activities can be interpreted as a projection of her own imaginative potency. After all, if, to answer Bachelard's rhetorical question, housework *can* be made into a creative activity (Bachelard 67), there are few more fitting metaphors for creation than those of the family of weaving, spinning, or sewing.<sup>74</sup> Barrie's observation that Grizel is "never alone when her needle was going" therefore assumes new significance as an intimation that sewing is not a diversionary pastime intended to purify Grizel's mind, but a vein of domestic artistry enabling her reunion with the other selves – both mother and mirror - in whom her creative powers can find expression. This subversive reading of Grizel's behaviour is borne out in the remainder of the paragraph; she unnerves her patient with late-night fireside conversations with 'herself' and is noticed to be spending more and more time in the Den – a space which is ineffably associated with the fantasies of her own mother, and the

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<sup>73</sup> See Chapter One of this thesis for a more extensive exploration of these ideas.

<sup>74</sup> See my discussion of the theories of Rowe and Warner in Chapter Two of this thesis.

imaginative games Grizel played as a child with Tommy, Elspeth, Corp and Gavinia.

However it is not until the closing line in which Barrie - with a degree of insouciance not reflecting the symbolic importance of her actions – describes how Grizel misidentifies Double Dykes as home, that a link between her 'strange' domestic creativity and the space to which she holds the key, is established. Grizel's retreat to Double Dykes after a period of communion with her other selves is the first of many; it is a sequence that the narrator explains as part of the illness which plagued the Painted Lady before her death (Barrie *TG* 313-4; ch.26). By using the phraseology of madness to cloak her reasons for returning to Double Dykes, Grizel's creative agency is, at least temporarily, obfuscated.

As a male writer employing the conceit of psychological ill-health to display the inherently damaging effect of physical confinement upon woman's voice and experience, Barrie appears to follow a nineteenth-century tradition of male authorship; both Grizel and her mother are 'madwomen', as trapped in the peculiarities of their minds as they are in the places they call home. Gilbert and Gubar point out that images of literal incarceration or escape in the writing of nineteenth century women normally differ from those in works by male authors as, whilst the latter are "both metaphysical and metaphorical" (84) the former are informed by their "feelings of social confinement" (86) which are, in turn, addressed by "enacting rebellious escapes" (85). Indeed, Barrie explicitly writes such escapes into the character trajectories of Grizel and her mother as a figurative symptom of their divorce from lucid thought processes and socially-acceptable female sexual behaviour. The narrator suggests that their madness is punishment for promiscuity,

with the Painted Lady's "cruel ugly eyes" (Barrie *ST* 183; ch.16) turned upon her daughter only when she is "hearkening intently" (183) for the sound of the phantom lover complicit in her disgrace. Conversely, Grizel later makes clear that, "in the days when she was an innocent girl", the Painted Lady was "sweet and pure" (*TG* 213; ch.18); the association developed between chastity and sanity is, thus, manifest. In the same extract, Grizel – who, in falling in love with Tommy has been described by the narrator as "never again quite the Grizel we have known" (158; ch.13) - hints at her predisposition to the same temptation as her mother:

"I think she can enter into my feelings more than any other person could ever do. Is that because she was my mother? She understands how I feel just as I can understand how in the end she was willing to be bad because he wanted it so much . . . I could never have cared for such a man, but I can understand how mamma yielded to him." (213; ch.18)

Patently, Barrie – through his narrator – establishes a fundamental connection between the sexual capitulation of the women and their subsequent descent into delusions. Yet with additional scrutiny, it becomes clear that in building this connection, he is in fact condemning the all-too-sane, calculated sexual selfishness of the men themselves. In driving Grizel to internal emotional distraction, her father(s) and Tommy Sandys<sup>75</sup> are seen also to drive her physically inwards to the

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<sup>75</sup> In Chapter Twenty-Three of *Sentimental Tommy*, the narrator describes the vulnerable girl's confrontations with three of her mother's former suitors as she prepares for the Painted Lady's death. Through a conversational exchange, the first lover is revealed to be both callous and cowardly as he attempts to hide Grizel from his 'real' family, before lying to her, mocking her wishes that he help her give her mother a respectable burial, and attempting to bribe her (266-7; ch.23). The narrator continues: "Her remaining two visits were to a similar effect, and one of the gentlemen came out of the ordeal somewhat less shamefully than the first, the other worse, for he blubbered and wanted to kiss her" (268). Such thinly veiled narratorial contempt for the men involved in the Painted Lady's

space she knows not as a prison, but as a sanctuary, and a source of creative liberation. After her ill-fated search for Tommy in Bad-Platten, Grizel returns to Thrums, stunned by the realisation that the 'dying lover' whom she pursued across the continent is in fact alive, well, and in the process of romancing another woman. This radical exposure of the Tommy myth impels Grizel to draw upon her own creative energies. She escapes from the houses of heteronormativity in which she has been figuratively imprisoned (McQueen's home, Corp and Gavinia's cottage)<sup>76</sup> and locates both closure and *enclosure* in the domestic space of Double Dykes; the site of that original, most profound union with her second self. Tommy and Corp's search for Grizel culminates in a re-creation of the tableau episode discussed earlier in this chapter:

Elsewhere the night was not dark, but as they had known so well when they were boys, it is always dark after even-fall in the double dykes. That is the legacy of the Painted Lady. Presently, they saw the house, scarcely the house but a lighted window. Tommy remembered the night when, as a boy, Elspeth crouching beside him, he had peered in fearfully at that corner window on Grizel and her mamma . . .

"Wait here," Tommy said almost fiercely, and he went on alone to that little window. It had needed an effort to make him look in when he was here before, and it needed a bigger effort now. But he looked. What light there

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degradation is expressed not just in the descriptions of their behaviour, but also their anonymity; they do not merit more than a peripheral existence in this episode of Grizel's life. Similarly, Tommy's decision to seduce Grizel (*TG* 105; ch. 8) alludes to the "red light" that accompanies his furious determination to "have his own way" (*TG* 8; ch.1); when his insincerity is exposed, the narrator relates that: "Tommy's new character was that of a monster" (*TG* 282; ch.24.). Tommy's coldness is demonstrated again in his treatment of Alice Pippinworth, in which his urge to make her his conquest is phrased in language of devilment at the Edenic setting of Bad-Platten: "[H]is vanity insisted that she should be armed to the teeth before they resumed hostilities. The red light was in his eyes as he drew her into the garden"(347; ch.28). As such, Barrie (through his narrator) stresses the innate weakness and conscious cruelty at the root of man's undisciplined sexual urges, suggesting his empathy with the supposedly psychologically disturbed women in his novel. Their 'maddened' realities function as, rather ironically, the only logical responses to the mercilessness of patriarchal sexual tyranny.

<sup>76</sup> McQueen's house being, as I have discussed, an embodiment of patriarchal professional respectability, whilst Corp and Gavinia as a young married couple with children represent a set of conventional family values in which Grizel can never partake.

was came from the fire, and whether she gathered the logs or found them in the room no one ever knew . . . By this fire, Grizel was crouching. She was comparatively tidy and neat again, the dust was gone from her boots even; how she had managed to do it no one knows, but you remember how she loved to be neat. Her hands were extended to the blaze, and she was busy talking to herself. His hand struck the window heavily, and she looked up and saw him. She nodded and put her fingers to her lips as a sign that he must be cautious. She had often in the long ago seen her mother signing thus to an imaginary face at the window, the face of the man who never came (368-9: ch.30)

If Grizel appears to fulfil the "legacy" of her mother, Tommy's ascendancy to the role of her phantom lover is, surely, a still more damning indictment of his future.

At first glance, this aspect of the plot is undoubtedly intended to elicit some kind of sympathetic disappointment from the reader. We are expected to commiserate along with the rest of Thrums that the Grizel we have known to be independent and astute has succumbed to the simpering silliness which characterised the Painted Lady. Yet, once again closer examination yields a different reading of Barrie's motives – entirely thanks to his decision to base Grizel's transformation within Double Dykes, a setting evocative of so much transgressive feminine energy.

For Grizel may have yielded to the mental turmoil which afflicted her late mother, but in doing so she has acquired power. Her "tidy and neat" appearance following days of punishing intercontinental travel references her mysterious capacity to both prioritise and satisfy her own desires even in the grips of extreme physiological and emotional distress: "how she managed to do it no one knows . . . how she loved to be neat". At the same time, Grizel's comparatively muted self-transformation contrasts with our memory of the Painted Lady's primping. Barrie demonstrates that Grizel's metamorphosis is a return and reclamation of a new

reality in which she is again her best self, whilst her mother's painted cheeks and foolish shawl masked a frenzied, sickened daydream. Furthermore, unlike the original example in their childhood in which Tommy peeped through the window and narrated the action within, in this instance Grizel is given two voices, as she audibly communes with her 'self' at the open fire. She controls who may cross the threshold, permitting Tommy with a nod, but stipulating that in this – her space – "he must be cautious." By so blatantly signposting this reliving of the original Double Dykes visit, Barrie encourages his audience to mark the difference between Grizel and the mother whose legacy to which she is 'tragically' pre-ordained, as well as between Grizel and Tommy. Importantly, it is Tommy's legacy that is undermined here, with the famous writer reduced to nothing more than the role of a disembodied face; an anonymous man not even convincing enough to exist in this domestic space, he is positioned as a figment of the fecund female imagination.

Grizel's descent into psychosis is conveyed as a dissolution of what makes her character so appealing. Yet, by recalling and, crucially, *reversing* the original scene, Barrie calls into question whether her madness is truly madness, or simply a repossession of selfhood that may only occur in the home world that is subject entirely to her mastery. When she is found crouching by the hearth at the Double Dykes farmhouse, Grizel is delirious yet adamant that: "'I woke up . . . This is home'" (369; 370; ch.30). Furthermore, whilst she may legally own McQueen's house and is at home in various others, Barrie repeatedly draws attention to the way in which Grizel alone holds the physical and metaphorical keys to Double Dykes. In doing so, he designates the farmhouse as the domestic space in which she chooses to

sequester herself unchallenged; the space that holds the key to understanding and, in fact, liberating Grizel herself.

To conclude this analysis of ways in which certain household items in the domestic space enable the storytelling of the female creative, it is important to consider the relationship fostered between Grizel and her first doll, Griselda. In her exploration of the intricacies of nineteenth-century doll-craft, Brunell traces the history and internal conflicts of (primarily) the American doll industry; however, she simultaneously recognises the universal importance of the doll as a reflection of the child-player's interior life. Brunell postulates that the dying years of the Victorian era witnessed an evolving cultural meaning for the role of dolls in a child's early experiences of the world (6). It was, therefore, in the period coinciding with Barrie's writing of *Sentimental Tommy* that there occurred a perceptible change in how dolls were integrated into childhood games: "Dolls played a far less central role in socialisation in the early nineteenth century, for example, than they did towards its end, when doll play became solitary and fantasy-oriented to increasingly isolated girls" (6). In other words, for female children and young women whose daily lives were made progressively more desolate by prescriptive class and gender expectations, the mundane figure of the doll became, perhaps, the sole focus of feminine creativity. Barrie captures precisely this intensity in his writing of the relationship between his "increasingly isolated girl" and the "fantasy-oriented" storytelling in which she engages with the help of her own homemade doll.

In the original scene at Double Dykes involving the child Grizel and her mother, Grizel's bond with Griselda is unmistakable, with the doll introduced as

the beloved focus of the girl's domestic craft. Found at the Coffin Brig "naked", (Barrie *ST* 181; ch.16) damaged and discarded, Grizel's rehabilitation of the doll is symbolic of her own personal redemption. She cherishes Griselda as an example of what it is to come back from "almost dead" (181), an imperfect creature who is rebuilt and resurrected within the walls of Double Dykes, using the textures of the home-space and the ingenuity of the female creative: "These articles of attire and the others that you begin with had all been made by Grizel herself out of the colored tissue-paper that shopkeepers wrap round brandy bottles" (181). Griselda is the offspring of Grizel and Double Dykes. She is, in essence, an example of the art that Grizel, as female creative made whole, is capable of (re)producing: a version of herself.

Moreover, Griselda is evocative of the internal contradiction of what it is to play with a doll. The pretence of make-believing the doll is a living infant is an inherently childlike activity, at the same time as the mimicry of maternal behaviour temporarily transforms the playing child into a figure with implied adult knowledge and a collection of bizarrely adult words and behaviours. In the narrator's description of the Painted Lady and her daughter within Double Dykes, Barrie touches upon the appearance of the women "doing each other's work" (180; ch.16) yet Grizel's knowing navigation between child and adult states is firmly embodied in her interaction with Griselda. Upon the realisation that her mother is falling into one of her nervous fits, Grizel "laid aside her doll, and with the act became a woman again" (182; ch.16) – the much-rehearsed gesture implying that she too often assumes emotional and practical responsibilities far beyond her years. With

Tommy and Elspeth supplying a narrative commentary to the action inside, Grizel enacts what seems to be a well-rehearsed behavioural ritual. Using Griselda to mime nursing a baby (and thus prompting the Painted Lady to remember that she has a child of her own), she anticipates her mother's descent into physical distress:

[S]he went to her mother and took loving hold of her and the woman clung to her child in a way pitiful to see. She was on Grizel's knee now, but she still shivered as if in a deadly chill . . . Grizel pinned the trembling arms with her own, and twisted her legs round her mother's, and still the Painted Lady's tremors shook them both (183; ch.16).

In comforting her mother, the relationship between Grizel and the Painted Lady is reversed as their identities coalesce. Limbs entwined, their bodies mimic the contact between mother and in-utero child, at this point, with Grizel as the parent; moreover, their psychic heredity is foreshadowed in the observation that the "tremors" of the mentally-ill mother "shook them both" – a comment that anticipates Grizel's own capitulation to hallucinations and paranoia in her adult years. Grizel's physical embracing of her other selves – doll and mother – within the walls of Double Dykes simultaneously functions as an embracing of the role of mother; yet her attempt to becalm the Painted Lady's restless mind by instilling in her the story of their life together, reasserting their interconnected identities, is futile. The "pantomime" (182; ch.16) within Double Dykes culminates in the Painted Lady brazenly outwitting her daughter, drawn to the Den by the gallop of a phantom horse. Descriptions of her departure borrow liberally from the register of fairy-tale:

[T]hough at all other times her face expressed the rapture of love, when she glanced at her child it was suspiciously and with a gleam of hatred. Her preparations were for going out. She was long at the famous mirror, and when she left it her hair was elaborately dressed and her face so transformed . . . [O]n her feet she put a foolish little pair of red shoes, on her head a hat too gay with flowers, and across her shoulders a flimsy white shawl at which the night air of Thrums would laugh (185; ch.16)

The "distant galloping" (184) of male salvation, combined with references to magical metamorphoses, red shoes and secret quests, unite to present a distorted likeness of nursery stories which would have resonated not only with Barrie's readership, but with Grizel herself. However, the maternal space she is obliged to fill in childhood subverts the purpose of such tales as parental instruments in the moral education of children. The Painted Lady's inadequacies as a mother have resulted in her perpetual living-out of such fables, rather than inculcating them as part of the female creative's storytelling cycle. Grizel's physical response to her mother's self-delusion (she "had taken up her doll once more and was squeezing it to her breast. She knew very well what was going on behind her back" [185; ch.16]) is an expression of her need for the escapism of creative play. The girl literally turns her back on the specious fancies that overwhelm her mother's sense of self, and at the same time she exhibits (through her attachment to Griselda as an object doubly representative of her own childhood and maternity) a deep emotional investment in the creative role of which the transmission of stories is so vital a component.

Indeed, uncannily like Esther Summerson before her,<sup>77</sup> Grizel pours

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<sup>77</sup> Ormond points out various parallels between the women, noting that, "Grizel [is] so like [Esther] in so many ways" (73). Ormond concentrates on the similarities in their social class (illegitimate orphaned housekeepers) and the closeness of Barrie's characters, Gemmell and McQueen, to Dickens' Woodcourt and Jarndyce. However, Barrie almost certainly drew influence from Esther Summerson

confidence and tenderness into her doll as the only vessel accepting of her unconditional love, and the sole audience for her stories. Grizel's interaction with Griselda in the afore-mentioned scene is conducted in silence behind the walls of Double Dykes; however, the doll answers a primal need in Grizel's hunt for identity. With "the painted eyes and mouth . . . incorporated long since in loving Grizel's system" (181; ch16), Barrie implies that Grizel imbibes the stories of belonging and maternal love she tells to Griselda, "incorporating" into herself the flawed yet beloved qualities of the doll. Traumatized by her mother's rejection, Grizel's fierce embrace of Griselda functions as an assimilation of selfhood in the same way that the female creative "reaches toward" (Gilbert and Gubar 16-17) the woman in the mirror. The union of girl and doll sanctifies the imperfections of the life from which Griselda is composed.

### 3.2 "A Perfect Lover After All": Grizel's Reclaimed Selfhood and Narrative Subversion

Alongside Griselda, the mirror and keys are utilised as important symbolic tools in the craft of the domestic creative; the presence of these objects, and the ways in which they are portrayed, can therefore be read as Barrie's endorsement of Grizel's creative energy. Yet it cannot be denied that Grizel's voice – her own capacity for

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when writing other aspects of Grizel's character, namely her reliance upon Griselda. In her classic opening monologue, Esther describes her beautiful, passive doll, Dolly, as her only audience: "I seldom dared to open my lips, and never dared to open my heart, to anybody else" (Dickens *BH* 14). As with Griselda, Dolly is established as a projection of her human counterpart. However, unlike the drive for union exhibited in Grizel's love for Griselda, in Esther's case the doll is used as a prop deprived of voice or intellect, demonstrating Summerson's separation – as the dynamic, inventive and sexually 'stained' storyteller - from the infantilised fantasy of womanhood that Dolly represents in *Bleak House*.

inventing and retelling stories - is silenced thrice. Behind the walls of Double Dykes - the home-space which affirms her transgressive power – Grizel's words to both mother and doll are mimed rather than articulated for Barrie's readers to comprehend. Her experience is imprisoned for a second time within Tommy's commentary and authorship, and finally, by the narration of the novel itself. Grizel's subjective experience of female illegitimacy is consigned to the isolation of Double Dykes, as a metaphor for the 'unconventional' identity which cannot be resolved or tolerated in the respectable social spaces of Thrums itself. By transmuting the inassimilable<sup>78</sup> female voice into one impacting only upon an audience of inanimate objects within the domestic space, Barrie appears to marginalise the *Tommy* novels' sole source of dissenting non-conformity.

Yet, in truth Grizel's positioning at the close of *Tommy and Grizel* stands as an unequivocal statement of empowerment. The narrator concludes:

And so the Painted Lady's daughter has found a way of making Tommy's life the story of a perfect lover after all. The little girl she had been comes stealing back into the book and rocks her arms joyfully, and we see Grizel's crooked smile for the last time (Barrie *TG* 431; ch.35)

Explicitly framing Grizel as little more than the psychic legatee of her maddened mother ("And so the *Painted Lady's daughter* . . . " [my italics]<sup>79</sup>) the narrator appears to accentuate the tragedy of Grizel's frustrated potential, juxtaposing her

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<sup>78</sup> Grizel is acutely aware of her linguistic alterity, and is regularly teased by other children for lapsing into her mother's idiolect. In Chapter 12, Tommy is surprised by her "sweet voice" (*ST* 146), but his exclamation – "You're English!" – is greeted with "offensive" reactions from the other children (146).

<sup>79</sup> My italics in this case.

misfortune with Tommy's eventual (albeit posthumous) success. Indeed, Barrie cultivates Tommy's ability to "find a way", or stage-manage real-life situations to his advantage, as a foundational aspect of his character. In *Sentimental Tommy*, it is observed that the phrase is "a favourite crow of his"<sup>80</sup> (193; ch.27) and it is used candidly throughout both novels to refer to his magnificent capacity for accomplishing small miracles in unlikely circumstances.<sup>81</sup> In the closing paragraph, the narrator appears to suggest that Grizel commits a final act of sacrifice in her tribute to Tommy, by "finding a way" to bring his story to the gratifying conclusion he intended for himself. Although she knows the unedifying truth of his death,<sup>82</sup> Grizel's silence enables the transmission of a romanticised version: "The surmise at the Spittal, immediately accepted by the world as a fact, was that he had been climbing the wall to obtain for Grizel the flowers accidentally left in the garden, and it at once tipped the tragedy with gold" (*TG* 422; ch.35). That Tommy's posthumous elevation to The Perfect Lover is facilitated by the woman who loved him and for whom he purportedly died, is, the narrator rather archly insinuates, the only logical conclusion to this story: "Tommy, as you have seen, was always the great one; she

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<sup>80</sup> One need only look to *Peter Pan* for confirmation of the uniquely identifying vocal signature of the "crow" (Barrie *PP* 144).

<sup>81</sup> The opening chapter of *Tommy and Grizel* - "How Tommy Found A Way" – functions as a bold statement of Tommy's resourcefulness in all areas of his life, a facet of his personality that forms a coherent plot-thread from his boyhood right through to his death. As that chapter plays out, it is evident that not only has Tommy managed to liberate himself from a degrading future in farm labouring, but he has convinced Elspeth to accompany him to London where he intends to "find a way" to become rich, successful, famous and desired, despite having no money, qualifications, or experience. Tommy can "find a way" to stretch and tweak reality to suit his purposes in countless situations, but, in his hubris, he is sacrificed to the "little gods" (*TG* 391; ch.32) who know he can never find a way to be the "perfect lover" (427; ch.35).

<sup>82</sup> Tommy is hanged when McQueen's overcoat catches on a railing surrounding a private flower garden, into which he is pursuing Alice Pippinworth when his "magerful" (*ST* 116; ch.10) nature overcomes him for a final time.

existed only that he might show how great he was"(423; ch.35).

Yet it is no accident that this last chapter is riddled with tonal, structural and lexical ambiguities designed to unsettle the most basic assumptions made by readers about the core message of the *Tommy* novels. The narrator playfully reaches out, a mere four pages before the novel's end, to ask: "[H]ave you seen through me all the time?" (428; ch.35), before explaining that: "I was really pitying the boy who was so fond of games that he could not with years become a man." Accompanying the narrator's oblique pity and "unnecessary scorn" (428) for Tommy is a correspondingly disguised championing of Grizel. In fact, that the closing paragraph of Tommy's story belongs to her is an indisputable proclamation of narratorial (and authorial) support for the story of unconventional womanhood that Grizel's character has come to represent.

In the end, Grizel completes a task of which Tommy, throughout his lifetime, was demonstrably incapable. Moreover, in reclaiming his signature phrase she retrospectively changes the direction of the entire narrative. If one considers again the final sentences of *Tommy and Grizel*, it becomes clear that the story of, and by, Tommy has been re-appropriated along with his words:

*And so the Painted Lady's daughter has found a way of making Tommy's life the story of a perfect lover after all. The little girl she had been comes stealing back into the book and rocks her arms joyfully, and we see Grizel's crooked smile for the last time.*

Grizel has indeed succeeded in transforming the story of Tommy into one of pure, enriching love – crucially, however, it is a love in which Tommy can play no part. It is

Grizel who emerges as the perfect lover as she welcomes "back into the book" the second self who emboldens and sanctifies her creative dynamism. Far from exiting the story as the Painted Lady's daughter – an (unjustifiably) derogatory designation in the context of these novels – Barrie crafts a lingering image of Grizel as a woman restored to glorious wholeness.

Furthermore, the nonchalant acknowledgment, a few paragraphs earlier, that she "lived on at Double Dykes . . . too strong and fine a nature to succumb" (430; ch.35), strengthens the association between Grizel's creative power and the enervating properties of the domestic space in which her own story of selfhood has been honed. Beaming the "crooked smile" with which we have come to associate her, Grizel basks in the genuinely perfect love that exists, unfettered, between the female creative and her mirror other, her alternate selves, her maternal predecessors in the canon and the offspring she reproduces in her art – of which, Barrie hints, "the book" (whether a book within the world of the novel or the *Tommy* novels themselves) is itself an example.

In this light, we might briefly re-examine Barrie's interpretation of the conflict between maternal and artistic creativity in *The Little White Bird*. The close of that text features a revelation from new-mother Mary, in which she rebukes the narrator's waspish accusation that in prioritising maternal creativity – in *obtaining* the little white bird - she lost to him the opportunity to create the tale itself. Claiming that the story she had always intended to write, 'was of your little white bird. . . a little boy whose name was Timothy"', Mary's reaction to the narrator's

completed work of art is an unambivalent expression of her ultimate creative conquest:

She was both laughing and crying, which was no surprise, for all of us would laugh and cry over a book about such an interesting subject as ourselves, but said she, "How wrong you are in thinking this book is about me and mine, it is really all about Timothy. . . And so," said she, clapping her hands after the manner of David when he makes a great discovery, "it proves to be my book after all."

"With all your pretty thoughts left out," I answered, properly humbled.

She spoke in a lower voice as if David must not hear. "I had only one pretty thought for the book," she said, "I was to give it a happy ending."

(Barrie *LWB* Ch.26)

Mary's role here assumes some of the sly omnipotence of the *Tommy* novels' narrator. She, like Grizel, has been presented as the subject of the text, imagined and framed by a male narrator "with all her pretty thoughts left out", only to reveal at the conclusion of the story that she has always been its true author; that it is "my book after all". As with Grizel's discovery of perfect love within herself, Mary's secret and subversive control of the story transforms it from a tragedy of her unfulfilled potential into something with a "happy ending". These thematic and textual similarities between *Tommy and Grizel* and *The Little White Bird* provide compelling evidence of Barrie's enduring commitment to the elucidation and emboldening of the triumph of the female creative.

Despite devoting two sizeable texts to the exposition of the life of a psychologically-complex boy, Barrie's original motivation in writing *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* – the explication of illegitimate girlhood - attains subversive aesthetic fulfilment in its closing acknowledgement of feminine creative

power. Grizel's story runs parallel to Tommy's, with the subtleties of her experience often subjugated to the elaborate set-pieces which constitute his. Yet it is through this technical restraint that Barrie accentuates the storytelling potential of the domestic space. Grizel's interactions with three household items intimately related to Double Dykes – the vulgar looking-glass, the key of enclosure, and her doll, Griselda - effect the transmission of a story utterly separate from the core narrative of the *Tommy* novels. By reading through the interstices of these items' relationship to Grizel, to one another, and to the domestic space in which we encounter them, it is possible to discern that at work in this story of boyhood is an ultimately liberating – and, for Barrie scholars, a potentially unexpected - message of feminine agency.

Identical words could be spoken of the next text I will discuss in this thesis. Indeed, Roth surmises that; "despite the arguments put forth in almost every critical review and reading of the play . . . *Peter Pan*, [Barrie's] most popular play and a hallmark of Edwardian boy-worship, begins and ends as the story of a little girl" (48; 52). In the following chapter, I will argue that the interior, realistic locale of the Darlings' night nursery is a space which simultaneously enshrines and deconstructs idealised visions of femininity. Although the climactic episode of the scene is popularly perceived to be the Darling siblings' escape to Never Land with Peter, a destabilising narrative is threaded through the meticulous stage directions and non-verbal action of Barrie's 1928 play-text. This alternative story offers critical audiences a perspective upon the conflicts, dangers and rebellions at work in that most sacred of Edwardian domestic havens: the children's nursery.

## Chapter Four- Beautiful Mothers? Angels as Mermaids in *Peter Pan*<sup>83</sup>

They sat thus night after night recalling that fatal Friday, till every detail of it was stamped on their brains and came through on the other side like the faces on a bad coinage . . . They would sit there in the empty nursery, recalling fondly every smallest detail of that dreadful evening. It had begun so uneventfully, so precisely like a hundred other evenings, with Nana putting on the water for Michael's bath and carrying him to it on her back. (Barrie *PW* 15)

*Peter and Wendy* is the novelised version of *Peter Pan*, published seven years after the play's debut performance in 1904 and seventeen years before any form of the theatrical production was published at all;<sup>84</sup> its appearance in 1911 provided an opportunity for Barrie to indirectly pre-empt much of the modern criticism levelled at the play. In his introduction to the Oxford Classics edition of *Peter Pan*, Hollindale suggests that that Barrie "overdoes it" with the theatrical signalling, remarking that it, and his other dramatic works, could be seen as "throwbacks to novelisation, with the literary stage direction as a Trojan horse allowing covert reoccupation of the house of fiction" (xvi); similarly, Trewin observes that, "Barrie luxuriated in stage directions. His plays in printed form are often a trickle of dialogue through a forest of commentary" (62). The return to third-person prose in *Peter and Wendy* is instrumental in Barrie's revivification of the wealth of un-actable spatial detail employed – but never, as I have argued previously in this thesis, fully elucidated – in the play version.

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<sup>83</sup> This refers to the "acutely embarrassing" (Hollindale xiii) "Beautiful Mothers" scene which briefly appeared in early versions of *Peter Pan*, but did not survive the first season.

<sup>84</sup> The first published edition of the play-text of *Peter Pan* appeared in 1928, whilst the first performance was, of course, in December of 1904.

The passage with which this chapter opens is the culmination of extensive framing material, bringing to a close Barrie's fanciful explication of the Darling parents' romantic history as well as elaborate descriptions of the thought processes of all five of the Darlings on various subjects. The action of the tale – or, at least, the action which appears in the play version of *Peter Pan* – is introduced in snatches of cryptic analepses, presented in the half-utterances of Mr and Mrs Darling as they mournfully discuss what might have been had they not done this or that "on that never-to-be-forgotten Friday" (Barrie *PW* 15). The Darlings' exchange constitutes an elegant descent into the original account of their children's Never Land adventures with Peter Pan; however, by the time Barrie has effectively 're-wound' his narration in the novel to the point at which the play opens, *Peter and Wendy* has already furnished the reader with a sense of foreboding that is less directly communicated in the nursery scenes of the 1904 production.<sup>85</sup> The section of the novel quoted above stands as an unequivocal reiteration of the dormant menace of the nursery, conveying a seething unease beneath the façade of domestic respectability in the Darling home. I have chosen to analyse the 1928 play-text of *Peter Pan* rather than its novelised form precisely because the fluidity inherent in the interpretation of

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<sup>85</sup> Stirling describes the modulation of narrative persona between the 1911 novel and the 1928 play-text: "While the plot of *Peter and Wendy* basically follows that of the play, the prose texts replaces the action on the stage with a narrator who comments on events and directs the reader . . . [t]he play itself was not published until 1928 . . . but in the twenty-four years since its first performance many things changed. Scenes were added and omitted. Most noticeably, Barrie added extensive stage directions to this printed version of the play, indicating not only movement and stage business but also mood, tone, and occasionally back story and commentary on the characters. At times the commentary becomes narrative and the voice of the stage directions resembles the narrator of *Peter and Wendy*, but he is not exactly the same. Many of the commentaries added in the long stage directions of 1928 printed play would be impossible to stage" (Stirling 12).

Barrie's extensive stage directions<sup>86</sup> has historically resulted in this same menace generally being overlooked in performance

Although Stirling contends that Barrie's penchant for revisionist tinkering makes it difficult "to regard either of the canonical published texts – *Peter Pan* or *Peter and Wendy* – as the 'authoritative' version of Peter Pan" (13), it is important to note that the 1928 version - painstakingly authored by Barrie decades after *Peter Pan* debuted onstage – was published by him in the knowledge that it would enjoy far broader consumption and greater longevity than any single theatrical run; the sinister undertones of this printed play-text stand, as such, as the definitive version of the story which most closely approximates Barrie's original concept of *Peter Pan*. As a novelist, we have seen that Barrie delights in confounding communication at various levels of storytelling within his work.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, as a dramatist he ensured that *Peter Pan* was as evanescent as its titular character, reinvented and evolving from one interactive performance to the next. In action, the nuances of malevolence within the domestic space to which Barrie later alludes in *Peter and Wendy* are, even today, rarely played as foundational aspects of the dramatic plot; the script remains a stalwart of theatres' festive programmes, whether acted as gently comedic children's fantasy or as full-blown pantomime.<sup>88</sup> However, by

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<sup>86</sup> I will be working mainly from the play-text of *Peter Pan* (and thus, Barrie's authorship) with occasional allusions to aspects of staging as they appeared in Barrie's own time. I reiterate here that the Uniform Text is a compound version of performance conventions, casting, and directions from 1904-1928 which was always intended to be read rather than presented. However, as I will demonstrate, the innately subjective medium of stage directions largely failed to convey the darkness embedded in Barrie's vision, prior to the printing of this 1928 text.

<sup>87</sup> See this thesis' previous discussion of the *Tommy* narrator's selective truthfulness, and issues of mediation existing between Grizel, Tommy, the narrator and Barrie himself.

<sup>88</sup> White and Tarr contend that Barrie crafted *Peter Pan* as a play which would be recognised and embraced as part of the British pantomimic tradition (xiii). Similarly, in Chapter Two of *Peter Pan's*

analysing Barrie's extensive stage directions in the composite Uniform Text of productions from 1904 onwards, there is arguably space for *Peter Pan* to be staged in a way that tells a rather less child-friendly tale. My analysis will interrogate the play-text of *Peter Pan* in order to demonstrate that the darkness discernible in elements of *Peter and Wendy* was present – if not often presented – in the original stage version produced by Barrie seven years previously.

As evinced in the extract quoted above, the novelist Barrie places an explicit emphasis upon the ambiguous character of the night nursery in *Peter and Wendy*. His description states the existence of danger at the heart of an apparently functioning family; a room uncannily "empty" of children, riddled with "dreadful" retrospective knowledge of "fatal" events. If one returns to the play-text, the scene upon which the curtain rises in Act One has an unmistakably ominous taint. As such, although early twentieth-century audiences settled in for the exciting escapism of a "fairy play",<sup>89</sup> modern critics in possession of Barrie's 1911 novel and 1928 play-text may locate for themselves an undercurrent of hostility in *Peter Pan* beneath the chatter and horseplay of the Darlings' bedtime routine and readable within the contours of the Edwardian nursery. From the outset, setting and prop

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*Shadows*, Stirling compellingly argues that *Peter Pan* references and operates within a general context of pantomime, whilst simultaneously articulating its slight distance from, and deliberating unsettling position within, the genre: "Barrie's play is betwixt-and-between – neither completely a pantomime, nor completely not a pantomime" (Stirling 44).

<sup>89</sup> When discussing the literary context within which Barrie formed the idea for *Peter Pan*, R. Green and Stirling cite the influence of *Bluebell in Fairyland* by Seymour Hicks (1901), although their assessments of the extent of such influence differ. R. Green comments of Barrie that the play "stimulated him, even if it did not contribute very much, to the writing of a fairy play himself" (R. Green 30), whilst Stirling argues that, "the play apparently affected Barrie greatly, according to his biographer Denis Mackail (1941: 319) '... [h]e talked about it, thought about it, and acted parts of it in more than one nursery'" (Stirling 30).

placement is of great importance in the play. Barrie situates the Darling home in verifiable London space ("*a rather depressed street in Bloomsbury*" [PP 87]) via an extensive yet whimsical opening commentary which assembles an instant conflict between the residence's geographical situation and the story in which it will prove to be a fundamental player:

*It is a corner house whose top window, the important one, looks upon a leafy square from which Peter used to fly up to it . . . The street is still here, though the steaming sausage shop has gone; and apparently the same cards perch now as then over the doors, inviting homeless ones to come and stay with the hospitable inhabitants (87).*

Barrie clearly introduces the scene from a position of hindsight. As part of the 1928 play-text, then, readers literally experience the telling of this story as it is stated in the stage directions: long after its real-world debut in the Duke of York's Theatre in 1904, and more than two decades since the Darlings first 'lived' in this street. As the focus segues from exterior to interior, the nursery window thus demarcates a division of space but also of time. Moving from the communal territory of the Bloomsbury district to the intimacy of the Darling home is more than a transition between public and private spheres; it is, additionally, a swoop into the past.<sup>90</sup>

The front-cloth used for this initial portrayal of the Darlings' street offers a vision of rather stagnant mundanity. Barrie's stage directions emphasise that little has changed over the course of the years which have passed, with "*the same cards*"

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<sup>90</sup> The division of space along chronological lines reflects Barrie's use of a similar dramatic technique in *Mary Rose*.

over doorways distinguishing the gentrified Bloomsbury square from the chaotic London of Tommy Sandys' first home, in which "one at least will be off, and another in his place, while we are giving them a line apiece" (*ST* 38; ch.4). Furthermore, the setting offers an effective symbolic contrast for the vibrancy of the Never Land scenes in Acts Two to Four, in which transition, both in technical and thematic terms, is perpetual and unpredictable. Surprisingly, one change has taken place "*since the days of the Darlings*", and it is worthy of mention here. In the midst of frothy staging stipulations about previous illustrious neighbours, or the quaint personification of the house as a nomadic everyman,<sup>91</sup> Barrie produces a rather problematic rendering of the Darling abode in which it is suggested as the site of historical disgrace:

*A lick of paint has been applied; and our corner house in particular, which has swallowed its neighbour, blooms with awful freshness as if the colours had been discharged upon it through a hose. Its card now says, "No children", meaning maybe that the goings-on of Wendy and her brothers have given the house a bad name (PP 87).*

In reality, any gradual withdrawal of children from this neighbourhood is probably attributable to socioeconomic factors, such as Bloomsbury's developing renown as a haven for figures prominent in the arts, progressive politics and education;<sup>92</sup> its

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<sup>91</sup> I previously quoted this excerpt of Barrie's stage directions, in which he states that the house has the flavour of one that wanders "about London". Its appearance is intended to be something to which the audience can relate: "[Y]ou may dump it down anywhere you like, and if you think it was your house you are very probably right" (*PP* 87).

<sup>92</sup> The Bloomsbury Group, which attracted increasing attention between the last years of the nineteenth-century and the middle of the twentieth, was a collective of broadly liberal-minded middle and upper-class British intellectuals and artists; their work, studies and socialisation centred around Cambridge University and the Bloomsbury area of London. Most famous amongst them today is

transformation into an upmarket borough of London popular with creatives and intellectuals would, logically, have driven out such families as the Darlings, whose financially-constricted status forms the skeleton of *Peter Pan's* plot. However, the language Barrie uses to detail something as mundane as the semi-organic process of gentrification is deliberately troubling.

For a play which in so many ways supposedly glorifies childhood and children, the series of images in the passage quoted above is - at the very least - unsettling. The house has been garishly modernised, painted and expanded, yet Barrie is careful to specify that such renovations are not merely aesthetic. The almost oxymoronic employment of "*awful freshness*", married to the cannibalistic subtext of a house that has "*swallowed its neighbour*" suggests a discomfiting over-compensation in the corner-building's changed appearance. Possibly the most definitive allusion to the existence of a pall upon the house is, however, its distinction from its neighbours in the updated card above its door. Whilst avoiding imposing upon the text any conclusive explanation of whether "*No Children*" is an order or a statement of fact, Barrie does directly – if factually disingenuously - attribute the presentation of the sign itself to whatever the consequences the behaviour of "*Wendy and her brothers*" had upon the generations of residents to come. Not only, therefore, does the opening scenery of *Peter Pan* position the Darling house in a context antithetical to the celebration of childlike innocence of which this text is purportedly evocative, it directly contradicts the trajectory of the

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arguably Virginia Woolf, along with fellow Edwardian writers Lytton Strachey and E.M. Forster, and the economist John M. Keynes.

play itself, in which the traditions of Peter and Never Land are joyously relived in perpetuity through Wendy and her own children.

Critically, Barrie's stage directions evoke a vision of the Darling home unfamiliar to modern audiences raised upon the cosy cinematic imaginings of Walt Disney or P.J. Hogan. As Tuite notes, "[w]ith the popularity of the musical and the ubiquity of the animated film, it is difficult for contemporary audiences to overcome these dominant and conventional iterations of Barrie's play and recapture the wonder *and danger* that its early theatrical productions inspired" (105; my italics). Indeed, even these "early theatrical productions" in Barrie's own lifetime<sup>93</sup> eschew any significant portrayal of the Darlings' Bloomsbury street. Describing the six weeks of *Peter Pan* in rehearsal for its 1904 debut, R. Green attests that:

On the first programme of all, Act 1 contains two scenes, the first being Outside the House – a scene which was never played, and which was probably little more than a glimpse, possibly with Peter hovering about, which went up almost at once, disclosing the Nursery (77).

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<sup>93</sup> The animated Disney film of *Peter Pan*, released in the United Kingdom in 1953, alongside Hogan's live-action film fifty years later (2003) together stand as the means by which the majority of audiences – regardless of age, location, or income - can visually access Barrie's story (Stirling 2). In her exploration of sequels to *Peter Pan*, Stirling interrogates the ways in which such cinematic reimaginings diverge from, or cohere to, Barrie's earlier visions of the story. In one instance, she points out that whilst Hogan's Hook (Jason Isaacs) voices original dialogue from the play, it is reframed around an adolescent love story between Peter and Wendy (Stirling 125), whilst in another, she charts how the 2003 film recharacterises Wendy altogether in order to satisfy a more explicitly feminist sensibility (130) – arguably thereby nullifying the more subtly subversive feminine deviance inherent to Barrie's scripting of the Darling women. Whilst my own references to the Disney and Hogan films may appear anachronistic in a discussion centred around the performance conventions and alternative readings of the play in Barrie's lifetime, I do so with the intention of demonstrating the continuing predominance of certain interpretations of *Peter Pan* - namely, those interpretations which cohere to visions of the domestic space as safe, warm and knowable – and illustrating the validity of my own reading of the play.

Similarly, in both Disney and Hogan films, the exterior of the house is seen fleetingly as the camera pans into the nursery; in both versions, the colour palette is muted and nocturnal, shades of blue and grey intersected only by the glow of lamp-lit windows. These enduring visual representations of where and *how* the Darlings live pointedly ignore the tawdry, engulfing, papering-over-of-unpleasantness imagined by Barrie as an integral part of the house's appearance: as might be expected, the "No Children" sign is not part of either cinematic set and is rarely, if ever, an acknowledged aspect of stage furniture.<sup>94</sup>

Once the curtain rises upon the play, the inconsistency of a house proclaiming itself to be child-free alongside a room dedicated to the nurturance of children, assumes still more significance. The night nursery positions the Darling offspring as integral to dramatic action as well as to the lives of their parents: the roleplay in which Wendy and John mimic Mr and Mrs Darling labours the extent of the sacrifices that the adults have made for their progeny in both emotional and material terms:

JOHN: (*good-naturedly*) I am happy to inform you, Mrs Darling, that you are now a mother. (*Wendy gives way to ecstasy*). You have missed the chief thing; you haven't asked, "boy or girl"?

WENDY: I am so happy to have one at all, I don't care which it is.

JOHN: (*crushingly*) That is the difference between gentleman and ladies. Now you tell me.

WENDY: I am happy to acquaint you, Mr Darling, you are now a father.

JOHN: Boy or girl?

WENDY: (*presenting herself*) Girl.

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<sup>94</sup> R. Green extensively charts the evolution of *Peter Pan* from its rehearsal period in 1904, to the "stage history" (121) encompassing years of its performance; although the play undergoes continual change in terms of its composition, casting and the developing demands of its "special effects" (83), Act One remains relatively constant: "Scene One is the Darling Nursery, and is very little different from the first act as we now know it" (43).

JOHN: Tuts.  
 WENDY: You horrid.  
 JOHN: Go on.  
 WENDY: I am happy to acquaint you, Mr Darling, you are again a father.  
 JOHN: Boy or girl?  
 WENDY: Boy. (*John beams*) Mummy, it's hateful of him.  
 (*Michael emerges from the bathroom in John's old pyjamas and giving his face a last wipe with the towel*)  
 MICHAEL: (*expanding*) Now, John, have me.  
 JOHN: We don't want any more.  
 MICHAEL: (*contracting*) Am I not to be born at all?  
 JOHN: Two is enough.  
 MICHAEL: (*wheedling*) Come, John; boy, John. (*Appalled*) Nobody wants me!  
 MRS DARLING: I do (*Barrie PP 89-90*)

The hyperbole of Wendy and John's play-acting as their mother and father does not negate the truth underlying its comedy. Throughout Act One in the nursery, the behaviour of the Darling adults entirely validates their children's exaggerated interpretation; George's irritability, cowardice and baseless assumption of paternal superiority in all decisions are characteristics seemingly tempered by Mary, who – in attempting to appease her husband – effortlessly steers him according to her preferences.

Critics are divided in their readings of the parents' psychologies. Coats perceives Mr Darling as the embodiment of negative Victorian patriarchy – "petty, miserly, and obsessive" (12) – whilst Gaarden defends his apparent small-mindedness, arguing that the dinner-party speech (in which he extrapolates his family's eventual homelessness from his inability to tie his tie) is "based in the hard facts of middle-class Victorian life . . . it is clear that he is the only one in his family who feels the truth of this" (77). Gaarden evinces scorn for "Barrie's women" – in her words, "programmed and dominated from childhood by a ruthless reproductive

instinct that drives them as relentlessly as heat-seeking missiles toward marriage and motherhood" (81); yet Morse locates in Mrs Darling a laudable sexual autonomy:

All of the children celebrate their mother's domestic sovereignty by playing at being born. When John, playing the role of his father, attempts to block Michael from birth and the younger child laments, "Nobody wants me", Mrs Darling reprises her role in the arrival of her children and intervenes: "I do" . . . As evidenced by the children's play, Mrs Darling and her sexual power are the features around which the Darling home is constructed (282).

What is indisputable is that the child-specific setting of the nursery bolsters the humorous message of Wendy and John's roleplay; namely, that parental devotion is nothing less than the martyrdom of any remnant of individuality. When the children play as their parents, the status endowed upon Mr and Mrs Darling as a new father or mother obliterates all other aspects of their identities. Their only accepted and expected purpose is to express joy at the expansion of their family.

Barrie hyperbolises the imbalance of such familial dynamics when he relocates the Darling children to Never Land. In Act Two, the Lost Boys mistakenly shoot the "Wendy bird" (111) from the sky before scurrying to protect her. Whilst they bustle back and forth to construct a house sheltering the girl's unconscious form, John's bemused comment that Wendy is "only a girl" is met with the following response, infused with the internal logic of the fantasy world: "CURLY: That is why we are her servants' (114)". Furthermore, as the scene progresses, Barrie directly correlates the particulars of the house-building process to the domestic realm from which the children have been plucked: "PETER: *(with an already fading recollection*

of the Darling nursery) These are not good enough for Wendy! How I wish I knew the kind of house she would prefer!" (115). As the somniloquent Wendy proceeds to list her precise spatial requirements through song ("funny little red walls", "roof of mossy green", "gay windows all around", and "roses peeping in" [115, 316]), the house takes shape around her.

It should be noted that this episode is lifted – with minor changes - from Barrie's earlier treatment of the Pan story in *The Little White Bird* (1902), which is itself later resituated in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906). In that source material, Maimie Mannering is the transgressive girl who evades her nurse's supervision to linger in Kensington Gardens after the gates have been locked. By spying on the fairies and their sumptuous ball, she incurs their wrath, culminating in their murderous pursuit of her; "an angry multitude; she saw a thousand swords flashing for her blood" (PPKG 213). When the fairies catch Maimie, she is: "in danger of perishing of cold" (214), and although their solution linguistically mirrors the treatment of Wendy – compare "Build a house round her!" (214) to Peter's "Let us build a house around her!" (PP 114) – Kensington Gardens' fairies are characterised by Barrie as a much more menacing species than Never Land's bumbling crew of Lost Boys: "When she rushed away, they had rent the air with such cries as 'Slay her!' 'Turn her into something very unpleasant, and so on" (PPKG 213).

In *Peter Pan*, Barrie subdues the overt terror<sup>95</sup> of Maimie Mannering's ordeal

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<sup>95</sup> Unlike Maimie, Wendy is not chased, nor is she alone in a realistic domain renowned for its all-too-factual dangers (Jackson notes that the Parks Regulation Act [1872] precipitated increased public awareness of "parks and open spaces" as sites which were easily exploited in the commission of

by transforming the vaguely sinister nature of the dwelling made to hide her near-death body from public view, into a communal bonding exercise which – in literally building a house around Wendy – places the desires of the Edwardian child at the very heart of the home. Additionally, once completed the 'Wendy house' visually performs the cultural process of domesticising and maturing the feminine presence at its core. In her song, Wendy stipulates that her house must be full of babies "peeping out" (PP 316), and upon waking, she emerges from it as a fully-fledged mother:

WENDY: (*stroking the pretty thing*) Lovely, darling house.

FIRST TWIN: And we are your children.

. . . .

WENDY: Very well then, I will do my best. (*In their glee, they dance obstreperously round the little house and she sees she must be firm with them as well as kind.*) Come inside at once, you naughty children, I am sure your feet are damp. And before I put you to bed I have just time to finish the story of *Cinderella* (116).

Wendy's awakening to her own, displaced version of the "darling house" constitutes an official acceptance of her new status as both literal foundation and product of her fantasy home-space. Moreover, by extension, she accepts her ascension into the cycle of oratorical creativity ("I have just time to finish the story of *Cinderella*") with which maternity is, for Barrie, intrinsically linked. In addition, during Act Four Wendy and John's playing at parenthood in the Darling nursery is recalled in an exchange

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serious sexual crimes towards the end of the nineteenth century [44]). Furthermore, Wendy's survival is almost immediately assured when Peter declares that his "kiss" has saved her life (Barrie PP 103), whereas Maimie's recovery is, albeit temporarily, less certain.

between Wendy and Peter:

WENDY: *(Peter and Wendy with her darning are left by the fire to totter parentally . . . She is too loving to be ignorant that he is not loving enough, and she hesitates like one who knows the answer to her question)* What is wrong, Peter?

PETER: *(scared)* It is only pretend, isn't it, that I am their father?

WENDY: *(drooping)* Oh yes.

*(His sigh of relief is without consideration for her feelings)*

But they are ours, Peter, yours and mine . . . What are your exact feelings for me, Peter?

PETER: Those of a devoted son, Wendy (129-30).

Just as Wendy and John's roleplay in the domestic sphere of the nursery positions their parents as adjuncts to (or mere facilitators of) the child's existence, the 'parental' conversation between Peter and Wendy in the make-believe realm of Never Land exposes the lack of substance underlying the parental identity when the child, its *raison d'etre*, is temporarily removed. Although Peter's own selfhood has been established as something which undergoes constant evolution,<sup>96</sup> it is Wendy's 'secure' role as substitute mother which is weakened when its hollowness is revealed.<sup>97</sup> It is immediately after realising that fully-rounded personhood is being denied to her in the Never Land roleplay that Wendy resumes her tale-telling to the Lost Boys; however this time, her fiction is threaded through with confused memories of home, summoned to her conscious mind by their echoes in her own

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<sup>96</sup> Throughout the play, Peter is variously: The Great White Father, an honorary Piccaninny tribe member with imperialist overtones (Barrie *PP* 128); a Hook impersonator (120); "youth, joy and a little bird that has broken out of the egg" (145) and a creature whose allegiance switches between warring parties: "*Peter, who will be the determining factor in the end, has a perplexing way of changing sides if he is winning too easily*" (123).

<sup>97</sup> In this exchange, Wendy is shown to be neither wife to Peter nor a woman in her own right, but simply exists to mother the Lost Boys.

performance of parenthood.

Taken together, John's incredulity at this newly gendered hierarchy ("she is only a girl"[114]) and the stage direction that emphasises the inadequacy of the nursery as a domestic locale which doesn't devote itself wholly to the supremacy of the child ("These are not good enough for Wendy!" [115]) initially appear to restate the problems of the home space. The girl child who is less desirable than her brothers, and the dormant hostility of the nursery are symbolically summoned to the reader's consciousness, only for Barrie to resolve both tensions in the elevation of Wendy in Never Land's hierarchy, with her every material desire fulfilled. However, as the Never Land scenes progress to encompass the transformative magic of the 'Wendy house', Wendy's fulfilment of the maternal role re-energises and gives new legitimacy to the anxieties her own mother cannot verbalise in the domestic space of their Bloomsbury nursery. In Never Land, the placing of the child - in this case, Wendy - at the centre of the home results in the 'adult' woman's own selfhood being sacrificed to the claims of maternity, with her minimal power as storyteller circumvented by the destruction of those dreams she has for herself.

Indeed, if we return to the domestic space of *Peter Pan*, evidence of the children's physical dominion at the expense of their parents litters the set in Act One. Barrie instructs that their three beds occupy both left and right sides of the stage (87), boasting "coverlets . . . made out of Mrs Darling's wedding-gown" (88), while items of their clothing are strung across a fire-guard attended by, "two wooden soldiers, home-made, begun by Mr Darling, finished by Mrs Darling, repainted (unfortunately) by John Darling" (88). Overwhelmingly, the arrangements

of the room signify parents whose ambitions and desires are subjugated so as to channel all available resources to their young family. The wedding dress representing one of Mrs Darling's rare personal indulgences before motherhood is chopped into bedclothes, whilst the soldiers whittled by parental hands – and, significantly, finished by Mrs Darling – are sabotaged by a son who believes himself both capable of, and entitled to, improving upon their efforts.

The landscape of the Darling nursery is evocative of contemporaneous attitudes to children, with Kincaid, Chapman, Jack and Coats respectively arguing that *fin de siècle* notions of parenting could fall anywhere on a spectrum spanning over-indulgence to a deeply-embedded (subconscious) bitterness. Kincaid in fact devotes an entire chapter to "Resenting Children" in his book, in which he posits that the Victorians' veneration of childhood is inextricable from their repressed adult sexual desires.<sup>98</sup> Kincaid contends that this resulted in emotional extremes vacillating between obsession and hatred in adult relationships with children, which persist globally to this day:

Our lolling nostalgia, child worship and soft eroticism comingle with fear and repulsion. The child that brings life also threatens to end it; and we are always hugging the child with one eye on its jugular. Our adoration is violent and unsettled; our nostalgia the bitterest sweet . . . Why do we punish the child we prize most precisely for being that prize? It is as if somebody has to

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<sup>98</sup> Kincaid asserts: "[B]oth the child and modern sexuality came into being only about two hundred years ago, but it isn't often noted that, in the excitement of getting these two new products on the market, they got mixed together . . . Despite the loud official protestations about children's innocence, our Victorian ancestors managed to make their concept of the erotic depend on the child, just as their idea of the child was based on their notions of sexual attraction" (52). Indeed, in attempts to define "their concept of the erotic" and "notions of sexual attraction", the Victorians had to articulate its opposite – the *negation* of sexuality, which, at least theoretically, is an idealised childhood innocence. Kincaid's analysis specifically references Barrie, *Peter Pan*, and the Llewelyn Davies boys as varying paradigms of the "dream child [that] becomes the demon" (140), noting that "those boys were there for Barrie only for a moment"(144).

reimburse us for all we expend in mooning over adorable children, as if we could cover the guilt such longings bring to us by blaming the adorable child itself . . . The pleasure we take in rejecting children often forms a strong current even in the most cuddly of our cultural fictions (140-1).

Kincaid's analysis exaggerates his modern audience's complicity in this love/hate binary. Similarly, it extrapolates "our" violent intent from behavioural responses towards children which are more accurately termed as impatience or dislike. Yet, it cannot be disputed that the polarity displayed in the Victorians' treatment of children raises the question: why would a culture renowned for romanticising childhood repeatedly take visible pleasure in endangering and disciplining the children both within and beyond its art?

Similarly to Kincaid, Chapman outlines the existence of a "cultural tension" (137) surrounding British middle-classes' cossetting of their offspring at the turn of the century, citing an 1879 testimonial in the household periodical *Golden Hours*:

With palpable disdain, the *Golden Hours* writer denounces the reign of the tyrannical child who wields absolute power in the middle-class home, demanding unceasing attention and admiration from parents, servants and guests alike . . . Given that the self-consciousness of the child who struts in the figurative spotlight of the home could inspire such revulsion, it comes as no surprise that the self-conscious child who strode the boards of the actual theater could elicit a storm of controversy (136-7).

Chapman's analysis, though focused specifically on the stage-character of Peter Pan himself, is applicable to middle-class Edwardian families more generally. She contends that, twenty-five years after the *Golden Hours* article deplored self-conscious children as monstrosities of the middle-class home, in 1904 *Peter Pan* is a

reconciliation of the simultaneous appeal and repugnance of childish self-awareness. The main character as an entity perceived to be "without self" (137) recalls the Romantic conception of the untameable child, immersed in the beauty and purity of the natural world; Peter is obviously enchanting, despite the fact that his story is framed within the eminently self-conscious parameters of performing to a paying audience. Equally, however, the scenes within the night nursery are a paradigmatic display of the childish "despotism" upon the domestic stage (136) that, Chapman argues, "so many late Victorian and Edwardian adults" (136) found obnoxious. If Peter represents the tolerably self-conscious child, the Darling children's metatheatrical roleplay (as well as the other, more typical ways in which they exert control over their parents) are relatable examples of Edwardian children whose occupation of the "figurative spotlight of the home" (136) is less than welcome. Jack concurs, locating in Barrie's characterisation of the Darlings a disapproval of the cossetting and "oppressive" (178) tendencies of Edwardian parenting.

In a similar vein, Coats locates an "often-overlooked" hatred at the "core" of Peter Pan's story (6). She argues that antipathy is present and expressed almost exclusively between Peter and Captain Hook insofar as those characters emblemise the oppositional states of man and boy – itself the essential conflict of the story: "In his authorial asides as well as in his plot structure, Barrie sets up a deliberately antagonistic relationship between childhood and adulthood"(4). Coats' analysis, although thought-provoking, both overstates the violence of this relationship and misidentifies the source of tension. For the majority of audiences,

the antagonism of *Peter Pan* is indeed most overtly expressed in Hook's comedic, ultimately self-defeating pursuit of Peter and the other Never Land children; yet it is in fact bred and nurtured within the domestic space of the Darling home.

Certainly, critics have acknowledged the permeability of the nursery as a locus for danger, particularly as that danger consists in the conceit of having Mr Darling and Hook played by the same actor - and therefore often interpreted as projected facets of one volatile personality. Roth and Gaarden separately remark the visual impact of having villain and father – demoniacal patriarch of Never Land and impotent patriarch of the hearth – share a body.<sup>99</sup> Roth argues that Mr Darling and Hook's cohabitation in a single actor offers the impression that the white adult

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<sup>99</sup> Having convinced Barrie to allow him to take the roles of both Mr. Darling and Captain Hook in the inaugural theatrical run of *Peter Pan* at the Duke's Theatre, Gerald Du Maurier instigated a tradition whereby actors playing Hook would normally also play Mr Darling and vice versa. Discussing the original company of *Peter Pan*, R. Green confirms that, "Gerald du Maurier was [a] most fortunate engagement, doubling Mr Darling with Hook, and thus setting a fashion that many famous actors were to follow" (92). Interestingly, Hook himself was an afterthought for Barrie, created to resolve difficulties in staging transitions; Birkin points out that in his early notes, accessible in Yale's Beinecke Library, Barrie positions Peter, his "demon boy", as the "villain of the story" ([jmbarrie.co.uk](http://jmbarrie.co.uk)). Although the character of Peter himself will not be subject to extensive analysis in this thesis, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the still more famous performance convention of having him played by a female actor. Discussing the illustrious company of actors – from Nina Boucicault to Jean Forbes-Roberston and Pauline Chase – who assumed the role of Peter over the years of the play's London runs, R. Green notes that each woman contributed her own style and charm to the character (123-6). Significantly, he adds that not all Peters were played with any assurance of androgyny: "Many another actress has followed Pauline Chase in charm, gracefulness – and very little ability to disguise the feminine. Gladys Cooper, one of the most notable, who played Peter in 1923 and 1924, interpreted the 'boy-who-would-not-grow-up' as a highly developed young woman" (125). This raises a potentially fascinating future discussion about the visual conflict of a woman's body encapsulating a boy's spirit in the performance of *Peter Pan*. Indeed, Morse addresses something close to such a topic in her study of Mrs Darling's sexuality, in which she frames Peter as Mrs Darling's rebellious double, and the projection of her 'unfeminine' impulses: "In adopting as her doppelganger a male arrested prior to sexual desire, Mrs Darling can grant full rein to her power. In this state, she can be 'cocky', but without the fear of emasculating her husband and her sons" (295). Finally, in a crucial but often overlooked part of the stage history of *Peter Pan*, Birkin reveals that: "Barrie's first instinct was to have [Hook] played by a woman", with his notebook suggesting, "Pirate Captain – Miss Dorothea Baird" ([jmbarrie.co.uk](http://jmbarrie.co.uk)). Given that Baird was initially cast as Mrs Darling, "the idea of the mother-figure doubling as the ostensible villain would have been a gratifying touch, echoing one of Barrie's original titles, 'The Boy who Hated Mothers.'"

male<sup>100</sup> alone is permitted to transcend realms from which other characters are excluded: "[T]he character seems able to travel back and forth between London and Never Land, even though he is an adult – always somewhere between the two worlds" (56). Gaarden concurs, concluding that Mr Darling incorporates aspects of Hook within his parenting:

[He is] Hook-like, directly attacking his children, the primary threats to his household dominance, his financial adequacy and social status, by removing their protector on an evening when he and his wife are going out to dinner . . . The result of his hostile abandonment is, of course, that his children literally disappear . . . in the Never Land of Barrie's fairy tale, the children encounter their father's "natural" murderous hostility unmasked as an enemy pirate (86).

Gaarden's critique positions Mr Darling/Hook as, alternately, the frustrated enabler and/or perpetrator of behaviour and feelings too heinous to be consciously admitted in the 'real' space of the home. Much like the stepmother or witch figure of traditional fairy and folk tales who channels and absorbs infants' maternal hatred,<sup>101</sup> he is dichotomised into the dual personas of father/clerk and

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<sup>100</sup> Mr Darling's position of privilege as a member of the dominant sexual and racial class should not be overlooked, despite the feelings of inadequacy and disempowerment he voices early in the play. Barrie is more than aware of the imperial tensions surrounding white colonisers in the early part of the century, as demonstrated by his satirical cultivation of the ever-elusive, side-switching Peter as the "Great White Father" (*PP* 128). Furthermore, his inclusion of battles between the Native American Piccaninny tribe of Never Land and the quintessentially British 'invaders' – a role fulfilled more than once by Hook's pirates (110-11; 133-4) – attests to his consciousness of the white British patriarch's inherently oppressive, and uniquely liberated, status.

<sup>101</sup> In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim hypothesises that the maturing child copes with radically different manifestations of behaviour or emotions in adults by distinguishing such manifestations into "two separate entities" (67) – a method of psychological distancing which preserves the stability of the 'good' relationship. Bettelheim offers various familial examples of this trope, including the Grandmother-Wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* ("By dividing her up, so to speak, the child can preserve his image of the good grandmother . . . as the story tells him, the wolf is a passing manifestation – Grandma will return triumphant") as well as that of the Mother/Wicked Stepmother: "Similarly, although Mother is most often the all-giving protector, she can change into the cruel stepmother if

predator/pirate as a way of resolving the presence of hatred and fear where socialisation teaches children to expect only love and devotion. Admittedly, within the domestic space Mr Darling's overblown patriarchal tyranny is intended to draw the audience's focus, exciting our own exasperation, dislike, disgusted pity and eventual forgiveness. Yet, it is my contention that a more critical reading of the nursery scenes which enclose the play reveals Mrs Darling to be the true source of disruption, rebellion and antipathy when it comes to children in *Peter Pan*. With maternal dismay and dissatisfaction suggested in the afore-mentioned Never Land roleplay of Acts Two and Four, Barrie implies that it is Mrs Darling in whom the tension between childhood and adulthood relationships truly exists .

Earlier in this thesis, I alluded to the metaphors with which Barrie introduces Mrs Darling when discussing the "secret psychological life" (Bachelard 78) implied in the interior organisation of Aaron Latta's cottage. Indeed, for this purpose it is worth reproducing in full the stage directions describing her first appearance in the play:

*She is the loveliest lady in Bloomsbury, with a sweet mocking mouth, and as she is going out to dinner tonight she is already wearing her evening gown because she knows her children like to see her in it. It is a delicious confection made by herself out of nothing and other people's mistakes. She does not often go out to dinner, preferring when the children are in bed to sit beside them tidying up their minds just as if they were drawers. If Wendy and the boys could keep awake they might see her repacking into their proper places the many articles of the mind that have strayed during the day, lingering humourously over some of their contents, wondering where on*

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she is so evil as to deny the youngster something he wants" (67). Emphasising that this projection of good and evil attributes onto two distinct figures is commonplace in relationships between children and any authoritative figure, Bettelheim further attests that the process is, socially, widely applicable: "Far from being a device used only by fairy tales, such a splitting up of one person into two to keep the good image uncontaminated occurs to many children as a solution to a relationship too difficult to manage or comprehend" (67).

*earth they have picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When they wake in the morning the naughtinesses with which they went to bed are not, alas, blown away, but they are placed at the bottom of the drawer; and on the top, beautifully aired, are their prettier thoughts ready for the new day. As she enters the room she is startled to see a strange little face outside the window and a hand groping as if it wanted to come in. (Barrie PP 89).*

Despite the fact that this entire section is "unactable whimsy" (Hollindale 312) which does not literally appear in the play, the domestic imagery with which Barrie saturates Mrs Darling develops a complexity to her character belying the cloying submissiveness of the dialogue with which she is encumbered. The first half of the description affirms her status as self-abnegating angel of the hearth, eschewing invitations to socialise in favour of sitting dutifully at the bedsides of her sleeping children; similarly to the fate met by her wedding dress, even Mrs Darling's choice of clothing speaks of self-sacrifice as she selects a second-hand evening gown "*because she knows [they] like to see her in it*". In wearing the gown, Mary Darling literally suppresses her individuality: the garment is a conscious refutation of self-expression as it recedes into "*nothing and other people's mistakes*" (my italics, to emphasise the absence of autonomy in Mrs Darling's choice of clothing).

Yet the concluding half of this extract destabilises such reductive readings of the traditional wife and mother. Whilst Mrs Darling's drawer-tidying may be expressed onstage as little more than the solicitous bustle of her evening routine, by employing the spatial metaphors of furniture her angelic domesticity is made furtive and – consequently - problematic. Bachelard categorises drawers of the home as,

"hiding places in which human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets" (73); indeed, Barrie deliberately characterises Mrs Darling as the arbiter of secrecy within the house as she not only tidies the minds of her children, but actively assesses and conceals their secrets for her own (unclear) purposes. Under scrutiny, her maternal attentiveness is revealed as a usurpation of privacy and a monopolisation of household power. After all, she is the only character endowed with the capacity to romanticise ("*pressing this to her cheek*") or sanitise ("*hurriedly stowing that out of sight*") the manner in which her children are presented to the world, yet she is simultaneously the only character fully in possession of the most damning aspects of their inner psychological lives. That Mrs Darling's omniscience has an ulterior motive becomes clear with the assertion that she does not cleanse or reform the children's "*naughtinesses*" but stores them "*at the bottom of the drawer*" - where, presumably, only she may control when they are accessed and how they are made use of.

Despite the tone of the staging notes fostering this more mysterious aspect of Mrs Darling's character, the most telling indication of tension between the mother and her children is located in her conscious acknowledgment of Peter Pan. In the play, her glimpse of the "*strange little face at the window*" is not an isolated incident; she confides that, "this is not the first time I have seen that boy . . . [T]he first time was a week ago" (92). Mrs Darling speaks of her enduring disquiet to her husband, yet her solution to the recurrent riddle of an otherworldly intruder is not to stay at home that evening so as to protect her precious babies, but to impress upon Mr Darling the need to keep their canine nanny – whom he promptly

condemns to the garden in a fit of piqué.

The earnestness of the Darling parents' discussion about the safety of their children is punctuated by satirical touches in the dialogue and stage directions, such as Mr Darling's mercenary remark about taking Peter's captive shadow to be valued at the British Museum (93) or the pair's lapse into a juvenile exchange echoing Wendy and Michael's earlier skit ("MR DARLING: [*who knows exactly the right moment to treat a woman as a beloved child*] Cowardy, coward custard. MRS DARLING: [*pouting*] No, I'm not"). Finally, the potentially serious nature of the scene dissolves into slapstick, with the Darlings pausing pensively ("MRS DARLING: [*Sliding her hand into his*] George, what can all this mean?") before Nana returns with the medicine bottle for Michael, precipitating Mr Darling's decisive humiliation and her exile from the nursery.

Upon leaving for the soirée, Mrs Darling's dialogue ventriloquises that of a conventional concerned mother. For the benefit of her children and the audience alike, she declares aloud, "Oh, how I wish I was not going out to dinner tonight" (97) but at the same time demonstrates the extent of her complicity in their disappearance by entreating them to "Be brave, my dears"(96). The exhortation is a clear, if subtle, anticipation of their Never Land adventures, replacing the more traditional "be good" or "sleep tight" expected to accompany the belief that her children will spend the night asleep in the nursery. Moreover, her response to Michael when he asks if any harm can come to him or his siblings "after the night-lights are lit" (97) is less an assurance of protection than an admission of the panoptical power she possesses within the domestic space:

MRS DARLING: Nothing, precious. They are the eyes a mother leaves behind her to guard her children . . . (*with a last look round, her hand on the switch*)  
Dear night-lights that protect my sleeping babes, burn clear and steadfast to-night.

*The nursery darkens, and she is gone, intentionally leaving the door ajar. Something uncanny is going to happen, we expect, for a quiver has passed through the room, just sufficient to touch the night-lights. They blink three times one after the other and go out . . . (97)*

Just as the lamplit window of Double Dykes functions as the house's eye, Mrs Darling bestows humanity upon the night-lights by designating them to be the eyes of a mother. Bachelard notes that, "[t]hrough its light alone, the house becomes human. It sees like a man. It has an eye open to night" (35); the obvious extension here is that the Darling house not only sees like a *woman*, but is entirely subject to feminine control. The mother who observes and regulates her children's most intimate desires and emotions; the wife who foresees and diffuses the melodramas of her husband: Mrs Darling as all-seeing and all-knowing authority of the home-space uses her parting words not to protect her offspring from danger, but to summon that danger into the space she - and only she - oversees. Read in this manner, her farewell is phrased as premise rather than promise: should she want her "sleeping babes" to enjoy her motherly protection, the night-lights must "burn clear and steadfast". As such, if the night-lights of the nursery are an extension of the maternal gaze, the darkness which immediately follows Mrs Darling's departure is the act of a mother closing her eyes to the menace she has knowingly invited into her home.

This analysis of Mrs Darling's misdeeds is not a demonstration of the

presence of viciousness within her character. Rather, it is intended to liberate her often overlooked role, repositioning the idealised, somewhat extraneous wife and mother as a source of power who is subverting the Edwardian heteronormative mores she appears to exemplify within the domestic space. Morse has produced a compelling reading of Mrs Darling as a woman "in unconscious conflict with Victorian social expectations" (282) whilst Jack has highlighted how Mrs Darling's "constant short-term strivings to falsify into innocence a world of savagery leave Wendy and the others vulnerable" (179). Consequently, although both critics identify a depth to Mrs Darling – a character normally "of little interest to critics beyond her possible role as the object of Peter Pan's Oedipal desires" (Morse 282) – neither Morse (with her assertion that Mrs Darling's conflict is "unconscious") nor Jack (when he characterises her interaction with her children as the obviously detrimental behaviour of just another fussing mother) give Barrie sufficient credit for his purposeful cultivation of Mrs Darling's atypicality. Auerbach has alighted upon an alternative terminology which better defines this complex, enigmatic idea of turn-of-the-century womanhood:

Angels were thought to be self-sacrificial by nature: in this cautiously diluted form, they were pious emblems of a good woman's submergence in her family. Mermaids on the other hand, submerge themselves not to negate their power but to conceal it . . . The mermaid is a more aptly inclusive device than the angel, for she is a creature of mysterious transformations and interrelations, able to kill and to regenerate but not to die, unfurling in secret her powers of mysterious, pre-Christian, pre-human dispensation (7).

The Victorian angel-woman is – as this thesis has established – a ubiquitous and

convenient literary image encompassing idealised feminine qualities of passivity, maternity and an immersion of the female subject in domestic affairs; yet by juxtaposing this image with the less intuitive metaphorical image of the mermaid-woman, Auerbach situates mid-nineteenth-century womanhood in a wider, less reductive mythological context. Using Hans Christian Andersen's iconic fairy-tale as her reference point,<sup>102</sup> she extrapolates from its wifely metamorphic, driven, and potentially volatile protagonist a representation of another, "vital Victorian mythology, whose lovable woman is a silent and self-disinherited mutilate, the fullness of whose extraordinary and dangerous being might at any moment return through violence" (8). Auerbach goes on to argue for not merely the presence, but the widespread veneration of metaphorical 'mermaids' in Victorian literature and art,<sup>103</sup> concluding that their defining qualities comprise, "their secret self-transformations, their power over social life and its laws" and ultimately, "a power that withers patriachs" (8).

Mrs Darling's liminality, as reinforced by the dynamics of her relationship to objects within the night nursery, problematises any straightforward analysis of her role in *Peter Pan* as a "good woman" who is "[submerged] in her family". Indeed, far from embodying the "self-sacrificial" qualities of a domestic angel, the sacrifices she makes (like Auerbach's mermaids) serve solely to conceal her own agenda; namely, facilitating the exposure of her children to the anarchic influence that is Peter, and

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<sup>102</sup> "The Little Mermaid" first appeared in the third installment of Andersen's *Fairy Tales, Told for Children* between 1836-37. Mary Howitt is recorded as the first published translator of Andersen's tales in England, in 1846.

<sup>103</sup> Some of Auerbach's examples include Thackeray's *Becky Sharp*, George Eliot's *Rosalind and Gwendolen*, LeFanu's *Camilla* and Tennyson's *Vivien* (8).

their subsequent removal from the home. Whilst Barrie's incorporation of mythical allusions ranging from Ancient Greek legend to New Testament Christianity into the *Peter Pan* corpus of literature has been fruitfully documented,<sup>104</sup> as yet the connection between *fin-de-siecle* women as figurative 'mermaids' and the literally sirenic appeal of Never Land with its Mermaid Lagoon, has remained unexplored. Hollindale's explanatory notes to the 1928 play somewhat account for this lack of critical focus:

*The Mermaids' Lagoon* . . . Act was added to the play in its second season. The previous year, the play had been in three Acts only, and the scene change from the arrival in Never Land to "The Home Under the Ground" had occurred in the middle of Act 2. Because the change of set was complicated, it necessitated a "front-cloth scene" to fill the gap (317).

The original front-cloth scene - featuring interplay between the Lost Boys, the Indians and Hook - was replaced by the lagoon scene permanently, following a less-than-enthusiastic reception of the former throughout *Peter Pan's* first season (317). As far as this rationale is concerned, then, Barrie's introduction of the mermaids in Never Land does little more than provide a convenient front-of-stage spectacle to distract from scene-change machinations on the main stage behind the cloth. Given the cultural currency of the siren in the late nineteenth-century (the Victorians' "art

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<sup>104</sup> See Jack's "*Peter Pan* As Darwinian Creation Myth", in which Jack notes that, "no author toiled more over names than did James Barrie." Jack elaborates: "Peter Pan can affirm Peter as type of the Church and gatekeeper of heaven whose symbol of the cock the eternal boy constantly arrogates to himself. Or Peter can conflict with Pan as Satan, the goat-god . . . Or Peter can join with Pan as child of the world, of pantheism and the fall, unable to face up to the cruel facts of death and decay" (*Darwinian* 160). See also; Wasinger for a discussion of how Barrie uses literary associations of the god Pan to imbue Peter with qualities subtly undermining imperial ideologies of sex, gender and heteronormativity. See also; Wiggins for an interpretation of how Barrie's incorporation of certain fairy traditions (such as the Lost Boys' invisible food) aligns Never Land with the myth of Persephone, whose consumption of pomegranate seeds imprisons her in Hades' underworld.

slithered with images of a mermaid" [Auerbach *Woman* 7] and her fellow "serpent-women and lamias who proliferate in the Victorian imagination" [8]), the manner of their inclusion seems almost gratuitous, inveigled into the plot in order to titillate audiences with whom their popularity might resonate. Adding to this impression, the Never Land mermaids appear onstage only momentarily in Act Three, seemingly to further the purpose of emphasising the intersection of desire, danger and unknowability represented by their hybridised bodies:

*One of the most bewitching of these blue-eyed creatures is lying lazily on Marooners' Rock, combing her long tresses and noting effects in a transparent shell . . . at a signal, ten pairs of arms come whack upon the mermaid to enclose her. Alas, this is only what was meant to happen, for she hears the signal (which is the crow of a cock) and slips through their arms into the water.*

WENDY: *(preserving her scales as carefully as if they were rare postage stamps)* I did so want to catch a mermaid.

PETER: *(getting rid of his)* It is awfully difficult to catch a mermaid . . . They are such cruel creatures, Wendy, that they try to pull boys and girls like you into the water and drown them (Barrie *PP* 118).

Considered in this isolated context we may be forced to conclude that "The Mermaids' Lagoon" is little more than an indulgence of a late-Victorian zeitgeist, incidental to the plot and serving only to propel behind-the-scenes action. However, the mermaid figure does make one further appearance elsewhere in *Peter Pan*, in a scene which simultaneously attributes new meaning to their presence in Act Three and affirms Barrie's profoundly symbolic agenda as an artist offering sympathetic representations of 'unconventional' womanhood. In 1908, Barrie adduced a new ending to *Peter Pan*, which – despite being performed only once – proved sufficiently influential to his concept of the story that it was incorporated into *Peter*

and *Wendy* three years later.<sup>105</sup> *When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought* follows on from the play's original concluding scene, which takes place a year after the Darling children's adventure and ends on a poignant tableau of Peter in the treetops of Never Land playing a melody on his pipes. In that version, Wendy exits the play still a child but one who is noticeably (unfortunately) growing. In the *Afterthought* however, Wendy occupies the maternal role formerly helmed by Mrs Darling. Stirling, upon weighing Barrie's "multiple revisions and additions" (112) to the ending of *Peter Pan* is unconvinced that the *Afterthought* concludes the story any more satisfactorily than the more commonly-performed final scene ("The Nursery and the Tree Tops") which appears in the 1928 Uniform Edition of the text. Asserting that *An Afterthought* merely "provides a different kind of circularity" (121) than the Tree Tops ending which sees Wendy neatly reinstated to the nursery, Stirling also critiques the *Afterthought's* failure to reconcile many of the play's most fundamentally challenging questions:

The 1908 *WWGU* came closest to providing a circular sort of closure but although Barrie incorporated it into the final chapter of *Peter and Wendy*, he did not include it in the revision of the 1928 play. . . Even in *Peter and Wendy*, it retains something of its afterthought status and does not really resolve any of the conflicts of the play, simply reiterating the main problem of resolution that marks the end of the play proper."

Stirling's acknowledgment that *An Afterthought* most closely approaches the "closure" to which Barrie seemed resistant throughout his writing of various

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<sup>105</sup> The 1908 scene is reproduced as the final chapter of the novel *Peter and Wendy* as "When Wendy Grew Up", in 1911. By fixing this ending in print seventeen years before the Uniform text of the play would be published, Barrie effectively bestowed upon *An Afterthought* the status of the Peter Pan story's most definitive ending – somewhat surprising, given its sole appearance onstage.

incarnations of the *Peter Pan* story, is a feeling echoed by R. Green and Ormond.

R. Green describes the framing of the *Afterthought* in 1908:

During the pause before it, (while Wendy was changing from the child to the mother) "a small nightgowned figure", according to a privileged reviewer present that night, "appeared before the curtain and made the following announcement: 'My friends, I am the Baby Mermaid. We are now going to do a new act, the first and only time on any stage. Mr Barrie told us a story one day about what happened to Peter when Wendy grew up, and we made into an act, and it will never be done again. You are to think that a lot of years have rolled by, and that Wendy is an old married lady.'" (110)

As the curtain rises upon the "*same nursery*" (Barrie *Afterthought* 157), Wendy's daughter Jane occupies Michael's bed, begging for the stories of Peter and Never Land which are embedded in the very textures of this room. This spatial and thematic continuity is laboured in Barrie's stage instructions for a incident later in the scene, when Peter sobs "*on the same spot as when crying about Shadow in Act I*" (162). Furthermore, believing Jane to be asleep, Wendy performs a recognisable domestic ritual: as she removes clothes from the wash screen and '*leisurely, folds and puts them away*' (160) she retraces the steps of her own mother, ordering the less palatable thoughts of her children's minds in the nursery of Act One. As Wendy "*puts down light and sits by the fire to sew*" (160) the vision expresses a duality evocative of Mrs Darling's own. Similarly to her mother, Wendy is the embodiment of idealised feminine industry as an angel of the hearth; at the same time, the work of her needle exemplifies the subversive creativity of sirenic womanhood. Like Mrs Darling, and indeed Grizel, before her, Wendy is submerged in the concerns of home, but seeks the liberation of transmitting her own story through domestic

artistry. Fittingly, Wendy's taking up of the needle invites Peter's return after an absence of years, recalling how she darned and they "*tottered*" (PP 129) at the fireside as faux-parents in the Never Land of Act 4. Their reunion is emotional; he pleads for her to join him in the fantasy world once more, and Wendy – though eternally tempted ("Peter, what are your exact feelings for me?" [*Afterthought* 162]) - demurs, finally turning the light upon her face and revealing her capitulation to the ravages of time.

Reacting to his dismay, Wendy's response is uncharacteristic in both its hysteria and its irresponsibility. Despite the fact that barely seconds previously, Peter has implicitly threatened Wendy's daughter whom he perceives as having replaced him – "*He takes step towards child with a little dagger in his hand*" (162) – in her distress at his rejection she "*rushes in agony from the room*" (162), leaving the two of them unsupervised. Jane, waking and comforting the weeping Peter, confirms the circularity of this scene; Barrie writes that "*they bow as in Act I*", heralding Jane's ceremonial ascension to her mother's place in the cycle of transgression and storytelling which defines woman's role in Never Land: "*She gets out of bed and stands beside him, arms round him in a child's conception of a mother. The lamp flickers and goes out as night-light did . . . Then Peter is seen teaching Jane to fly*" (163).

Ormond and Hollindale concur that this ending, though solemn, feels more satisfying than the original. With its involvement of multiple generations of Darling women glorifying "the eternal nature of Peter" (Ormond 108), the *Afterthought* is made "integral" (Hollindale vii) to the play's communication of undying innocence

and unshakeable faith.

Whilst their approbation is well-judged, Ormond and Hollindale misidentify the source of *An Afterthought's* validity as an alternative conclusion to *Peter Pan*. Scrutiny of Wendy's closing soliloquy, read against her interactions with the objects of the night nursery, suggests that for Barrie this parallel ending does not give satisfaction solely because it complements "the eternal nature" of Peter. Just as the figurative importance of the night-lights in Mrs Darling's Act One speech foreshadows her knowing parental sacrifice, Wendy's lamp dims to allow her to re-enter the nursery in secret. Her stance in the darkness, "*taking in the situation and much more*" (163) represents a tacit confirmation of that inter-generational, maternal complicity in the child's escape to Never Land; a complicity which, though more subtly suggested in Barrie's characterisation of Mrs Darling, is discernible in her own non-verbal engagement with the spaces of her home. Here, Wendy actually articulates her collusion:

WENDY: Don't be anxious, Nana. This is how I planned it if he ever came back. Every Spring Cleaning, except when he forgets, I'll let Jane fly away with him to the darling Never Never Land, and when she grows up I will hope *she* will have a little daughter, who will fly away with him in turn – and in this way I may go on for ever and ever, dear Nana, so long as children are young and innocent (*Barrie Afterthought* 163).

In her anticipation of his return in *An Afterthought*, Wendy ensures the immortality of the story of the Darling women, rather than the "'stories of me'" (*PP* 153) to which Peter (and implicitly Barrie's audience) are attracted. Peter's seduction of Jane, when framed as part of Wendy's "plan", re-distributes the balance of power to

the women of the play, who have been previously cast as tragic heroines by being aged out of Peter's world. Equally, the close of the scene elevates Wendy to a position of dominance. In a reversal of the original tableau of Peter in the treetops of Never Land, in this version he is the one who must leave the stage to return to the fantasy realm, whilst Wendy both claims his world as her own – "the *darling* Never Never Land" (my italics) – and remains onstage as an intimation that her omniscient authority in the domestic sphere outlives the ephemeral moments of Peter's quickly-forgotten conquests. Stirling perceives this aspect of *An Afterthought* as contributing to the play's frustrating refutation of narrative finality, observing that, "[t]he projected chain of Wendy's daughters stretching into infinity does not provide resolution or even a return to the beginning, but simply multiplies the impossibility of closure" (123). Structurally, this criticism is not without validity; however, it is indisputable that Wendy's role in the *Afterthought* represents the thematic victory and immortalisation of a distinctly feminine agenda which has been at work for years beneath the Darling women's responsibilities of motherhood and domestic life.

However, the particular manner in which the *Afterthought* was framed for its one theatrical performance is what truly contradicts readings – such as those of Ormond or Hollindale – which stress its appropriacy as a narrative fulfilment for Peter. For Barrie pointedly selects a "baby mermaid" – who specifically introduces herself as such – to prepare the audience for the content of *When Wendy Grew Up*. Her mythological pedigree is jarring on multiple levels: not only is she not obviously a mermaid in bodily terms (she is a "small night-gowned figure" [R. Green 110]), but

mermaids appear nowhere else in the play apart from their brief turn in Act Three, in which their defining qualities are elusiveness and threatening beauty. What reason could Barrie have had for alighting upon an infant siren – as opposed to, perhaps, a fairy in this 'fairy play' – as the character who lays the foundation for this alternative ending to his most famous story? Theoretically, as the literal offspring of one of the Lagoon's mermaids this child mirrors and foretells the appearance of Jane – the baby of Wendy, who herself is the daughter of that figurative Victorian mermaid, Mrs Darling.

Like the Darling women, the baby mermaid in her Edwardian nightgown is camouflaged in the domestic sphere; on a superficial level, therefore, she sets up *An Afterthought* solely to establish a matrilineal storytelling cycle personified by Mrs Darling, Wendy and Jane. However, her presence and proclaimed identity align her with the creatures of Act Three, whose appearance means danger and voices beckon death. The physical and symbolic hybridity she shares with her sirenic ancestors in the play places this scene in a context which validates the cultural substitution of the nebulous mermaid-woman for the self-effacing angel at the hearth. At its basis, then, the baby mermaid's appearance directly before a scene which stresses the endurance and deceptiveness of female power, is persuasively read as Barrie's legitimisation of seditious womanhood in the spaces of home. Nor would this be Barrie's only proclamation of non-angelic qualities in the Darling women. In "The Nursery and the Treetops" – the ending Barrie fixed in text for the 1928 published edition of *Peter Pan* - the stage directions describe Wendy's annual return to Never Land to accomplish some 'Spring Cleaning':

*We are now dreaming of the Never Land a year later. . .When [the little house] has settled comfortably it lights up, and out come Peter and Wendy. Wendy looks a little older, but Peter is just the same. She is cloaked for a journey and a sad confession must be made about her; she flies so badly now that she has to use a broomstick (Barrie PP 153).*

The apparently innocuous addition of the broomstick as Wendy ages reads as (to use a typically Barrie-esque adjective) a whimsical detail, secondary to the more urgent concern of her maturation and eventual exile from Never Land. However, Stirling's analysis stresses the broomstick's deeper symbolic resonance, transforming Wendy into that, "adult female figure of fantasy, feared and stigmatised" (117): the witch.

The transformation of Wendy from accomplice to antagonist may seem far fetched, yet the suggestion bears traces of Barrie's early idea that the actor playing Mrs Darling might double with Hook, rather than the actor playing Mr Darling.<sup>106</sup> If the mother, as the only sexually-mature woman in the story, occupies the place of the pirate/adversary in Never Land, it makes sense that, as she matures, Wendy will gradually come to fill this place when Hook's death leaves it empty (Stirling 120).

The incongruity of the Baby Mermaid's introduction of *An Afterthought* has been submerged – both in its single 1908 performance and in critical discussions ever since – by the whimsicality of the staging; the innocence of this sweet, vulnerable figure in a nightgown is unlikely to be "feared or stigmatised" (Stirling 116). In the same way, by having the knowable yet physically-changing figure of Wendy use a broomstick, the ending of "The Nursery and the Treetops" hides in plain sight an

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<sup>106</sup> See FN99 on p182 of this thesis, which discusses Barrie's plans to double Mrs Darling with Hook at germinal phases in the creation of *Peter Pan*.

icon of seditious womanhood whose presence will fulfil an adversarial, decidedly non-maternal role as well imposing a check on Peter's egotism. Barrie's propensity for introducing such facets of ominousness and complexity to the Darling women and their narrative legacies is, thus, established and critiqued independently of *An Afterthought*. The 1908 ending therefore stands as not merely – or even primarily – a narrative endorsement of Peter's everlasting essence, but a meaningful acknowledgement of subversive female agency in the domestic sphere.

Unsettling connotations of the mermaid figure both in *Never Land* and in *An Afterthought* enable us to view Mrs Darling through the same sirenic lens. By recognising that she relies upon a combination of mystery and manipulation to maintain equilibrium within the home we can conclude that Auerbach's is a fitting metaphor. Superficially acquiescent with conventional social, class and gender expectations, Mrs Darling nevertheless is associated with mythic tradition when she masks peril with words, lulling her children to sleep and luring danger close to them with the stories she tells. It is, in fact, as soon as Mrs Darling exits the scene that the extent to which she facilitates disruption within the night nursery becomes apparent:

*There is another light in the room now, no larger than Mrs Darling's fist, and in the time we have taken to say this, it has been into the drawers and wardrobe and searched pockets, as it darts about looking for a certain shadow. Then the window is blown open, probably by the smallest and therefore most mischievous star, and Peter Pan flies into the room . . . PETER (in a whisper) Tinker Bell . . . Do you know where they put it? (The answer comes as of a tinkle of bells; it is the fairy language. Peter can speak it, but it bores him) . . . Which big box? This one? But which drawer? Yes, do show me.*

*Tink pops into the drawers where the shadow is, but before Peter can reach it, Wendy moves in her sleep. He flies onto the mantelshelf as a hiding-place. Then, as she has not waked, he flutters over the beds as an easy way to observe the occupants, closes the window softly, wafts himself to the drawer and scatters its contents to the floor (PP 97).*

Seamlessly, Tinker Bell is substituted for Mrs Darling as the source of feminine authority within the nursery. As the night lights blink into darkness, Barrie specifies that the ball of light representing Tink is "no larger than *Mrs Darling's fist*" (my italics), thus stating an explicit physical confluence between the women and the particular ways in which they 'light' – read inform, influence, and monitor – the home space. Additionally, the word Barrie selects to express this confluence is surprisingly aggressive; even in isolation, a closed fist is a startling image in the context of this supposedly magical scene. To metaphorise the coalescence of feminine power specifically as the fist of Mrs Darling is, however, a still more suggestive statement which fundamentally challenges the perceived placidity of her role in *Peter Pan*.

Hollindale notes that this interlude encompassing Peter's entry into the Darlings' house is "occupied by movement . . . [t]he stage effect of the play is largely achieved by such episodes of wordless movement and tableau" (312). Consequently, Tinker Bell's scouring of the nursery for Peter's shadow temporarily dominates dramatic focus, the feverish activity of her search accentuated by the stagecraft of a ball of light darting erratically in and out of "*drawers and wardrobes and . . . pockets*". Significantly, the visual juxtaposition posed by the becalming glow of Mrs Darling's sleep-inducing night-lights against the invasive, frantic movement of Tinker

Bell's spark exaggerates the symbolic contrast between how these women operate within the domestic space; one carefully organises the invisible "drawers" of her children's minds, whilst the other irreverently rifles through the visible drawers of the nursery in a chaotic circuit of the stage.

Yet, by not only immediately exchanging the character-specific light of one woman for another onstage, but articulating a corporeal consistency in the transition (Mrs Darling's hand becoming Tinker Bell's body) Barrie stipulates the necessity of reading the womens' apparently polarised identities holistically. Two female characters who appear to share few similarities – who do not even appear onstage simultaneously – are subtly presented as contiguous beings whose distinct natures, personalities and cultural legacies intersect more than might be expected.

The women's mutual connection to the secret spaces of the nursery further enhances such an interpretation. Using the drawer in which Peter's shadow is held captive after Mrs Darling "rolled it up" (92), Barrie forges a relationship of illuminating oppositions between the paradigmatic Edwardian mother and the "*common girl*" who "*mends fairy pots and kettles*" (100). The former imprisons the shadow and is, arguably, imprisoned by societal standards and the walls of her home; the latter liberates the shadow, and - excepting that conditional aspect of her existence which is reliant on the belief of children - enjoys the greatest bodily and moral autonomy of any female character in *Peter Pan*.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Admittedly, the range of well-developed female characters in the play is narrow. Aside from Wendy, whose 'incarceration' takes both literal and figurative forms, Liza (the Darlings' maid) and Tiger-Lily are both obliged to operate within respective hierarchies (class, and imperial/tribal) which constrict their freedoms. Conversely, Tinker Bell enjoys absolute physical liberty and – though she loves Peter – thoroughly rejects being controlled by him, or any other authority within the play.

The literal drawer in which Peter's shadow is confined constitutes an arena in which the desires of distinct feminine authorities are conflicted between seeking to suppress or unshackle deviance and disruption. Further, the metaphorical meaning of the shadow itself evolves throughout Act One. Initially, it is little more than an intangible manifestation of mischief ("MR DARLING: It is nobody I know, but he does look a scoundrel" [93]); but by sequestering the shadow in the drawers of the nursery, Mrs Darling silently aligns the dark essence of Peter – his faceless phantom self, without whom he is incomplete - with the earlier "naughtinesses" that she buries deep within the psychological drawers of her sleeping children. With the casual staging instruction that Peter "*wafts himself to the drawer and scatters its contents to the floor*" (97), Mrs Darling's motivation in hiding, rather than expunging, the troublesome thoughts of her children is revealed. As the shadow swoops free from its incarceration within the drawer, the transgressive dreams of her children are also symbolically exhumed. The unutterable thoughts that she discerns within her innocent offspring are, ultimately, made manifest as a full-bodied Peter Pan restored to optimum strength and iniquity.

Barrie thus creates a delicately balanced, if initially imperceptible, alliance between Mrs Darling, Tinker Bell and Peter Pan. Although in Act Five Mrs Darling is triply maligned by Peter as mortal, adult and female ("No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man"[151]), their shared purpose in the play is threaded throughout the set and stage-craft of this scene. The fairies and the mother are not, in fact, oppositional forces, but united in the common purpose of having the children disappear. Mrs Darling knowingly defies every protective maternal instinct

in order to expose Wendy, Michael and John to the adventures that Peter promises. With him, the children will grapple with sexual awakening, betrayal, temptation, mortality and the necessity of navigating their own course between good and evil; in other words, the psychological battles central to maturation. Growing up is a defiance of the perpetual state of delay that is Never Land, and Mrs Darling as a character treads the most precarious tightrope of parenting; she literally leaves her children to find their wings in the hope that, with their freedom, they will choose to return to their roots.

Nowhere is this intent more emphatically illustrated than in the device of the window. According to Barrie's staging instructions, the nursery window must be situated "*in the centre*" (88) of the set, illustrating its importance as an accessible part of the stage as well as its centrality to the ensuing action. Mrs Darling establishes her own ambivalent status in relation to the window early in Act One, when her first appearance in the play is dominated by her anxieties about Peter's presence there:

*As she enters the room she is startled to see a strange little face outside the window and a hand groping as if it wanted to come in.*

MRS DARLING: Who are you? (*The unknown disappears; she hurries to the window*) No one there. And yet I feel sure I saw a face. My children! (89)

The audience's first impression of both Mrs Darling and Peter Pan is, therefore, one in which Barrie cultivates a relationship between their characters – crucially, using the conduit of the window. As conflicting embodiments of indoors and outdoors, reality and fantasy, domesticity and anarchy, Barrie has Mrs Darling and Peter regard

one another across the threshold of the window to emphasise its importance as a motif dually representative of separation and connection. Moreover, Mrs Darling obliquely acknowledges this duality when, upon recounting the story of Peter's near identical previous visit to her husband, she confides that, "the boy escaped, but his shadow had not time to get out; down came the window and cut it clean off" (92). The window severs Peter from himself, accentuating the distinction between the worlds on each side of the glass. At the same time, his shadow's detention within the nursery constitutes a crossing-over of one realm into another and entices Peter to return. Division and union, imprisonment and liberation; the window in *Peter Pan* is a device ripe for metaphorical embellishment. Finally, although in the stage directions prefacing Act One, the nursery "*is at present ever so staid and respectable*", the fact that it will soon "*tell a very strange tale* to the police" (my italics) references Barrie's repeated use of the window as a symbol synonymous with communication.<sup>108</sup>

The window's function is therefore twofold, enabling both physical and verbal escape from the interior, domestic space. Peter confides to Wendy that he visits the nursery window, "[t]o try to hear stories. None of us knows any stories" (102). The tales which offer escapist fantasy to normal children are, for Peter, fodder for creating Never Land's reality - something evinced in the opening of Act Two as the Lost Boys are earnestly discussing the snippets of *Cinderella* that Peter has

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<sup>108</sup> See Chapter Two of this thesis, and the analysis of windows in Aaron Latta's cottage. See also; Chapter Two's discussion of Barrie's template for Peter and Wendy's exchange at the window, in the form of Tommy and Reddy. In that relationship Tommy was, of course, the orator whose tales transported the little girl to faraway fantasy realms, a role Barrie attributes to generations of female Darlings in *Peter Pan*.

relayed to them: "TOOTLES: I am awfully anxious about Cinderella. You see, not knowing anything about my own mother I am fond of thinking she was rather like Cinderella" (107).<sup>109</sup>

So hungry is Peter for this material in fact, that he becomes threatening towards Wendy when she equivocates about joining him in Never Land: "*(How he would like to rip those stories out of her; he is dangerous now)*" (102). The stories constitute Wendy's currency with Peter; she, specifically, is necessary for the transmission of the tales, affording her protection from his harmful desire to "*rip them out of her*", and providing her with a useful negotiating tactic to maintain his interest: "WENDY: Don't go, Peter. I know lots of stories. The stories I could tell to the boys!" (102). Furthermore, this survival strategy is traceable to Mrs Darling's influence. Not only have the bedtime stories told by mother to child equipped Wendy with a prescience of the hazards she may encounter in Never Land, her tale-telling – as with legendary female tellers before her<sup>110</sup> - imbues her with a purpose

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<sup>109</sup> In contrast to the more conventional childlike response to wish-fulfilment fairy-tales such as *Cinderella* – for instance, internalising the teachings of the story in order to make reality more bearable, or projecting oneself onto a heroic character whose goodness is eventually rewarded (see Bettelheim 55-6) – Tootles instead incorporates the fantasy heroine Cinderella into his reality as a template for his real mother.

<sup>110</sup> Rowe recounts the legend of Scheherazade, who offers herself as the bride of the cuckolded and murderous Persian king, Shahryar. Shahryar has sworn to take a new virgin as his wife every day as well as slaughter her predecessor, since, he opines, no woman is trustworthy or pure. On her first night as his wife, Scheherazade begins to tell a story which entrances the king, who spares her life for one more night in order that he may hear how the story ends. Scheherazade cultivates a nightly pattern, always halting her story in the middle as the next day dawns and consequently earning a reprieve from the King – protecting not only herself, but her fellow women, and – indirectly – King Shahryar, whose violent mania has become all-encompassing. Rowe attests that: "Scheherazade paradigmatically reinforces our concept of female storytellers as transmitters of ancient tales, told and remolded in such a way to meet the special needs of the listener – in this case, King Shahryar and all men who harbour deep fears of the sexual woman and the dual power of her body and voice" (60). Like Scheherazade, Wendy Darling's tale-spinning is a commodity - something she exchanges in return for Peter's attention, her own safety, and a special role in Never Land that no one else may fulfil. Wendy also epitomises the definition of female storytellers that Rowe applies to Scheherazade. She

which will ensure her salvation in the fantasy world. The matrilineal storytelling cycle of the Darling women endows Wendy, her mother and their female heirs to prepare for themselves – through successive generations' sharing of bedtime tales - a role in adventures which spirit them beyond the confines of the Edwardian hearth and in which, as with *An Afterthought*, they too will have eternal life.

The window of the night nursery thus comes to embody the intersection of reality and fantasy, enabling Peter's intrusion into the domestic, interior, realistic world where the escapism of words and play morph into physical departure. As Act One draws to a close, Barrie's stage directions are once again explicit in their symbolism:

*From down below in the street the lighted window must present an unwonted spectacle; the shadows of children revolving in the room like a merry-go-round. This is perhaps what Mr and Mrs Darling see as they come hurrying home from the party, brought by Nana who, you may be sure, has broken her chain. Peter's accomplice, the little star, has seen them coming, and again the window blows open . . . [B]reaking the circle he flies out of the window over the trees of the square and over the house-tops, and the others follow like a flight of birds (104).*

Four figures flee the nursery, the darkness and mischiefs of the Darling siblings' minds corporealised into "*shadows of children*". The arresting image presented to the returning parents is that of uncanny change; as their offspring breach the safe, bounded space of the home and vanish into the night, they are mere silhouetted imprints of the flesh and blood children that Mr and Mrs Darling left behind.

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recasts her old life in Kensington as a fairy-tale with which she captivates the Lost Boys (*PP* 130 ff), tempting them to return with her to that world; and she navigates any volatile interaction with the boy who "harbours deep fears of the sexual woman and the dual power of her body and voice" (Peter Pan himself) by promising to tell him stories if he returns to her each year (*PP* 153).

Rendering the upper-floor, enclosed nursery permeable to the anarchic outside influence of Peter Pan, the open window is metaphorically suggestive of temporary opportunity – it provides, quite literally, 'a window' for either tasting danger or seeking home comforts, but its accessibility seems neither indefinite nor guaranteed.

Across Barrie's works, the window's role is integral in this concept of transition between realms or states of being. In *Peter Pan*, this transition is realised both as the physical portal through which Peter leads the trio of flying children, and that which is effected through the Darling women's circulation of "strange tales" - amongst which, cleverly, Wendy and her brothers' adventures will soon be numbered.

## Chapter Five- Keeping the Window Open: Intertextuality and the

### Second Chance in *Dear Brutus*

The multivalent significance of the window had long been an artistic preoccupation of Barrie's. In 1902, *The Little White Bird* offers the reader at least one of Peter Pan's origin myths, in the narrator's story-within-a-story which comprises Chapters Thirteen to Eighteen of that novel and which were later re-issued as a separate text: *Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens* (1906). In these chapters, the reader may glimpse the first stage in Barrie's textual development of the particular association of the window with the concept of chance; an association which was to become still more thematically pivotal in Barrie's works after *Peter Pan*.

In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, the origin myth buried within the more expansive plot of *The Little White Bird* is extracted and clarified, thus making more central the intertwined motifs of the window and the redemptive moment that is lost. In the story, the infant Peter Pan runs away from home to live with the birds and fairies of the Gardens, only to later revisit his sleeping, bereaved mother by gliding through the window of his old nursery, "wide open, as he knew it would be" (PPKG 196). Peter however, rejects this opportunity to stay with her: "[a]nd in the end, you know he flew away. Twice he came back from the window, wanting to kiss his mother, but he feared the delight of it might waken her, so at last he played her a lovely kiss on his pipe, and then he flew back to the Gardens" (198). Eventually sated with his magical Gardens existence, Peter returns to the window with the intention of seamlessly resuming his place in the family - only to find he has been

replaced:

[S]o eager was he to be nestling in her arms that this time he flew straight to the window, which was always to be open for him. But the window was closed, and there were iron bars on it, and peering inside he saw his mother sleeping peacefully with her arm round another little boy. Peter called, "Mother! mother!" but she heard him not; in vain he beat his little limbs against the iron bars. He had to fly back, sobbing, to the Gardens, and he never saw his dear again. What a glorious boy he had meant to be to her! Ah, Peter! We who have made the great mistake, how differently we should all act at the second chance (199).

Reading this interaction, Wasinger argues that windows are the ultimate loci of hybridity, allowing eternal transition between worlds as well as between their correspondent social expectations. Being able to traverse the threshold of the window facilitates Peter's continuous occupation of "Betwixt-and-Between"-ness (Barrie *PPKG* 172) allowing him to indefinitely suspend the fixity of cultural categorisations – such as gender, sexuality, masculinity, or adulthood – intrinsic to Edwardian domestic life. Upon this second and supposedly decisive return to his own nursery, however, the closed window signifies an insurmountable physical and figurative barrier; its closure becomes a "marginalising device" designed to preserve a social status quo that excludes the "indeterminacy" (Wasinger 223) represented by

Peter Pan:

[T]he window's proximity to his mother's post-parturitional body suggests that Peter's self-inflicted exile separates him from the processes of heterosexual fertility that produced both himself and his parents' second child . . . More importantly, to the extent that the barred window keeps Peter's little brother *in*, it also keeps Peter *out* . . . Peter can no longer enjoy his titillating oscillation between the maternal sphere of the nursery and the

hybridity of Kensington Gardens. In *Kensington Gardens*, hybridity poses enough of a threat to domestic heterosexuality that it is, literally, locked out of the middle-class home (223).

As addressed in the previous chapter, the window as a key practical feature of the domestic sphere intersects with metaphorical concepts of escape. Yet, from 1902 onwards its meaning in Barrie's works evolves to include the notion of chances lost or sacrificed, as well as the discomfiting liminality - or "hybridity" - identified by Wasinger. More so even than in the play version of *Peter Pan*, Barrie's conspiratorial aside in *Kensington Gardens* to "we who have made the great mistake", is an allusion to a literal window of opportunity and the numberless ways in which the consequences of taking or missing that opportunity – embracing or refuting the transient experiences which make up existence - can prove formative of one's selfhood. This self-reflexive musing on the interplay of pre-destination and free will constitutes the main plot thread of the next play discussed in this thesis. Indeed, despite the fact that fifteen and eleven years respectively separate the first appearance of these sentiments in *The Little White Bird* and the publication of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, and the theatrical debut of *Dear Brutus* in October of 1917, the novella's wistful statement – "how differently we should all act at the second chance" – so influenced Barrie in his creation of this play that the sentence is mirrored almost verbatim in aspects of its dialogue.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Barrie reinforces the theme of the play by having various characters relate the circumstances of their lives they fervently wish to change. In Act One, Purdie sighs, "If only I could begin again. To be battered forever just because I once took the wrong turning, it isn't fair" (Barrie *DB* 482) whilst the disintegration of the Dearths' marriage is revealed through Alice's comment, "If I hadn't married you

As we have seen, Barrie's writing process is far from chronologically methodical. Many elements in Tommy Sandys' character of 1896-1900 clearly anticipate his invention of Peter Pan, whilst his writing of Grizel throughout the same period incorporates the plot of a manuscript he started several years previously.<sup>112</sup> *Peter Pan* itself references the related but discrete story of *The Little White Bird* (1902), in which Peter appears as a peripheral entity who emerges from an egg, whilst *Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens*, though published two years after the play's debut, resurrects a pre-Darling universe in which the formerly pre-adolescent Peter is once more an infant.<sup>113</sup> Equally, as Ormond attests, despite not appearing onstage until 1917, *Dear Brutus* was percolating in Barrie's mind thirteen years previously, during a period contemporaneous with *Peter Pan's* inaugural theatre run:

In February 1917, Barrie told his old friend AEW Mason of his anxiety at not being able to find a good subject for a play. Mason suggested that he complete an old idea known as "The Second Chance". The play, *Dear Brutus*, was written in a few weeks and it opened on 17 October . . . Barrie's notes for "The Second Chance" begin in 1904, with an outline plan which altered very little over the years. The characters were to regret the choices they have made in life. They have their second chance, but at the end return to what they were (117)

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what a different woman I should be" and Will's response: "Three things they say come not back to men nor women – the spoken word, the past life, and the neglected opportunity" (486). Mr Coade muses to his wife that, "if I had a second chance I should be a useful man instead of just a lazy one" (487), but it is Lob who expresses the sentiment most neatly when he admits that "nearly everybody here is longing for – a second chance" (487).

<sup>112</sup> See Chapter Three of this thesis, in which I discuss the evolution of Grizel's character from its inception as part of *The Illegitimate Child* (1888)

<sup>113</sup> Arthur Rackham's illustrations to *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* depict Peter as a cherubic baby.

The notes for "The Second Chance" to which Ormond refers therefore constitute a direct chronological link between *Peter Pan* and *Dear Brutus*, suggesting significant continuity between these works despite the potentially discordant thirteen-year intervention. Nevertheless, Barrie himself locates a sinister tonal shift in the plays he produced in the later years of his career, when writer's cramp forced him to rest his dominant arm and create with his left. He notes rather superstitiously that, "I never, so far as I can remember, wrote uncomfortable tales like *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose* til I crossed over to my other hand" (Barrie, qtd in Meynell vii).

Interestingly, *Dear Brutus*, in spite and perhaps even because of this darkness (Jack *Road* 5) is commonly perceived as a high point of Barrie's creative maturation, although it – like the majority of Barrie's works – failed to achieve the longterm popularity of *Peter Pan*. It is presented across three acts and unfurls a story of disparate characters collected together according to an initially unclear common interest, in a country manor estate hosted by the nefarious Lob. The company, in addition to Lob and his butler Matey, consists of three couples and two single women guests: the middle-aged Coades, the glamorous but jaded Dearthys, the Purdies, Joanna Trout and Lady Caroline Laney. Throughout Act One, the cast's shared purpose is explicated: their variously unbearable circumstances emerge, with each of them regretting a flawed decision or twist of fate in the past which renders them dissatisfied with their present. Lob propositions his guests with an excursion into his magical, transitional wood; appearing only on Midsummers' Eve, the wood offers pilgrims 'a second chance' at life. Each of the characters - excepting the already content Mrs Coade and Lob himself - seize this opportunity to change the

course of their future, the consequences of which are revealed in the fantasy world of the Midsummer Wood in Act Two. Act Three charts the players' deliverance from the illusions of the wood as they return to reality in Lob's manor and are exposed to the alternative lives crafted by their fantasy selves. Although for some of the characters (such as the Dearths) these revelations are integral to personal growth, for others – Matey, Lady Caroline and Jack Purdie – their second chances are instrumental only in unmasking their determined self-deception. Those characters who lament the unfairness of fate are shown that, "the fault, Dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves"<sup>114</sup> (*DB* 514; Act 3): in the wood they learn they shall, inexorably, use their free will to make terrible choices.

Modern scholars praise *Dear Brutus*' economy of form as well as its popular appeal. Ormond surmises that, "Barrie probably never achieved greater dramatic control than in this relatively short play" (120) whilst Jack hails *Dear Brutus* as an "enduringly popular" piece of theatrical writing (*Jack Road* 85). Stylistically, *Dear Brutus* represents the true blossoming of Barrie's interest in the interaction of storytelling, identity and setting, an idea with which – I have argued – he experimented in the *Tommy* novels and *Peter Pan*. In this play's development of interior architecture, light and shade, and an overtly Shakespearean dichotomisation between the reality of the home sphere and the green world of fantasy, Barrie enhances his use of spatial dynamics to reflect and accentuate dramatic action: characters pursue their 'window' of a second chance by crossing

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<sup>114</sup> This quote, from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) gives the play its title and is one of many allusions to other Shakespearean works throughout *Dear Brutus*.

the threshold between the mysterious worlds of Lob's drawing room and the moving, magical Midsummer wood.

The domestically-set Acts One and Three of *Dear Brutus* structurally enclose the revelation of characters' alternative lives in the fantasy world of Act Two. Act One is largely expository; the individual predicaments from which characters yearn to be extricated in order to (literally) reinvent themselves are gradually revealed through the dialogue conducted in the drawing room of the opening scene. It is agreed that the Dearths are the most sympathetic – and therefore most meticulously developed – protagonists of *Dear Brutus*.<sup>115</sup> Insofar as their individual transformations within the Midsummer Wood are concerned, the plights of Alice and Will Dearth are central to the pathos of the play; not only does their experience in the fantasy world directly dictate the evolution of their identities upon returning to the realistic space of Lob's drawing room, but the crux of their parallel life – the child who was never born – is clearly conversant with the preoccupations of each of the primary texts discussed in this thesis.

However, it is my contention that it is in Lob (a peripheral figure who seemingly exists in this play merely to enable the epiphanies of more intricately-rendered characters) that Barrie locates an open-endedness addressing the very question of hybridity embedded in the window symbolism of *Peter Pan* and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. If read intertextually as an extension of those stories,

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<sup>115</sup> Ormond remarks that Will Dearth is, "the most likeable of the characters . . . [his] central position is stressed by the arrangement of the acts" (121-2); similarly, McGowan contends that, in giving Dearth "the expression and understanding of the essence of *Dear Brutus*" (143) Barrie designates him as a "true hero" (167); the couple "now understand the 'might-have-been', and can find "the resolution to shape what will be"(176).

the opacity at the core of Lob's characterisation - accentuated by his mutable relationship to the contradictory spatial worlds of the play - is actually crucial to reinforcing the principal message of *Dear Brutus*. At the same time as developing the dramatic interplay between the antagonistic symbolisms of light (truth) and darkness (delusion) which forms the broad basis of this play's morality, therefore, the introductory staging notes for *Dear Brutus* stress the complex nature of Lob's selfhood in relation to the domestic space:

*[T]hey are Darkness and Light. The room is so obscure as to be invisible, but at the back of the obscurity are French windows, through which is seen Lob's garden bathed in moonshine. The Darkness and Light, which this room and garden represent, are very still, but we should feel that it is only the pause in which old enemies regard each other before they come to the grip. The moonshine stealing about among the flowers, to give them their last instructions, has left a smile upon them, but it is a smile with a menace in it for the dwellers in darkness. What we expect to see next is the moonshine slowly pushing the windows open, so that it may whisper to a confederate in the house, whose name is Lob (Barrie DB 463; Act 1)*

In Lob's drawing room, Barrie has graduated from the ambiguous, dormant dangers of the Darling nursery to setting a domestic arena which is openly combative: an enclosed, 'civilised' interior locale is set in opposition to the wildness of the exterior spaces of the garden, and later, the marauding wood. Designating the oppositional entities of Darkness and Light to be the "*chief characters*" of the play implies that the struggle of these "*old enemies*" possesses a symbolic importance beyond merely competing for stage presence. Indeed, such imagery of light and dark is extended throughout *Dear Brutus* to exemplify an inherent conflict between fact and illusion;

this is, significantly, the central theme of the play, which infiltrates each of the characters' personal journeys to some degree.

The natural world as a whole is seen to be out of kilter with the sanitised, socially-palatable version of reality represented by the drawing room. As fragmental rays from the moon and stars ricochet across the garden foliage, they whisper "*last instructions*" to the flowers who convey with "*a smile with menace in it*" that they are complicit in seeking to enlighten, for good or ill, the "*dwellers in darkness*" - those inhabitants of Lob's manor who have wreathed their lives in shadowy delusions. Lob himself is shown to be a conspirator in simultaneously the maintenance and the rupturing of these delusions. Although he is a "*confederate*" who is sympathetic to the machinations of the garden, the domesticised world of the drawing room is equally reflective, and formative, of his mysterious identity.

The drawing room's interior geography is, in fact, mimetic of Lob himself; through his exploitation of the set-piece of the hearth, Barrie suggests that a correct reading of the drawing room approximates an understanding of its owner:

*The fireplace may also be a little dubious. It has been hacked out of a thick wall which may have been there when the other walls were not, and is presumably the cavern where Lob, when alone, sits chatting to himself among the blue smoke. He is as much at home by this fire as any gnome that may be hiding among its shadows; but he is less familiar with the rest of the room, and when he sees it . . . he often stares long and hard at it before chuckling uncomfortably (464; Act 1)*

As we have seen in Barrie's personification of Double Dykes' hearth to mimic the maternal mendacity of the Painted Lady, the fireplace can be utilised as a symbol

which fundamentally reflects, shapes, or subverts concepts of traditional domesticity, as well as offering metaphorical insights into the complex psychologies of those who have made this space 'home'. The "dubiousness" of the drawing room fireplace in *Dear Brutus* stems from its brutish aspect ("*hacked out of a thick wall*") and its uneasy integration within the rest of the room (it "*may have been there when the other walls were not*"). Similarly, Lob – "*very small*" (472; Act 1), and in possession of "*a domed head*" and "*little feet*" (473; Act 1) borders on the physically atavistic. He is an anachronism who, being "*all that is left of Merry England*" (470; Act 1), is just like the fireplace: displaced in time and ill-fitted to the modern niceties of the drawing room, which he regards with discomfort. Barrie's assertion that Lob is "*at home*" in the smoky shadows of the fireplace, however, seems to fortify a reading of the diminutive creature as being one with the domestic space, hewn of stone and fire and borne of the hearth itself.

Yet, in a text which places such emphasis on the literal and symbolic battle-lines drawn between interior and exterior sites, Lob consistently defies aligning himself absolutely with either the realistic, domestic realm of the drawing room or the anarchic world of fantasy which is represented by the outdoor sites of his own garden, and periodically, the magical wood. Throughout *Dear Brutus*, he emerges as a creature of nebulous loyalties, powers and internal contradictions who, though labelled a confederate of that magic at work beyond the walls of the house, is nevertheless "*terrified*" (489; Act 1) by its influence. Indeed, this ambiguity is stressed from the opening of the play. Barrie's notes stipulate that the first mention of Lob underlines his spatial connection to the French windows, as they are "*pushed*

*open*" for the moonlight to hiss Lob's name (463; Act 1); significantly, these windows are a focal point of the drama and constitute the most visible border between domestic and fantasy worlds in *Dear Brutus*. Barrie reiterates the dual importance of the French windows' situation "*at the back of the obscurity*" (463) as both a structural and emblematic means of transition: they are the channel through which the play's characters must pass so as to access their second chance, and a metaphor for that second chance in and of itself.

Despite being thus positioned in relation to the transitional space of the window, it is the realistic interior world of the drawing room in which Lob chooses to remain for the majority of the play. The relationship between domestic and fantasy worlds in *Dear Brutus* is anomalous amongst the texts included in this thesis: somewhat unusually, the home space is characterised as the place in which humanity's most all-encompassing fictions are rooted, whilst the magical realm of the forest is positioned as the source of essential truth. Contributing to this contrast is the dramatic use of artificial light. Whereas Barrie has previously relied upon lamps or night-lights to indicate or simulate reassuring human presence, in *Dear Brutus* this type of light is presented as a man-made conspirator in the preservation of precarious falsehoods. The entrance of the female cast in Act One precipitates the shattering of the stillness of Lob's drawing room, with artificial light used as a temporary reprieve from the truth for these "*unsuspecting ones*" (DB 463):

*They have been groping their way forward, blissfully unaware of how they shall be groping more terribly before the night is out. Someone finds a switch, and the room is illumined, with the effect that the garden seems to have drawn back a step, as if worsted in the first encounter. But it is only*

*waiting* (464; Act 1)

These as-yet-unknown bodies in the gloom are, Barrie implies, "*blissfully*" ignorant of the dangerous game in which they are contested territory between indoors and outdoors, palatable lies and unedifying fact, forgiving darkness and stark, unapologetic light. The contours of the drawing room, when cast into sharp relief by the flick of a switch, form a mirage which flatters the upper/middle-class sensibilities of the players (and indeed, the play's implied audience). "[A]pparently *inoffensive*" (464), the set must be dressed "*creditably like a charming country house drawing-room*", peppered with the reassuring nuances of gentility ("*little feminine touches that are so often best applied by the hand of man*"): the overall effect is that of a comfortably bourgeois milieu.

In juxtaposing the alternate obscurity and false radiance of the drawing room with the refracted illumination of natural light in the garden throughout Act One, Barrie suggests that fundamental truths of selfhood are lost to our sight in the domestic space, coming into sharper focus only in the fantasy realm beyond the knowable confines of home. Therefore, it is a fitting dramatic statement that this contrived environment provides the setting for the disclosure of each character's individual pretence. As the scene is played out, the audience learns of Matey's iniquity, Lady Caroline's prejudice, Jack Purdie's guilt-edged adultery, Joanna Trout's false friendship, Mabel Purdie's silent anguish, and Mr Coade's feelings of "*gentle*

*regret*"(487) for a life into which he has invested more kindness than productivity.<sup>116</sup>

The exposition of the Dearth's unhappiness, both as individuals and as a couple, constitutes the tragic balance to the farcical adultery plot of the Purdies and Joanna Trout: it is revealed that Alice Dearth possesses a "blunt" (485; Act 1) disregard for the man she married, with Will Dearth's descent into rudderless alcoholism both the cause and the consequence of her disdain:

ALICE: A nice hand for an artist!

DEARTH: One would scarcely call me an artist nowadays.

ALICE: Not so far as any work is concerned.

DEARTH: Not so far as having any more pretty dreams to paint is concerned. (*Grinning at himself*) . . . When did you begin to despise me, Alice?

ALICE: When I got to know you really, Will; a long time ago.

DEARTH: (*bleary of eye*) Yes, I think that is true. It was a long time ago, and before I had begun to despise myself. It wasn't until I knew you had no opinion of me that I began to go down hill . . . If you had cared for me I wouldn't have come to this, surely?

ALICE: Well I found I didn't care for you, and I wasn't hypocrite enough to pretend that I did. That's blunt, but you used to admire my bluntness.

DEARTH: The bluntness of you, the adorable wildness of you, you untamed thing! (484-5; Act 1).

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<sup>116</sup> Matey's (the butler) theft of the ladies' rings in Act One enables their blackmailing him to reveal the purpose of their invitation to Lob's estate; Lady Caroline scorns him, emboldened by her elevated social rank to rubbish his suggestion that she too might "take a wrong turning" (471). Jack Purdie is a serial philanderer who simultaneously blames and cossets his wife ("Nothing could make me say a word against my wife . . . [b]ut Mabel is a cold nature and she doesn't understand" [478]) all the while romanticising his infidelity as an overwhelming, fated, self-improving force of "Kismet" (481). Joanna Trout coyly defends her loyalty to 'friend' Mabel ("[a]nd yet I don't think she really likes me. I wonder why?" [478]) whilst having an affair with her husband, becoming affronted when Mabel confronts them: "How extraordinary! Of all the - ! Oh, but how contemptible! [*She sweeps to the door and calls to MABEL by name*]" [480]). Mabel Purdie, meanwhile, endures a self-enforced oblivion throughout her marriage to Jack, fully aware of his behaviour and yet too demeaned to act decisively to change her own future. Alice Dearth is repulsed by the decay of her husband in both professional and personal capacities (485) and wishing she had married more shrewdly: "[the Honourable Freddy Finch-Fallowe] followed me about . . . before I knew you."(486). Will Dearth blames his deterioration on his wife's obvious disdain and ponders whether they would still be in love had their marriage borne children (485). Finally, Mr Coade – despite seeming absolutely content – mourns his misspent youth in which he was too "pleasantly well-to-do" to accomplish his "noble undertaking" – an involved thesis on the Feudal System (473). Alone of the company, Mrs Coade and Lob are not sufficiently disillusioned with their own lives to risk the unknown 'second chance' in the wood.

Beneath these protestations of love for her "adorable wildness", Dearth's speech reveals that his original infatuation lay in the illusion of Alice which lent itself to the betterment of his art. Upon realising that her untameable nature is an essential part of her selfhood as opposed to merely a facet of her role as his muse, for Dearth her "bluntness" and self-interest (ALICE: 'I'm sorry for myself. If I hadn't married you what a different woman I should be' [486; Act 1]) have become corrosive to his public success as well as to his private identity ("And now I'm middle-aged and done for . . . Don't know how it has come about, or what has made the music mute" [485]). Their exchange in the drawing room bristles with the souring of "*wild love*" (483; Act 1) which for the characters themselves, is inexplicable yet inevitable.

Dearth, in suggesting that a child would have saved their relationship (485), effectively pleads for the domesticisation of his wife, implying that his salvation lies in her acceptance of that state epitomising female nurturance: motherhood. He is countered by his Alice's objection that he would have made an unsuitable father – a charge he accepts without truly understanding his own culpability ("DEARTH: I dare say you're right. Well, Alice, I know that somehow it's my fault" [486]). The play's cultivation of Dearth as an endearingly flawed hero with a "*humorous outlook on his degradation*" (483) in turn sets up Alice as a haughty and unlikeable manipulator in whose vanity, indifference and – critically – resistance of the maternal instinct can be located the true disharmony of their marriage ("MABEL: If she were not such a savage!" [527; Act 3]).<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> McGowan shares the view of the play's characters, remarking that Will Dearth's "yearning for children is an unselfish one while Alice's desire for another husband is for her own social aggrandisement" (142).

However, upon finding themselves in the fantasy realm of the Midsummer Wood, the emergence of the Dearths' parallel destinies suggests alternative reasons for their unhappiness in the domestic sphere of home. An extended exchange reveals that in this universe, Dearth does not have a wife but a child, Margaret. Adopting his phrases (496; Act 2) and his bad habits ("DEARTH: I wish to heaven, Margaret, that we were not both so fond of apple tart"[497; Act 2]) Margaret's characterisation fluctuates between a mischievous female version of her father, and a coquettish echo of Alice Dearth herself:

MARGARET: (*coaxingly*) You think I'm pretty, don't you Dad, whatever other people say?

DEARTH: Not so bad.

MARGARET: I *know* I have nice ears.

DEARTH: They are all right now, but I had to work on them for months.

MARGARET: You don't mean to say that you did my *ears*?<sup>118</sup>

DEARTH: Rather!

MARGARET: (*grown humble*) My dimple is my own.

DEARTH: I am glad you think so. I wore out the point of my little finger over that dimple (503; Act 2)

In this parallel realm of inverted social hierarchies and other selves, Barrie seemingly fosters a world of romantic innocence in accordance with the fourth-phase green world Shakespearean comedies that *Dear Brutus* references so liberally. The forest, classically regarded in literature as "a passage-way of particular importance . . . a place of mortal danger and forbidden desires" (Messerli 274)

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<sup>118</sup> This clearly recalls Alice Dearth's conversation with Joanna Purdue in Act One: "JOANNA: You certainly have good ears. ALICE: (*drawling*) Yes, they have always been rather admired. JOANNA: (*snapping*) By the painters for whom you sat when you were an artist's model?" (83)

corporealises Dearth's dream of an alternative life by giving him the perfect child whose absence has been framed as the cause of his ruin. Indeed, this haunting introduction of the dream-child who fulfils and re-energises the hero-gone-to-seed only to be lost to his sight at the close of Act Two, is perceived as one of Barrie's most vicariously bittersweet episodes:

The most likeable of the characters, Will, would certainly be better off with the daughter whom he finds in the wood, and with whom he seems to recapture earlier joy . . . [t]he sadness of *Dear Brutus* is that the meeting in the wood is to be the only one, not a coming together but a tantalising glimpse (Ormond 122; 125).

Yet Dearth's joy in fatherhood is misinterpreted. The dream-daughter, as a manifestation of his deepest desire, demonstrates that he does not yearn for an equal with whom a child can be produced, but merely a subject who reflects and develops his own glory. In the conversation above, it is revealed that Margaret is created from his very art; as such, Barrie implies that what Dearth truly desires is a passive, infantilised 'ideal' who never challenges or critiques but exists simply to refract his triumphs while she soothes his troubled thoughts.

Correspondingly, the broken appearance of Alice Dearth in the forest ("A *vagrant woman . . . one whom the shrill winds of life have lashed and bled; here and there ragged graces still cling to her, and unruly passion smoulders*" [505; Act 2]) is an intimation that non-conformity must be rigorously suppressed in the women of either world. In the Midsummer Wood, Alice's dishonourable union (with a man who is not Will) is shown to have left her destitute and humbled. Implicitly, the

untameable Alice of Lob's drawing room is castigated in the fantasy world for rejecting a life which socially positions motherhood both as a pinnacle of feminine glory (despite the sacrifices it demands of woman's freedom and individual power), and as the duty incumbent upon any wife who wishes to keep her marriage afloat.

As the Dearths make their way individually back across the threshold of reality in Lob's drawing room, Barrie draws upon the disruptive dynamics of the fantasy space to accentuate the problems of home. Dearth, in pursuing Alice through the forest back to the manor house even though he fails to recognise her, repeats the mistake of his former life; he refuses to see his wife for who she is as an individual, and instead seeks to incorporate her into his 'art' (his life with Margaret). Although fellow characters continue to indict Alice as the main source of toxicity within their marriage ("MABEL: She is a wild one" [523; Act 3]), Barrie therefore utilises the transformative space of the wood to suggest that the Dearths are at least equally complicit in their mutual degradation – and in doing so, absolves the non-domesticised woman of an unjust, culturally-weighted blame even as he renders a vivid and distressing presentation of the consequences of her wildness.

In contrast to Barrie's prolonged exposition of the Dearths' fatally flawed partnership, Lob is the only character in the play whose personal history remains - apparently - enigmatic. The closest any individual character comes to explaining him is when Matey alludes to the co-existence of sweetness and menace in his master's psyche, contending that he is a "lovable old devil" (469; Act 1) . . . The villagers know it. They are all inside their houses tonight – with the doors barred . . . He frightens them. There are stories" (471; Act 1). Matey's insights do not stem solely from his

prolonged personal contact with his master. Whilst the evolution of the role of butler<sup>119</sup> has led to the virtual eclipse of 'body-servant'<sup>120</sup> as a term denoting a relationship of respectful intimacy between master and senior household employee, the lesser-known title is more apposite when discussing the bond between Matey and Lob. As body-servant, Matey maintains both a literal and figurative attendance to Lob's corporeality. He intercedes between the mysteries of this domestic space and the mundane world not merely in the handling of physical chores, but also as a relatable guide and translator for the mortal cast members, and, by extension, the audience members of whom they are a representative cross-section. As such, while the butler in literature is often imposed as a conduit between upper class and lower classes,<sup>121</sup> in this case, Matey is inserted as mediator between the real and the supernatural. Defending himself against the women's blackmail attempt in Act One, he is tasked with satisfying their curiosity about Lob's connection to the fantasy world:

MATEY: . . . I wouldn't go out to-night if he asks you. Go into the garden, if you like. The garden is all right. (*He really believes this*). I wouldn't go farther. Not tonight.

. . . .

Above all, ladies, I wouldn't go into the wood.

MABEL: The wood? Why, there is no wood within a dozen miles of here.

MATEY: No, ma'am. But all the same, I wouldn't go into it – not if I was you. (*With this cryptic warning he leaves them, and any discussion is prevented by the arrival of their host*) (472).

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<sup>119</sup> Originally, "butler" referred to a male servant with responsibilities relating specifically to the overseeing of a household's wine cellar and dispensing of liquor (*oed.com*)

<sup>120</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary traces the literary history of "body-servants" as far back as the seventeenth century, when Sir Richard Cox uses the term in his *Hibernia Anglicana Pt. 1* 320 (1689). The phrase also appears in Laurence Sterne's *The Life of Tristram Shandy II* v.34 in 1760, and in *Harper's Magazine* in August of 1883 (484/1) (*oed.com*)

<sup>121</sup> Barrie addresses this issue in his classic play, *The Admirable Crichton* (1902)

Even as intermediary between 'normal' and supernatural worlds, Matey is capable of only a partial explanation of the peculiarities of Lob's estate, since his authority is limited to his own sphere of experience: the interior, realistic world is the sole 'safe' territory. By professing that he amounts to little more than the accidental product of "domestic service . . . flung among bad companions" (471; Act 1), Matey further acknowledges that – as butler or body-servant – his authority in the home-space is limited by the reification of his labour. Although when set against the dissolute masculinities of Will Dearth and Jack Purdie the figure of the butler retains a certain genteel dignity, as a member of household staff Matey is nevertheless integrated into the domestic sphere. His body is an instrument in the successful functioning of the home, subverting any of his pretensions to be head of household - even if this role is far from satisfactorily occupied by his master.

Finally, although it falls to Matey to 'translate' and temper Lob's sudden changes in mannerism so as to make him comprehensible to both house-guests and audience, Barrie uses dramatic irony to suggest that his master's liminal persona defies interpretation even by his interpreter. An authorial aside ("*He really believes this*") undermines Matey's confidence that the garden is "all right"; Barrie's note thus recalls the play's earlier insistence upon Lob's disconcerting spatial ambivalence as a creature who, though welcome in both realms, belongs in neither.

Barrie nuances this feeling of unfixeness at the heart of Lob's character during Act One, eking out volatility in everything from his behaviour to his speech. Throughout the play, Lob's demeanour fluctuates between portentous, grave and capable of "deep thoughts" (473; Act 1) to impishly charming "*He rolls on a chair,*

*kicking out his legs in an ecstasy of satisfaction*" (473; Act 1). He is manipulative and "artful" (475; Act 1) employing reverse psychology in an attempt to coerce his guests into entering the Midsummer Wood ("COADE: Lob is the only sceptic in the house. Says it is all rubbish and that we shall be sillies if we go' [475; Act 1]), before becoming petulant and aggressive when it seems he shall be disappointed: "It is the thing I wanted, and it isn't good for me not to get the thing I want. (*He creeps under the table and threatens the hands that would draw him out*)" (476; Act 1).

This unpredictability is mirrored in the capriciousness of Lob's dialogue. When in communion with his beloved plants, Lob is consistently tender and devoted – "Poor bruised one, it was I who hurt you. Lob is so sorry. Lie there . . . Sweetheart, don't cry, you are now prettier than ever" (477; Act 1) – yet he struggles to locate an appropriate register in which to engage his human house-guests. During the exposition of the blackmail plot,<sup>122</sup> Joanna Trout remarks that, "he does call his flowers by the old Elizabethan names" (470; Act 1), and later he adopts "*sweet little clucking sounds*" (475; Act 1) or "*clucks victoriously*" (476; Act 1) to convey inarticulate sentiments. Viewed in a context of erratic behavioural changes and physical oddity, this archaic, non-human vocabulary and the reversal of intention in his words combine to impress upon the audience a character in whose world(s) meaning is either transient, or occluded altogether.

Moreover, the other characters are painfully aware of their inability to

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<sup>122</sup> The female house-guests pressure Matey into revealing information about Lob and his scheme by threatening to send a telegram to the police raising the alarm about his theft of their rings.

explain Lob, to anchor him in either an interior or exterior domain,<sup>123</sup> or to categorise his intentions in bringing them together. The obviously Shakespearean undercurrents in *Dear Brutus*<sup>124</sup> are touched upon throughout the play, but it is in the following exchange that the women grapple with literary precedent so as to verbally secure Lob to a recognisable cultural standard from which they can derive some kind of sense:

MABEL (*who has brothers*): Lob? I think there is a famous cricketer called Lob.

MRS COADE: Wasn't there a Lob in Shakespeare? No, of course I am thinking of Robin Goodfellow.

LADY CAROLINE: The names are so alike.

JOANNE: Robin Goodfellow was Puck.

MRS COADE (*with natural elation*): That is what was in my head. Lob was another name for Puck.

JOANNA: Well, he is certainly rather like what Puck might have grown into had he forgotten to die (470; Act 1).

The mischievous, morally ambiguous sprite who brings oblivious innocents to a state of self-awareness is not an unusual trope in literature. Ageless, roguish and amnesiac, it is, however, possible to trace elements of a specific canonical male fairy in the women's chatter as they cast about for a paradigm against which Lob can be measured.

Indeed, many of Barrie's staging descriptions of Lob are redolent of Peter

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<sup>123</sup> In Act One, Lob is introduced as the master of the house, yet is observed to be often, "out there among his flowers, petting them, talking to them, coaxing them till they simply *had* to grow" (469)

<sup>124</sup> Ormond helpfully lists the various homages to Shakespeare's plays throughout *Dear Brutus*, noting that although, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* provides the most telling parallel" (123) Barrie incorporates additional references to *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice* and (in the play's title) *Julius Caesar*.

Pan; his insistence upon the former's fragility (Lob seems to be "*hollow . . . it is possible that, were the ladies to combine, they could blow him out of a chair*" [473; Act 1]) echoes Peter's ethereal movements across the stage, a fusion of "*autumn leaves and cobwebs*" (PP 97). Furthermore, Lob's meticulous avoidance of the set furniture – "[O]ne feels that if he were to strike against a solid object he might rebound feebly from it" (DB 472; Act 1) – recalls Peter's self-imposed isolation; he "*is never touched by anyone in the play*" (PP 98)<sup>125</sup>. Lob's "clucking" belongs to the same family as Peter's iconic crow (PP 118); like Peter – who "*has a perplexing way of changing sides if he is winning too easily*" (PP 123) - the force to whom Lob is allegiant, along with the question of whether his motivations are benevolent or sinister, is never fully established in *Dear Brutus*. Finally, compare Barrie's stage direction when introducing Peter to the nursery in *Peter Pan*, to his description of the drawing room in *Dear Brutus*: in the former example, Peter "*flies onto the mantelshelf as a hiding place*" (PP 90) whilst in the latter Lob in his chair by the fireside is like "*any gnome that may be hiding amongst its shadows*" (DB 464; Act 1). Both figures are thus acutely conscious of their liminality. Their very bodies exist as conspicuous refutations of the sexual hierarchies, structures of power and gender

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<sup>125</sup> Stirling points out that Peter's avoidance of physical contact was added to the published 1928 version of the 1904 play, lending weight to the idea that *Dear Brutus* and *Peter Pan* are involved in an symbiotically-influencing intertextual relationship: "Many references to Peter Pan's difference from other boys and girls, his insubstantial and not-quite-human nature, are introduced only in the 1928 script. . . One major innovation in this version is the idea that Peter cannot be touched – this is made explicit in Peter's first exchange with Wendy in the nursery. . . [y]et even here Peter, in answer to Wendy's insistent questioning, cannot say why this might be, and it becomes part of the accumulating mystery surrounding his character" (124). This 'new' quality of Peter's cannot be explained by him to Wendy, in the same way that Lob's origins and purpose in *Dear Brutus* cannot be deciphered by any of his guests. The qualities of intangibility and *untouchability* that they share is something that Barrie borrows from Lob to instil in Peter, further mystifying both characters.

roles embedded in the home-space, and, as such they seek to be 'hidden' in plain sight by the symbolic cornerstone of the domestic sphere: the fixtures of the hearth.

In his various incarnations across Barrie's *oeuvre*, the eternal boy is - even by 1917 - culturally synonymous with nostalgia. What if the Peter of 1904 had refuted the suspension of ageing in Never Land by accepting Mrs Darling's offer to go to school, then to an office, before becoming, in time, a man (*PP* 151)? What if the Peter of *Kensington Gardens* (1906) had woken his mother when he first returned to her (*PPKG* 196), and what if the window had not been closed upon him that on fateful second occasion (199)? What if we too could be children forever, or again? Barrie's notes make evident the contemporaneity between the first performances of *Peter Pan* and the seeds of *Dear Brutus* in 1904; there is also an undeniable thematic correspondence between *Dear Brutus* and aspects of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Furthermore, there is the fact that in the original manuscript of *Mary Rose*,<sup>126</sup> first staged three years after *Dear Brutus*, Barrie toyed with the idea of reviving Peter Pan as the heroine's island companion (Ormond 130). In early versions of the play, Mary Rose's island is Never Land and her reunion with Peter the fulfilment of an extended narrative arc spanning two decades:

*Peter himself emerges and sits on Joanna's [Mary Rose's] tree trunk playing his pipes. Joanna arrives (from a boat if this can be suggested) and the two meet. They don't kiss or shake hands – they double up with mirth at being together again on what we now realise to be Peter's island. They claw at each other like two inordinately gay children. He pulls down her hair and puts leaves in it, so that she looks like Wendy . . . Peter signs jocularly that all is*

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<sup>126</sup> Ormond attests in an article published the year before her *Scottish Writers* book on Barrie that, "[b]y the second manuscript however, Barrie had cut out Peter and his island, and with each successive version, he moved closer to the haunting and tragic vision of the 1924 Uniform Edition" ("J.M. Barrie's 'Mary Rose'" 61)

*ready and dances off doubled with mirth and playing his pipes. In a similar ecstasy, she dances after him (Ormond Scottish Writers 131).*

Although the connection between *Peter Pan* and *Mary Rose* was later severed by the excision of this 'reunion' conclusion, the point remains that Barrie harboured an enduring fascination with the continuation of Pan's legacy long after either the 1904 play, or the 1911 novelisation. For Barrie, this manuscript ending is a statement of his persisting investment in the boy who never grew up; the rest of the plot of *Mary Rose* is subsequently read in context of the 1904 play as simply a response to *Peter Pan*, an account of the Never Land experience from the 'other side' - namely, from the perspective of those who are left behind.

Moreover, whilst the reunion scene between "Joanna"<sup>127</sup> and Peter would have offered a pleasing symmetry in bringing together the equally childlike characters of the bereaved mother and the orphaned boy, it would nevertheless have been an incongruous conclusion for the heroine of the play.<sup>128</sup> In his last-act-resurrection of Peter and Never Land in this early version of *Mary Rose* - as well as his explicit comparison of Joanna to Wendy - Barrie is unsuccessfully endeavouring to lay Peter Pan to rest, rather than offering coherent narrative resolution to the female protagonist about whom the play is written. Stirling's analysis of *Peter Pan* supports this reading, claiming that "*Peter Pan*, finally, is a story that cannot close.

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<sup>127</sup> Barrie's first choice for the name of *Mary Rose*'s character.

<sup>128</sup> Ormond is similarly of the opinion that removing the reunion scene benefitted the cohesion of *Mary Rose*, remarking that Barrie, "was wise to change the ending, which an audience unfamiliar with *Peter Pan* would find inexplicable and bizarre" (131)

This partly serves to maintain the illusion of Peter's extra-textual existence. . . perhaps he never quite achieved the ending he was looking for" (126).

Barrie's repeating envisionings of an "ending" for Peter, beyond even the boundaries of his own narrative landscape, makes it entirely plausible that *Dear Brutus* represents yet another attempt at such closure. It cannot be disputed that, in the interval between 1904 and 1920<sup>129</sup> (which encompassed the writing and production of *Dear Brutus*), Barrie was preoccupied with revisiting his most famous work. Importantly, his early treatment of the *Mary Rose* narrative proves that on at least one other occasion he attempted to integrate Peter Pan into a play where he had no obvious role, tormented by his artistic instinct that his story had not yet reached its final resting place.

Given such textual and biographical evidence, it is surely not outrageous to hypothesise that *Dear Brutus* in its entirety is a representation of *Peter Pan*'s second chance; an earlier, less blatant continuation of the Never Land arc than once appeared at a premature stage of *Mary Rose* in 1920. Stirling says as much in her own analysis of inter and extratextuality throughout Barrie's career, noting that in *Peter Pan* he "plunders" (23) from a wide variety of literary sources and genres to produce a "composite figure" with traces of Odysseus, Achilles or Satan himself.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, when discussing the appearance of multi-genre sequels to Barrie's play, she isolates Steven Spielberg's *Hook* as, "one of the most extreme of the 'what if'

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<sup>129</sup> The period starting with *Peter Pan* and ending with *Mary Rose*, encompasses *Dear Brutus* in 1917.

<sup>130</sup> Stirling traces these literary references in Chapter One of *Peter Pan's Shadows in the Literary Imagination* as she discusses the multifarious fictional and non-fictional origins of the character of Peter.

variety, since it takes the step few sequel authors have dared to take and stages an adult Peter Pan" (4). Crucially, *Dear Brutus* "dared" to do this more than half a century previously, albeit with a considerably more subtle extra-textual blending of Peter into Lob.

Indeed, the very fact that Lob gathers together an eclectic bunch of individuals with the grand purpose of shunting them into a parallel world, yet refuses to pursue his own second chance in the wood suggests, critically, that he as Peter is already living it. Moreover, if we accept that Lob's own moment of transition has taken place outwith the temporal scope of this play, it seems natural that Barrie may have envisioned Lob's former life as part of a fictional universe with which he was deeply familiar, and parts of which were psychologically intertwined with his experience of writing *Dear Brutus*. For further justification, we might re-visit once more Barrie's 1928 "Dedication to the Five", his preface to the published edition of the play-text of *Peter Pan*, in which he allegorises the change wrought upon selfhood over time as crossing between rooms in a house:

Some say that we are different people at different periods of our lives . . . I think one remains the same person throughout, merely passing, as it were, in these lapses of time from one room to another, but all in the same house. (78-9)

If Peter and Lob are indeed "different people at different periods of [their] lives" but essentially "the same person throughout", Barrie's purpose is clear. We recognise the reflection of Peter in Lob, a character who has passed from the pre-adolescence of the night nursery to the 'adult' sophistication of the drawing room; but see the

resemblance as if through a cracked mirror. Through repeatedly highlighting Lob's "disturbing" (Ormond 124) qualities – his cunning, his uncanniness, his rather repulsive physicality as one who has never "*looked so old except some newborn child*" (DB 472; Act 1) – the play refutes the twentieth-century's enduring romanticisation of the dream-child preserved outside of time; a concept which is interrogated more openly in the destruction of Will Dearth's illusory daughter, Margaret. Although he does not expressly articulate a parallel between Peter and Lob, Barrie thus cogitates on the problem of the eternal innocent elsewhere in the plot of *Dear Brutus*. An elaborate dialogue between Dearth and Margaret in Act Three addresses the parental fear of change which surfaces consistently across Barrie's work:

DEARTH: The nicest time in a father's life is the year before she puts up her hair.

. . .

MARGARET: I am to be a girl and a woman day about for the first year. You will never know which I am until you look at my hair. And even then you won't know, for if it is down I shall put it up, and if it is up I shall put it down. And so my Daddy will gradually get used to the idea.

DEARTH: (*wryly*) I see you have been thinking it out.

MARGARET: (*gleaming*) I have been doing more than that. Shut your eyes, Dad, and I shall give you a glimpse into the future.

DEARTH: I don't know that I want that: the present is so good.  
(500; Act 2)

In the relationship between Dearth and his dream-daughter, the heartbreak of maturation meets with its equal and opposite: Margaret exits the play as a child deprived of the opportunity to grow up. Whilst Margaret's fate as a "might-have-

been" or "shade" (498-9; Act 2) understandably attracts critical attention,<sup>131</sup> Barrie's exploration of how "some little kink" (498) can dramatically alter the course of one's life story runs deeper and wider than the trajectory of any single character in *Dear Brutus*. With Lob positioned as Peter's "might have been", Barrie labours these supernatural beings' equivalence as a means of threading additional complexity into the central concerns of the play, at the same time as offering a response to the immortal 'what if' of *Peter Pan*.

The spatial storytelling of Act One's closing tableau offers further evidence in support of this message. If we revisit Wasinger's earlier analysis of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, she asserts that in closing the window Peter's mother prevents him from enjoying "his titillating oscillation between the maternal sphere of the nursery and the hybridity of Kensington Gardens" (223). In other words, the motif of the closed window is an expression of finality. It withholds from Peter any subsequent opportunity to *choose* his destiny, and resoundingly rejects the "hybridity"<sup>132</sup> symbolised by his crossing between worlds, in favour of a conventional, rigorously delineated Edwardian patriarchal family in which he cannot be incorporated.

However, Barrie's disempowerment of Peter in *Kensington Gardens* translates into agency in *Dear Brutus* if we accept the later play as an extended narrative of his own second chance. Having first successfully exhorted each of his

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<sup>131</sup> See McGowan (154); Ormond (*Scottish Writers* 124).

<sup>132</sup> I use the term with reference to Wasinger's own discussion, in which hybridity is a by-word not only for physical indeterminacy, but a defiant, lingering liminality between strictly demarcated Edwardian categories of sexuality, gender, masculinity or femininity, strength or weakness, childhood or adulthood.

house guests to visit his home, before manipulating them – against their most insistent reservations – into stepping over the threshold separating realistic and fantasy spaces, Lob ousts his final 'victim' (his own butler) into the parallel world of the wood:

MATEY: (*as he places his tray on the table*). It is past your bedtime, sir. Say good-night to the ladies, and come along.

LOB: Matey, look!

MATEY (*shrinking*): Great heavens, then it's true!

LOB: Yes, but I – I wasn't sure.

(*MATEY approaches the window cautiously to peer out, and his master gives him a sudden push that propels him into the wood. LOB's back is towards us as he stands alone staring out upon the unknown. He is terrified still; yet quivers of rapture are running up and down his little frame*).

(489; Act 1)

Lob's visually arresting stance at the window speaks to his resolute inscrutability – yet his control, perhaps even his triumph, in the situation is unquestionable. In expelling his body-servant into the transformative arena of the wood, Lob forcibly removes Matey from his position as social intercessor between magic and mundanity. Our relateable guide is, it seems, just as susceptible as his uninitiated fellow cast-members (and, implicitly, the audience) to the trickery of Lob's world. Additionally, through Matey's infantilisation of Lob in this extract, Barrie crafts an echo of the Darling children's resentment of their father's authoritarian bedtime regime in *Peter Pan*. The failure of Mr Darling's imagination is obliquely parodied as Lob, driving his 'father-figure' through the window *into* the fantasy realm, at once effects a reversal of Peter's earlier exclusion in both the 1904 play and its *Kensington*

*Gardens* 'prequel', and forcibly ejects from the domestic space the last bastion of a paternalistic, conservative social worldview.<sup>133</sup>

With his back to the audience however, Barrie ensures that Lob's relationship to the window remains arcane at the close of Act One. Simultaneously fearful and rapturous, Lob's expression is obscured and his motives remain unknowable. Yet, Barrie deliberately problematises our capacity to judge whether Lob hovers on this border between spaces as a symptom of weakness or power: ultimately, the impetus behind his decision is less important to the over-arching message of the play than the fundamental act of choosing. In his ability to absolutely control his companions' access to the window and the fantasy world beyond it, Lob possesses an authority denied to Peter Pan, who cannot even make this decision for himself. Peter's attachment to the windows of various London houses is a multi-faceted trope communicating ideas of innocence, hope, belief, and the anguish of loss; yet the 'Peter' of *Dear Brutus* demythologises the fatalistic agony of the second chance cultivated by his predecessor, by demonstrating his absolute control of whether or not he passes through the window.

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<sup>133</sup> For further textual suggestion that Peter and Lob are different versions of the same character, we might consider Stirling's analysis of the beginning of Act Five of *Peter Pan*, in which Peter vacillates over the closing or opening of the nursery window to prohibit or permit the children's return (Barrie *PP* 148-9). Encountering a mourning Mrs. Darling, the "funny feeling" which enfolds Peter (149) can be read alongside Lob's "terrified...quivers of rapture" (*DB* 489: Act 1). Stirling notes that Peter, like Lob, "seems to wrestle with his conscience (if he has one). In this scene, Peter the villain (who has closed the window) struggles with Peter the hero (who finally flies off leaving the window open) and it is only by the slimmest chance that Petr the hero is so moved (or repulsed?). . .that he thinks better of his plan and allows the children to enter the nursery at all" (Stirling 40). The convergence of similar ideas about chance and ambivalent moral allegiance around the particular motif of an open or closed window once more aligns the character of Lob with Peter. Interestingly, just as Lob presents in *Dear Brutus* as an adult and Peter Pan is, in the play's incarnation, a pre-adolescent boy, the adult guests at Lob's manor are seen to be the equivalent of the imminently returning Darling children, with both groups at the mercy of Lob or Peter's capricious ethical impulses.

This concept is reiterated at the close of the play, when Joanna Purdie inquires of Matey whether the "experiment" of the second chance at life, "ever has any permanent effect?" (528; Act 3). Turning to Lob for answers, Matey emphasises his master's determined lack of fixity:

*But when MATEY goes to rouse him from his chair, he is no longer there. His disappearance is no shock to MATEY, who shrugs his shoulders and opens the windows to let in the glory of a summer morning. The garden has returned, and our queer little hero is busy at work among his flowers.*

Lob's transition between these formerly antagonistic realms of indoor and outdoor, reality and fantasy constitutes a spatial reinforcement of the idea that change is continual, conscious and complex. Moreover, in moving imperceptibly across the border of the open window, Lob reconciles the symbolic conflict of Act One; the delusions of the drawing room now comingle with the stark truths of the sunlit garden to reveal (quite literally) a new dawn which allows the worlds of fantasy and reality to co-exist in balance. A staging direction insinuates a similar hope of a rebalanced reality for the Dearths.<sup>134</sup> Though they have physically exited the play struggling to come to terms with their devastation, the play-text reader is tantalised with the possibility that, "[i]f we could wait long enough we might see the Dearths *breasting their way into the light*" (528; Act 3) together as the curtain falls. Not only

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<sup>134</sup> This *denouement* in *Dear Brutus* was – as with so much of Barrie's work – subject to extensive revision between the play's initial performances in 1917, and the Uniform edition consulted in this thesis. Ormond observes that Barrie's "nerve failed him at the time of the first production, and he reintroduced Margaret, skipping behind her 'parents' in a tableau which preceded the fall of the curtain. . . however, Barrie recognised that he had falsified the conclusion of his play. Margaret was omitted from the third act, and the final concord between the Dearths becomes a more uncertain, tentative thing, deprived of unnatural brightness" (*Scottish Writers* 125).

does this light imagery recall the blighted future of their dream-daughter, "*lost among the shadows*" (508; Act 2) of the fantasy wood, as well as referencing the "*tenebrious shades [which] appear in the lighted doorway*" (464) in the drawing room of Act One, the ambiguous language of potential selves – "*we might see the Dearth's breasting their way into the light*" – crystallises and reasserts *Dear Brutus*' fundamental message about the crucial moment of choice. Evidently, like Lob these shades – as "might-have-been" or "might be" versions of lives – do not sit neatly in either the realm of illusion or of truth, but, present in both, enable communication between the spatially-polarised states of darkness and light. As such, alongside the equally liminal Lob, they enshrine the idea that any strict dichotomisation of fantasy and truth is fallacy; in every incarnation of our selves lies nuance, and the "*brave ones*" (528; Act 3) with the capacity for change may move from obscurity into enlightenment by passing through many shades of compromise and self-scrutiny.

Changing the course of one's destiny – becoming different selves in the houses of our lifetimes – is, Barrie stresses, an eternal and infinite possibility for all who have free will. As such, although for some of his house-guests the window represents a momentous, limited opportunity to re-shape the course of their destinies, Lob - for whom transience (in words, people, alliances and even the fabric of the domestic world around him) is the only constant - ensures that for those who, like the Dearth's, choose to change their own future, the window is forever permeable.

## Chapter Six - Beyond the Veil: Liminality and Defiance in the

### House of *Mary Rose*

I had an odd thought today about the war that might come to something, but it seems to call for a poet. That in the dead quietness that comes after the carnage the one thing that those lying on the ground must be wondering is whether they are alive or dead. Out there the veil that separates the survivors and the killed must be getting very thin, and those on the one side of it very much jumbled up with those on the other. One can see them asking each other which side of the veil they are on, not afraid that they may be dead so much as surviving. And then the veil thickening a little and the two lots going their different ways. You could even see some going with the wrong lot, a dead man with the living, a living man with the dead. Perhaps it is of this stuff that ghosts are made (Barrie, qtd in Meynell 90).<sup>135</sup>

Barrie's macabre musings "about the war that might come to something" may never have known poetic fruition, but they do unmistakably anticipate many of the motifs of the final play discussed in this thesis. Writing to E.V. Lucas<sup>136</sup> three years after the death-in-service of his beloved adopted son, George Llewelyn Davies, Barrie is understandably anxious about how humanity as a whole will process the – at that time, unprecedented - trauma of a war upon British shores. The fallen, he implies, are the lucky ones; in the aftermath of war's "carnage" our world will be decimated to the point where life and death are unbearable, interchangeable hells, with the bodies, "not afraid that they might be dead so much as surviving". Alongside his melancholia however, Barrie's artistic intuition is piqued. The "veil" separating mortality from the afterlife is just one more device which demarcates

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<sup>135</sup> Letter to E.V. Lucas, written at Adelphi Terrace House, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1918

<sup>136</sup> Lucas was a renowned nineteenth-century translator of European fairy-tales.

different realms in Barrie's fiction, and his envisioning of a muddled purgatory where there is, "a dead man with the living, a living man with the dead" stands as an extension of the ideas of spatial transgression and liminality expressed in the *Tommy* novels, *Peter Pan* and *Dear Brutus*. This concept of souls displaced by devastation - of humans so psychologically disengaged from life by the suffering of living – is, Barrie muses, "the stuff that ghosts are made of"; it is, then, apt that his most poignant ghost story blossoms from this same thread, featuring a bereaved mother so haunted by her own loss that she is trapped between worlds with no sense of belonging in either one.

Despite the fact that *Dear Brutus* was written during the First World War, *Mary Rose* is the only play in this thesis where the reality of that conflict intrudes upon dramatic action – and even then only tacitly, in the form of Harry Morland Blake (the son of Mary Rose and Simon) who wears the army uniform of an Australian soldier. Jack detects in Barrie's evolving tone a reaction to the horrors of war, as he seeks to sate the changing literary appetites of audiences after 1914:

As it ushered in an age which increasingly questioned orthodox belief and wished life to be shown in darker colours, Barrie, who had been seen as the dramatic mirror of late Victorian optimism, was held by many to be old-fashioned. Even then, he responded with two of his darkest and most successful plays, *Dear Brutus* (1917) and *Mary Rose* (1920).

Ormond, however, reads a more personal impetus in Barrie's deviation from type, noting that the 1924 Uniform Edition of *Mary Rose*, "clearly shows the effects on the playwright of the death of his adopted son, Michael Llewelyn Davies, who

drowned at Oxford in the summer of 1921 . . . [t]he final revisions to *Mary Rose*, a play written and performed during the last two years of Michael's life, are associated with his memory" ("J.M. Barrie's 'Mary Rose'" 60). Jack and Ormond's observations each have their merits; although both analyse *Mary Rose* using a biographical lens – an approach which, especially with regards to Barrie studies, is deeply contentious<sup>137</sup> - to entirely dissociate Barrie's personal experiences from his art is a disingenuous enterprise. Like the other texts included in this thesis, *Mary Rose* is necessarily (if subtly) suffused with the ideological and emotional structures of Barrie's world which include, in this case, a postwar, grief-stricken reality. When, in his biography of Barrie, Geduld critiques *Mary Rose* as a tragedy, he too is referring to the context and motivations underlying the play's conception. For Geduld, it is a play, "concerned with irrevocable loss: loss of identity, loss of daughter, wife, child and mother, and loss of the soul; Barrie's heroine loses intelligible contact with the world (through a retreat into fantasy) and ultimately drives herself out of it" (157-8).

However, in spite of its emergence in a period which in both socio-political and personal terms could be defined as one of the bleakest of Barrie's life, *Mary Rose* is emphatically not a play about loss. Rather, it represents the intersection of many of the themes explored in his previous works. As the final text in this thesis' analysis of the narrative properties of the home, *Mary Rose* signifies the apotheosis

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<sup>137</sup> There exists a long history of scholarship which endeavours to draw equivalence between Barrie's life experiences and his literature - with short-sighted and detrimental results. Geduld's *Sir James Barrie* stands, in fact, as the foremost – and hence, deeply influential - example of the distortive readings produced by critiquing Barrie's work through a biographical or psychoanalytical lens. Dudgeon's works are also guilty in this regard (see Literature Review of this thesis).

of the role of domestic space in subversive story-telling and the formation of identity. Furthermore, its lead character revivifies – indeed, amplifies - ideas of the 'unconventional' woman's reclamation of the creative space, which are expressed across Barrie's writing of more than two decades. Mary Rose herself is an embodiment of Barrie's preoccupation with motherhood as a process which is not merely personally transformative but which internalises instincts so powerful that laws of nature are transgressed,<sup>138</sup> while the play's manipulation of a present-day narrative frame, interspersed with various analeptic episodes which are themselves subject to chronological stretches and leaps, recalls his lifelong interest in the idea of time as a flexible, subjective experience.<sup>139</sup>

If Barrie experimented with the interior life of the domestic realm in *Dear Brutus*, his rendering of the home space in *Mary Rose* represents the zenith of this conceit. The plot of the play is familiar to Barrie scholars, not merely because of the play's continuing commercial popularity<sup>140</sup> but also because of its utilisation of tropes seen across his works. A brief synopsis is helpful at this interval however

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<sup>138</sup>Barrie's fascination with maternity and the change it engenders in women is suggested in nearly all of the female characters in this thesis, from the Jean Myles/Mrs Sandys dichotomy, to Grizel and the Painted Lady; to Wendy and Mrs Darling; to Peter's mother in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and even, in its inverse form as the 'unmotherly' woman, Alice Dearth in *Dear Brutus*. Finally, Mary Rose herself experiences such a visceral bond with her son that she defies supernatural forces in order to be reunited with him.

<sup>139</sup> Fox (22-45) Wiggins (85-7), Chapman (144) and Gaarden (80) – to name a mere few - have each explored different facets of Barrie's experimental use of temporality, mostly in *Peter Pan*. Yet in more general terms, Barrie's interest in the notion of suspended or relived time is expressed in his repeated use of motifs such as fantasy realms and windows. Finally, the telling words of his "Dedication To The Five", which I have reproduced repeatedly in this thesis, speak of his interest in the fluidity and intensely personal nature of how we individually experience the passage of time.

<sup>140</sup> *Mary Rose* has enjoyed major theatrical revivals at least twice in Scotland alone throughout the past decade; firstly for a highly-praised turn at the Edinburgh Lyceum Theatre from 24<sup>th</sup> October – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2008 (*lyceum.org*); and more recently, for a four-month run at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre between 20<sup>th</sup> June – 11 October 2017 (*scotsman.com*)

since, despite a relatively straightforward narrative arc, *Mary Rose's* multivalent symbolism and multiple chronologies necessitate a clear understanding of the action itself. The play opens upon a young soldier perusing the desolate country estate formerly owned by Mary Rose's parents; following a protracted back-and-forth with housekeeper Mrs Otery, it emerges that he is the beloved grandson/son returned from years as a runaway. His questions expose fragments of the house's chequered history, and, as he sinks into a fireside armchair a temporal shift transports the audience back in time. During these historical scenes, Mary Rose Morland is revealed as the only daughter of devoted upper-middle-class parents, who goes missing from a Hebridean island aged eleven. Despite there being no trace of her for twenty days, she returns inexplicably and without warning, oblivious to the length of her absence, where she went, or what happened to her there.

Electing to keep the distressing details of her ordeal from their daughter, Mary Rose's parents allow her to grow up in blissful ignorance; upon marrying her childhood sweetheart Simon and giving birth to their baby boy, she even honeymooned with him on the same island which claimed her as a child. Rather predictably, the newlyweds' tempting of fate results in Mary Rose's hearing the call of the island spirits once more. Again, she vanishes, this time for twenty-five years. When she eventually returns home, Mary Rose is disturbed by the changes wrought in her husband and her family. Worse still is her realisation that her baby has grown up and (for reasons left vague) fled his family for a life of voyaging and war. However, before the full effects of Mary Rose's discovery are described, the action leaps back to the present-day context in which that boy is now a man, sitting in the

sepulchral home of his grandparents. Mary Rose appears to him – whether as a ghost or as a wraith tied to life by her devastation is left ambiguous – and, despite not recognising him as her child, their reunion releases her. As she hears the island call to her for the final time, she exits the play, fulfilled.

The stage notes which precede Act One of the play are extensive. Indeed, Ormond notes that the Uniform Edition, begun in 1924, is "primarily intended for reading" ("J.M. Barrie's '*Mary Rose*'" 60). Consequently, the mapping of the set is extravagantly symbolic at the same time as treating the room's interior geography with precision. The play opens upon a "*room in a Sussex manor house*" (Barrie MR 241), later revealed to be the drawing room, which is devoid of inhabitants and apparently in a state of longterm dilapidation. The room boasts one window at the back of the stage, and two doors: "*[O]ne leading downstairs; the other is at the back, very insignificant, though it is the centre of this disturbing history*" (241).<sup>141</sup> Importantly, both the sole window and this "*insignificant*" door occupy a prominent visual position, allowing their phenomenological spatial connotations to be exploited to maximum effect throughout the play.

The physical sparseness of the set is subverted in the rich morbidity of its imagery. Wherever possible, Barrie personifies the room as a conscious, suffering entity - whether in the peeling of its wallpaper ("*[it] leans forward here and there in a grotesque bow, as men have hung in chains*" [241]), in its desolation ("*[a]ll of this room's past which can be taken away has gone*"), or in the window which wears a

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<sup>141</sup> Note that this direction recalls a similar comment upon the window in the Darlings' night nursery in Chapter Four.

"shroud" of sacking to block out the sun. However, the house is not merely in mourning. Its evocation of unbearable deathly stillness ("*the next sound heard here will be in the distant future when another piece of paper loosens*") is belied by Barrie's allusion to a duplicitous, suppressed life:

*We might play with the disquieting fancy that this room, once warm with love, is still alive, but is shrinking from observation, and that with our departure they cunningly set to again at the apparently never-ending search which goes on in some empty old houses* (241).

A domestic space riven between states of death, grief, half-life and immortality, the Morland house's every nuance is suggestive of the play's titular protagonist. Indeed, Ormond's comment that, "the whole room takes on the qualities of the daughter" (*Scottish Writers* 127) indicates Barrie's cultivation of Mary Rose as a figure who is likewise transfixed between the living and the dead. The 'present-day' Morland drawing room of Act One is therefore spatially redolent of the central character's suspension between the worlds of reality and fantasy - a dichotomy which, in this text, parallels that of life and the afterlife. Furthermore, Barrie refers to a mysterious entity in his description of the room's oppressive quietness: "*It is such a silent room that whoever speaks first here is a bold one, unless indeed he merely mutters to himself, which they perhaps allow*" (241; my emphasis here and in following quote). He repeats the pronoun later in the paragraph – "*with our departure they cunningly set to again at the apparently never-ending search*" – as he builds the personification of the drawing room as a locus of stealthy, frenzied

activity lying dormant to escape human notice.

Barrie thus cultivates a stage setting upon which the sentience of the play's protagonist is imprinted, instigating a relationship of mirroring between woman and space which becomes increasingly pronounced as the plot of *Mary Rose* unfolds.

The protagonist herself is an amalgamation of many of Barrie's women:<sup>142</sup> playful yet complex, girlish yet "touch[ed] by frost" (260),<sup>143</sup> Mary Rose is perhaps the most literally liminal<sup>144</sup> amongst a host of fellow female characters who are somehow othered by the social contexts of their stories.<sup>145</sup> With regards to this liminality,

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<sup>142</sup> Listing the myriad interconnections and crossovers between Mary Rose and the other female characters I have chosen to analyse in this thesis would form a lengthy and tangential discussion. However, there is little doubt that in *Mary Rose Morland* there are strong echoes of Grizel, whose relationship with the domestic sphere enables the transmission of a subversive counter-narrative in the *Tommy* novels; of strange little Maimie Mannerling, hunted and yet spared by the fairies of Kensington Gardens; of Mrs Darling, in whose home threat to one's children coexists with maternal love; of Wendy Darling, perhaps Mary Rose's most literal predecessor in her adolescent flight from the home-space in pursuit of adventures on a fairy island; and of Alice Dearth, who is shown to be disenchanted with a life in which her child was never born.

<sup>143</sup> This term itself references a common conceit in Barrie's works, comparing children to flowers in bloom, whose beauty is all the more precious as a result of its transience as they grow, or, in some cases, perish. See this thesis' discussion of the idea in *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel* in reference to both Tommy and Reddy (*TG* 293; ch.24; *ST* 28; ch.3 respectively), and the less explicit reference to Mrs Darling's dread of her daughter's maturation in *Peter and Wendy* when the narrator conflates the flower in Wendy's hand with the little girl herself: "One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, 'Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!'" [Barrie *PW* 5]

<sup>144</sup> I refer here to the concept of "liminality" as defined by Arnold van Gennep, and deconstructed by Henderson and Cowan. Their analysis states that van Gennep's work, "identified 'liminal rites' as 'rites of transition', that ambivalent in-between state during a rite of passage when a person moves from one biological (as in puberty) or social situation to another" (39). Mary Rose, as pre-pubertal eleven year old crossing from a narrative of genteel English civility into Scottish wilderness and mythmaking, embodies this definition of liminality.

<sup>145</sup> Once again, whilst it would be superfluous to list the various degrees of 'unconventionality' written into the other female characters I have discussed in this thesis, Barrie's affection for girls, women, daughters and mothers who speak their compliance with socio-political expectations at the same time as undermining them is well documented in my previous arguments. I would add that Maimie Mannerling of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, though not explicitly analysed in this thesis, represents one of Barrie's most overt symbols of feminine transgression, with her flouting of both adult and fairy authority taking place in the symbolic seat of patriarchal authority: a garden alive with Edenic temptations which is overlooked by the institutions of British imperial power.

Mary Rose is the ultimate "betwixt-and-between" (*PPKG* 172) in both cultural and geographical terms. As a mother, her sexuality precludes her from the prelapsarian innocence attributed to girl-children; yet her lighthearted attitude to adult concepts of marriage and birth reflects an appetite for play intrinsic to the make-believe games of Wendy and John in the nursery of *Peter Pan*: "MARY ROSE: Simon, after we are married, you will sometimes let me play, won't you?" (*MR* 262). Mary Rose's parents collude in this agelessness as they vow to keep her Hebridean adventure a secret from their daughter: "At first we thought to tell her after we got her home; and then, it was all so inexplicable, and we were afraid to alarm her, to take the bloom off her. In the end we decided never to tell her" (259). Upon her engagement to Simon, the Morlands agree that the secret must be passed to him to care for along with Mary Rose herself. The cycle of condescension is perpetuated as the young woman is deemed incapable of possessing knowledge reserved for adult, authoritative and – in Simon's case – unimaginative minds.

In addition to her social marginalisation as a character poised somewhere between innocence and experience, Mary Rose is suspended between the antithetical domains of domestic, realistic, interior space and anarchic, fantasy, exterior space; despite giving her name to the play, her presence onstage is negligible as a result. She makes her debut around two thirds of the way through Act One, preparing her parents for Simon's proposal of marriage before flitting to the attic, reappearing to briefly 'celebrate' their engagement ("It is so fearfully solemn"[262]). Act Two, set on her Hebridean island, features a greater level of interaction between the newlyweds and Cameron the Scottish Ghillie yet ultimately

builds the foundation for Mary Rose's more permanent withdrawal from the narrative of her own life, as she is claimed by the island's mysterious spirits.

Meanwhile, Act Three opens a quarter of a century after Mary Rose's vanishing and involves the Morland elders, Mr Amy and Simon in a repetition of Act One's proposal scene. Once again, Mary Rose appears fleetingly – this time escorted home from the Hebrides by Cameron – only to disappear offstage within a matter of moments as she desperately searches the manor house for her 'baby', Harry. Her final entrance momentarily reunites mother and child as the action reverts to the present-day context of Harry Morland-Blake in the abandoned drawing-room of his grandparents' home. Yet even this climactic 'return' renders Barrie's eponymous character speechless in a rhetorical interlude largely orchestrated by her son:

HARRY: Do you know any other ghosts?

MARY ROSE: No.

HARRY: Would you like to know other ghosts?

MARY ROSE: Yes.

HARRY: I can understand that. And now would you like to go away and play?

MARY ROSE: Yes.

. . . .

HARRY: All I know about [ghosts] for certain is that they are unhappy because they can't find something, and then once they've got the thing they want, they go away happy and never come back.

MARY ROSE: Oh, nice!

HARRY: The one thing clear to me is that you have got that thing at last, but you are too dog-tired to know or care. What you need now is to get back to the place you say is lovely, lovely.

MARY ROSE: Yes, yes (296-7).

The displacement of Mary Rose between domestic and fantasy realms throughout the play alongside the infantilisation of her dialogue in this apogee exchange with

Harry, results in the relaying of a narrative in which the central character's voice is rarely in a position capable of meaningful communication. In her study of female speech in the Grimms' fairy-tales, Bottigheimer finds that in those texts, while:

[W]omen answer with great frequency, they almost never pose a question, and their general helplessness leads them to cry out often. This . . . expresses the weight of an entire society enjoining compliant responses in good girls, and more important, forbidding inquiry, initiative, and, most heinous of all, impertinence (127).

Similarly, Barrie manipulates the type, frequency, complexity and reciprocity of Mary Rose's speech throughout the play as a dramatic statement of the disconnection between the social and moral values of turn-of-the-century British discourse,<sup>146</sup> and the women who find themselves unwilling or unable to conform. With any truthful account of her incomprehensible experience rendered taboo within the home world, Mary Rose is repeatedly seen to pay lip-service to a patriarchal ideal of sweet, submissive femininity. Her dialogue throughout the reunion scene in Act Three descends into simplistic, acquiescent monosyllables offered only in response to Harry's repetitive prompting. Just as Bottigheimer draws

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<sup>146</sup> It is worth noting that although *Mary Rose* first appeared onstage in 1920, much of the action is set between thirty and twenty-five years previously, thus locating the events leading up to Mary Rose and Simon's engagement in Act One in the late-1800s. The island scenes in Act Two are set four years later (264), after which Mary Rose's second absence of a quarter-century brings the action of Act Three – encompassing both her return to the house with Cameron, and the 'present-day' reunion with Harry – roughly in line with Barrie's own present in 1920. Given his choice to clothe Harry in a WWI soldier's uniform, it is also reasonable to surmise that peace had only recently been declared, therefore firmly situating the play's adult characters as products of late-Victorian/Edwardian values. It should additionally be observed that since Mary Rose's prolonged absences place her outside of the passage of time, her behaviour in Act Three is symptomatic of a woman whose socialisation is entrenched in the *fin de siècle* period.

a parallel between the lack of "inquiry, initiative and . . . impertinence" in the speech of Grimm heroines and their cultural agency more generally, the above example – arguably Mary Rose's defining moment in the play - serves only to emphasise the near-total disintegration of her autonomy as both a woman and as a storyteller.

Correspondingly, in Barrie's other works female characters more broadly retain control of their speech acts. As I have argued, Grizel, Mrs Darling and Wendy emerge as storytellers whose narratorial dexterity poses a pointed contrast with the unreliable or ineffectual speech of male characters within their respective texts. By way of comparison, the exclusion of Mary Rose from her own life experience is so complete that she fails even to recognise herself in Cameron's Act Two retelling of her disappearance as an eleven year old girl. Captivated by the Ghillie's knowledge of Scottish folktales, Mary Rose resists Simon's attempts to usher her back to the mainland, insisting that she, "won't go without the story" (Barrie *MR* 273). Cameron proceeds to relate the details of Mary Rose's own uncanny tale, prompting her explicitly dissociative third-person exclamation: "What a curdling story! Simon, dear, it might have been Mary Rose" (273). The scene continues:

CAMERON: There iss more. It was about a month afterwards. Her father was walking on the shore, over there, and he saw something moving on the island. All in a tremble, ma'am, he came across in the boat, and it was his little miss.

MARY ROSE: Alive?

CAMERON: Yes, ma'am.

MARY ROSE: I am glad: but it rather spoils the mystery.

SIMON: How, Mary Rose?

MARY ROSE: Because she could tell them what happened, stupid. Whatever

was it?

CAMERON: It iss not so easy as that. She did not know that anything had happened (273-4).

Barrie uses Mary Rose's comparative eloquence in Act Two as a means of accentuating the emptiness of her words across the play as a whole. In stark contrast to her "helpless" (Bottigheimer 27) predecessors in the canon, Mary Rose is here the rebellious initiator of inquiry who speaks back to the paternalistic British 'common sense' embodied in the character of Simon. Her dialogue here is in fact incisive and sophisticated, as she effuses over her island ("Darling rowan-tree, are you glad to see me back?" [265]), openly chastises her husband ("Simon, do not make fun of my island" [272]) and assumes an active role in the discussion with Cameron, conversing on topics ranging from cuisine to university education. When set against Act One's breathy interactions with her parents ("Oh-h-h-h! [*She makes little runnings from one parent to the other, carrying kisses for the wounds*]"[254]), or the childlike word-long answers she offers to Harry's questions in Act Three, Mary Rose's locquacity in the fantasy realm is significant and purposeful. Whilst it suggests her unity with the island as a locus of artistic inspiration in which her speech becomes imbued with agency, Barrie actually uses Mary Rose's words in this discussion with Cameron to accentuate her unnatural passivity elsewhere in the play; the oppression of her true voice; and the "enjoined compliance" (Bottigheimer 127) to which she is subjected within the arena of her familial home.

The conspiratorial reticence of Mary Rose's parents and husband as they withhold from her the details of her past, prevents her from assuming a dynamic

role in the narration of her inassimilable experience. Their attempts to preserve her in an amnesiac "innocence" (Barrie *MR* 260) not only leaves her oblivious to the dangers of the island, but ignorant of her otherworldly, unquantifiable selfhood. At its root, the Morlands' decision to enshrine their daughter in her "curiously young" (260) state, is a silencing act which prioritises the girl's utility as a conventional wife and mother above her discomfiting and potentially divisive creative vision.

On this more subversive level, their editorial control of her story removes from Mary Rose the ability to transmute her experiences into art – something highlighted by Barrie with a dash of dramatic irony when Mary Rose frames her life in terms of its inadequacy as a work of folklore. In returning from the island, the "little miss" of Cameron's tale holds the potential to "spoil the mystery" by speaking about, and therefore normalising, her time there. Yet the integrity of the tale (and her titillating strangeness within it) is repeatedly preserved by the traditional authority figures of parents and husband at the expense of the atypical feminine voice. We might recall that 'forgetting', as a supposedly therapeutic remedy for childhood trauma, was a common course of treatment in Victorian Britain. Younger female victims of sexual abuse, for instance, "were deemed more likely to forget, and more easily reformed. Older girls [of which an eleven-year-old Mary Rose would be one] were however, frequently shifted from one institution to the next far away from their original homes, often ending up in an adult-style penitentiary" (Jackson 136). Returning to Jackson's use of testimony from the journalist F.A.

McKenzie upon his visit to the Salvation Army Nest home in 1908,<sup>147</sup> there persisted a theory that "the merciful oblivion of time" healed otherwise insurmountable psychological ills, permitting, "that, from the moment the door is entered the tragedy is wiped out. No one ever speaks of it to them, and they are never suffered to say a word about it" (McKenzie, qtd in Jackson 142).

Essentially, Barrie uses Mary Rose's verbal acuity in Act Two to point out the problem posed by her own survival, both at the level of the folkloric tradition, and, metafictionally, at the level of the play itself. As she traverses the realms of fantasy and reality represented by the island and the Morland house, Mary Rose is initiated into a body of experience and knowledge which cannot be translated into a postwar patriarchalist language of peace both at home, and in the home-space. Whilst her silence is figured as amnesia ("She did not know that anything had happened" [Barrie *MR* 274]) it is, therefore, also readable as a metaphor for her social oppression, and a literal statement of trauma she has been counselled, over years, to suppress. Mary Rose's own voice is subdued, distorted and ultimately elided as the peculiar history which belongs finally to her is monopolised by voices of the living who occupy the knowable side of the veil.

Trapped between realms in a story which – though about her – is never her own, and fuelled to persist in living only by her desperate searching for "that thing" (297) she wants, Mary Rose's instincts as a creator of art and of life are, consequently, *doubly* deprived of healthy expression. Her suspension between the

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<sup>147</sup> See Chapter Three of this thesis.

worlds on either side of Barrie's figurative veil in this play constitutes a formal reinforcement of her socially liminal status as a respectable middle-class woman marginalised by the aberrant quality of her experience. These successive suppressions, distortions and elisions<sup>148</sup> of her voice result in the relocation of her disruptive creative energies into the domestic realm itself. In her work on the Victorians' mythology of womanhood, Auerbach writes that: "[A] normal, and thus a good woman, was an angel, submerging herself in family, existing only as daughter, wife and mother" (4). However, she continues, when the scope of woman's power is unnaturally circumvented in this way it must transfigure itself, "imperceptibly into a demonism that destroys all families and all houses" (4). Mary Rose is the daughter of Victorians; the repressions and restrictions she suffers as girl-woman, silenced storyteller and childless mother force her artistic energies to manifest in the very textures of the home, causing devastation to her parents, ruining her marriage and prompting her young son to flee in pursuit of adventure on the ocean.

Indeed, Barrie is at pains to make Harry himself a universally empathetic figure in the play, stressing his familiarity as "*an Australian soldier, a private, such as in those days you met by the dozen in any London street*" (Barrie MR 242). Barrie's characterisation of Harry labours the idea that he is a lighthearted and relatable force for good, his convivial dialogue ("Well said, my cabbage" [243] "We live and

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<sup>148</sup> Mary Rose's ability to recount her own experiences on the island and thus bring the uncanny flavour of the island into the domestic space is, in turn, suppressed by her lack of physical stage presence, distorted by the childish register of her dialogue, and elided by her parents' insistence on her never being permitted to remember, or speak of, her ordeal.

learn, missis"[242]) and hearty appearance<sup>149</sup> establishing a radical contrast with the sinister ethereality of the Morland house. Having survived not only an adolescence as a runaway at sea but also service in the First World War, Harry is a walking rebuff of death; his very presence seems to confront the grief-stricken introspection of this place's legacy since, "*though interested he is unsentimental and looks about him with a tolerant grin*" (242).

Nevertheless, Harry's good humour does not negate the fact that he brings violence into this home-space. His soldier's uniform is visibly synonymous with the taint of a bloody war, whilst the ruthless skill which guides his "*fearsome-looking*" knife (itself a relic of "*trench warfare*" [244]) belies the affability of his on-stage bearing. As such, although Barrie exaggerates Harry's bluff joviality as he prowls the house of his childhood, his communications with the contours and objects of the domestic space endow apparently inconsequential articles with the potentially troublesome subjectivity of his own past – a past inextricable from the woman who gave him life. Harry's dialogue draws attention to items which, as the present-day action fades to the afternoon of Mary Rose's engagement over three decades previously, are revealed to have strange significance pertaining to his mother; "*the apple-tree . . . with one of the branches scraping on the window*" (243), the "*blue curtains . . . I used to hide behind them*" and finally, at the culmination of a crescendoing series of terse questions between Harry and Mrs Otery, the, "*passage wandering about by itself in a respectable house! It leads – yes! – to a single room,*

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<sup>149</sup> Ormond makes the point that Harry, "[w]ith his rough speech and masculine manner . . . provides the strongest possible contrast to the elfin Mary Rose and to the charm invested in her love for her baby son" (*Scottish Writers* 128)

and the door of the room faces this way" (244).

Furthermore, it is Harry whose presence in the Morland drawing room proves critical to the fulfilment of its unspoken purpose – its "*nightly travail which can never be completed till this man is here to provide the end*" (247). He is the missing element in Mary Rose's "*troubled story*" (247), quite literally the piece of herself which completes her life's narrative. By returning to the domestic space of his childhood, Harry's engagement with the interior landscapes therein provides the phenomenological impetus needed for that narrative to arrive at its conclusion. As he drops into the hearthside chair, Harry as Mary Rose's creation enables the process of artistic creation; the restoration of her maternal agency in the form of her lost baby animates a secondary creative instinct to relate her side of the history embedded in this domestic space. The stage directions for this transitional scene are particularly suggestive, and consequently merit quoting at length:

*Harry is now sitting sunk in the chair, staring at the fire. It goes out, but he remains there motionless, and in the increasing dusk he ceases to be an intruder. He is now part of the room, the part long waited for, come back at last. The house is shaken to its foundation by his presence, we may conceive a thousand whispers. Then the crafty work begins. The little door at the back opens slowly to the extent of a foot. Thus might a breath of wind blow it if there were any wind. Presently Harry starts to his feet, convinced that there is someone in the room, very near his knife. He is so sure of the exact spot where she is that for a moment he looks nowhere else. In that moment, the door slowly closes. He has not seen it close, but he opens it and calls out, "Who is that? Is there any one there?" With some distaste he enters the passage and tries the inner door, but whether it be locked or held it will not open. He is about to pocket his knife, then with a shrug of bravado sends it quivering back into the wood – for her, if she can get it. He returns to the chair, but not to close his eyes: to watch and be watched . . . The figure of Harry becomes indistinct and fades from sight. When the haze lifts we are*

*looking at the room as it was some thirty years earlier on the afternoon that began its troubled story (247).*

Despite his superficial presentation as the jocund prodigal son, therefore, Harry in fact brings forth the latent cruelty of the home-space. His knife, salvaged from the war, is itself simultaneously a symbol of survival and slaughter which jars with the dated gentility of the Morland drawing room. As he hurls it for a second time into one of the packing cases cluttering the set, Harry pierces the veil between this 'civilised' world and the domain of terrifying irresolution in which his mother wanders, voiceless. This explicit throwing down of a gauntlet "*for her, if she can get it*" renders the opening of a literal portal – "*the little door at the back*" – between the domestic realm and the world of fantasy to which Mary Rose and her experience have been consigned. Equally, the knife forges a visual connection between mother and son that serves as an inescapable reminder of their shared trauma.

In fact, although critical comment on *Mary Rose* has tended to problematise the maternal relationship as "inherently tragic" (Ormond *Scottish Writers* 128) or self-serving ("[Mary Rose's] concern is only for her favourite toy, her infant son" [McGowan 201]), there exists an essential sympathy between Mary Rose's strangeness and Harry's own. Their affinity lies in the fact that, whilst they appear to reside within a narrative stressing the importance of preserving a patriarchal (in Mary Rose's case) or imperial (in Harry's case) status quo, their own stories are deviant, and consequently buried. Furthermore, Harry's Act One confession about

the night he ran away invokes his mother's legacy by referring to the apple-tree with which her spirit becomes synomyous:<sup>150</sup>

"[It] was out at the window down that apple-tree to the ground that I slided one dark night when I was a twelve-year-old, ran away from home, the naughty blue-eyed angel that I was, and set off to make my fortune on the blasted ocean. The fortune, my – my lady friend – has still got the start of me, but the apple-tree should be there to welcome her darling boy."  
*He pulls down the sacking, which lets a little more light into the room. We see that the window, which reaches to the floor, opens outwards. There were probably long ago steps from it down into the garden, but they are gone now, and gone too is the apple tree (243).*

Mother and son are thus bonded across time by the objects of the home-space.

Harry uses a tree evocative of his mother to escape a conventional middle-class upbringing at roughly the same age that she herself first tasted island life, whilst his blithe treatment of his own ordeal – "ran away from home . . . and set off to make my fortune on the blasted ocean" – at once emphasises and skims over the fact that his too is an unfinished, fragmented and potentially traumatic tale.

This idea of mother-son kinship is developed throughout Act One. As Harry is incorporated into the domestic realm itself ("*He is now part of the room*") the persona of his unnatural mother is implicitly twinned with the unnatural domestic arena; Harry as "*the part long waited for, come back at last*" is not only literally "the part" of Mary Rose which has been lost, he also symbolises suffering which has cost the home its heart. If we compare correspondence written some two years before

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<sup>150</sup> "Throughout the play Mary Rose is associated with growing things, the rowan on the island, the apple tree which blossoms when she falls in love and is cut down at the time of her wintry return" (Ormond, *Scottish Writers* 135). See later in this chapter for discussion of how Mary Rose's utilisation of the window (via her apple-tree) contributes to an understanding of her otherness.

the publication of *Mary Rose*,<sup>151</sup> this transitional moment in the play is evidently inspired by Barrie's own attempt to process trauma:

Sometimes as I sit there I have a queer feeling that I am downstairs in the brown chair and this is someone else up here. Downstairs seems to belong to those Victorian days before the war and it is queer to have lived in them without knowing what was coming. I shall go in some day when the door is open and see if I am there (Barrie, qtd in Meynell 89).

Barrie's thoughts of 1918 explicitly map identity onto the dimensions of the home-space. His conception of himself as an entity riven between pre and post-war existences feeds into a discourse connecting the passage of time, the formation of selfhood and the visibility of both as part of a long-running intertextual metaphor of houses and homes. In this letter, Barrie's conscious self speaks from a place of retrospective, and literal, superiority; upstairs in his house, he describes his alienation from a "downstairs" self who existed "before the war . . . without knowing what was coming". The downstairs self is a Barrie who occupies the centre of the home, content to ruminate in his brown chair whilst blissfully unaware of the psychological detritus which will litter British consciousness after its collective experience of the Great War. By translating this real-life image from his letters into drama, Barrie draws an analogy between his own, pre-trauma self and Harry, or between the man yet to lose the innocence of the home-space and the man whose

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<sup>151</sup> Written to E.V. Lucas from Barrie's London home in Adelphi Terrace on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1918. This reminiscence about Barrie's seat at the fireplace appears in the same letter 1918 which contains his musings on the veil between the living and the dead; the clear consonance between the latter and ideas he expresses in *Mary Rose*, strongly implies that the former is also expressed as the part of the play in which Harry reclines in the chair.

physical presence – as soldier, son, and survivor – is critical to the exposure of decay at its core.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard observes that: "Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another" (8). This idea of interactive temporal states manifests itself as a literal dramatic nuance in *Mary Rose*, in which past, present and future are scenically juxtaposed. Set changes which transport the audience back and forth through time in Acts One and Three are achieved using the technical manipulation of lighting and stage furniture, causing the ambience of the domestic realm to oscillate between sinister and warm as "past, present and future" coalesce onstage. As well as being artistically sophisticated<sup>152</sup> these devices – particularly when placed against the backdrop of one domestic setting – crystallise the running conceit of tension between stasis and change which appears across the works explored in this thesis. By setting the majority of the action of *Mary Rose* in the relative confinement of a familial drawing room, Barrie exaggerates the effects wrought (or in the case of the titular character, not wrought) by time. Past, present and future are thus shown to inhabit one physical space in *Mary Rose*, with their various oppositions and stimulations providing insight, as well as conferring additional dimensions of meaning upon the action of the play.

The second half of Act One is instrumental in Barrie's portrayal of these

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<sup>152</sup> Hollindale notes that Barrie was particularly technologically ambitious when it came to the production of *Mary Rose*: "Barrie sets and delights in the challenge of effective scene-changing which this moment and its Act 3 reversal demand . . . [n]eat tricks of stagecraft and theatrical illusion are integral with plot and meaning" (332).

additional layers of meaning. Following the complex staging of Harry's envelopment by the room, the drawing room assumes a brighter aspect which is, once again, redolent of a woman:

*There are rooms that are always smiling, so that you may see them at it if you peep through the keyhole, and Mrs Morland's little drawing room is one of them. Perhaps these are smiles that she has left lying about. She leaves many things lying about; for instance, one could deduce the shape of her from studying that corner of the sofa which is her favourite seat, and all her garments grow so like her that her wardrobes are full of herself hanging on nails or folded away in drawers (Barrie MR 247).*

Barrie's cultivation of corporeal sympathy between Mrs Morland and her "*little drawing room*" stands, on one level, as an expression of longstanding socio-literary archetypes. 'Home' here seems to exist as an intrinsically feminine space, where matriarchal authority prevails. Later in the stage directions for the opening of this scene, for example, Barrie describes the strength of Mrs Morland's influence in terms of a benignant satellite tyranny, referring to an ominous "*cough or click of her needles*" emanating from across the room as a "*clandestine way of telling her husband not to be so assertive to his guest*" (249). Furthermore, a state of gendered domestic harmony is maintained by employing the trope of the self-possessed wife whose quiet wisdom consistently redeems her husband's neuroses and pretensions. Mr Morland's grandiose-sounding "*magisterial duties*" are exposed as little more than the fripperie of feminine accoutrements – "*not much larger than a lady's*

*handkerchief*", whilst the wife who contents herself with knitting neckties<sup>153</sup> not only "does nearly all his work for him" but "makes up his mind for him, and is still unaware that she is doing it" (249). Indeed, Hollindale asserts in his explanatory notes for the play that:

Barrie's psychology for Mrs Morland . . . [is] a form of sexual self-effacement which is the source of a quiet authority. This reading of the approved wifely role may now be dismissed as sentimental, condescending, or fraudulently compensatory for women's actual low status, but it does represent a precise instruction for the playing of what are still eminently playable roles (333).

Contrary to Hollindale's discernment of condescension in the writing of Mrs Morland's character, Barrie recognises that the sexual politics of the home are inherently damaging to autonomy – even in this scene of apparently comfortably middle-class, quintessentially British domesticity. Hollindale locates a "sexual self-effacement" in Mrs Morland which, he believes, marks her as a paradigmatic nineteenth-century wife and mother; this same attribute is symbolically magnified and in fact subverted by Barrie, whose interest in the complexity of the relationship between home-space and personhood we have seen developing throughout the other primary texts in this thesis.

For example, in Mrs Morland's "*smiles that she has left lying about*" one can discern reflections of the nursery's usurpation of Mrs Darling's body: in *Peter Pan*, her "*mother's eyes*" become watchful night-lights (PP 97), whilst her assiduous

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<sup>153</sup> Of Mrs Morland, Barrie writes that: "no doubt the necktie she is at present knitting will soon be able to pass as the person for whom it is being knit" (248).

winnowing of "*many articles of the mind*" (89) from the heads of her sleeping children becomes knowledge she must both possess in her own mind, and process as items to be stored in the hidden spaces of the room. More relevant still is Barrie's focus on woman's smile as signature. In the *Tommy* novels, Grizel's "*crooked grin*" is an indicator of her return to non-conformist wholeness, whilst Mrs Darling's "*sweet mocking mouth*" (89) stands as visual symbol denoting her inarticulable duality as an Edwardian wife and mother: her speech espouses a traditional womanly "sweetness" which is invariably undermined by her non-verbal acts, and the secrets she keeps from her own family. Mrs Morland's "smiles" in *Mary Rose* take this a step further. The drawing room is, in fact "*always smiling*" (MR), suffused in the warmth of its hostess. Her smiles litter the domestic space almost carelessly; their abundance is an indication of the home's cheerful ambience at the same time as the ambiguity of their spatial description – "*lying about*" - hints at a something hidden beneath an apparently genial mood. Furthermore, Barrie's use of "smile" knowingly summons the spectre of the future drawing-room, described in the text's first paragraphs as fleetingly exhibiting "*a disturbing smile . . . which came, surely, of knowing what only the dead should know*" (241). Using the smile as motif with which to succinctly connect these conflicting temporal states of blissful oblivion and preternatural knowledge, Barrie casts a pall over the carefree dynamic of the drawing room as it appears in Mrs Morland's time. The interaction of past, present and future – as represented by the drawing room's evolving "smile" - insinuates that the numerous material comforts of this domestic space are outlived by the ambiguous legacy of the women who inhabit it; the women of whom these specific

smiles are emblematic.

If we revisit the rest of the paragraph, the ambiguity of this legacy is elaborated. In Mrs Morland's favourite chair, "*one could deduce the shape of her*" whilst her clothing has grown so characteristic of her that, "*her wardrobes are full of herself hanging on nails or folded away in drawers*"(247). In spite of the fact that, superficially, Mrs Morland's position as gracious matriarch is reflected in her physical influence over the furnishing and spatial dynamics of the drawing room, on a more literal level her relationship to it is that of a woman whose "*shape*" has become negative space – a persona defined more by her absence than her presence. In this context, it seems hardly necessary to add that the rather macabre image of various Mrs Morlands "*hanging on nails or folded away in drawers*" contributes to an overall picture of this domestic space as antithetical to the cultivation of a healthy sense of self. Barrie's staging instructions stress that beneath a surface aesthetic of blissful middle-class British domestic life, there is a gradually-sharpening focus on the female body that is subsumed by – perhaps even sacrificed to – the space we call home.

As such, Act One of *Mary Rose* perpetuates a reading of the home space as a realm emphasising the tragicomic limitations of traditional gender and class roles. Simultaneously, however, Barrie uses dialogue and character placement to direct attention to specific physical aspects of the set suggestive of deviant or divergent readings which place an emphasis on feminine alterity. These discourses compete with the espousal of tired British socio-political values and hierarchies which constitute the play's dominant plot thread, and of which the Morlands and their

home appear emblematic.

For example, when the peacock "*of whom we have already heard*" (248) in Harry's memory of his childhood home reappears here in lustrous tapestry as part of a troupe of "*friends in the room*", we may recall, once again, Warner and Rowe whose works have persuasively aligned the act of feminine (or subversive) storytelling with the act of weaving. Rowe's essay on the cultural history of tapestry specifically is of particular value here, since she uses the *Metamorphoses*' story of Philomela and Tereus as a paradigmatic account of tapestry being exploited as a narrative form. In the myth, the brutally-silenced Philomela crafts the story of her rape by Tereus into a tapestry, which she then uses to indict him to his wife, her sister Procne. The sisters are saved from Tereus when the gods transform them into a swallow (Procne) and a nightingale (Philomela) respectively. Crucially, Barrie is familiar with this tale; amongst its structural and thematic referencing of A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dear Brutus* employs the nightingale's song as a staging effect which propels the play between the narrative exposition of characters' parallel realities in Act Two, with both Matey and Purdie referring to the bird as "Philomel" (DB 470, 490; Act 1, 2). When considered in a textual climate thus demonstrating Barrie's awareness of Philomela's original plight and 'salvation', the peacock tapestry in *Mary Rose* becomes demonstrative of a variety of interconnected symbolisms.

In *Mary Rose*, the medium of the tapestry itself alludes to silenced female experience speaking through domestic artistry, just as Philomela makes visible her own trauma by weaving it into a display of Tereus' guilt. At the same time as the

Morland tapestry gestures towards the suppression of woman's voice, Barrie's use of the peacock as its subject stands as a deliberate deviation from the Ovidian myth. Notably, avian imagery abounds across Barrie's body of work. From the caged yite symbolising equal parts liberty and imprisonment in *Sentimental Tommy*, to the fallen baby lark whose own tragedy in seeking to soar and sing before becoming dazzled by sunlight prefigures the tragedy of Tommy and Grizel's love (*TG* 112-4; ch.9); from Peter Pan's character germination in *The Little White Bird*, Wendy's misidentification as "the Wendy Bird" in *Peter Pan* (*PP* 111) to the very fact that flight, intrinsically birdlike, is bound up with faith in all iterations of the *Pan* story; from the Bird Island in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, with each species possessing a metonymic trait designed to refract something of humanity (*PPKG* 174, 180); to the nightingale's song heralding the unfurling of alternative life stories in *Dear Brutus* (*DB* 490; Act 2): one must conclude that Barrie's selection of the peacock – and his emphasis upon its presence both within Harry's memory and onstage itself throughout Act One - is a purposeful creative decision.

As such, whereas in Ovid's myth Philomela's voice is passively re-channelled into the nightingale's lament, traditionally the figure of the peacock is intertwined with powerful concepts of majesty, omniscience, innocence and the duality of light and shade which comprises the human condition (Werness 320-1). Furthermore, it is indicative of a spirituality beyond the limits of one faith.<sup>154</sup> Critics have identified

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<sup>154</sup> Werness traces the extensive symbolic significance of peacock imagery as it appears across diverse cultural and religious contexts, encompassing Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Greek mythology, Renaissance art, Alchemy, the Ming Dynasty and late-nineteenth-century American art nouveau (320-1). Although she acknowledges the peacock's metaphorical associations with pride, vanity, and excess,

a pseudo-Christian morality at work in *Mary Rose*, with Barrie's development of a "religious, if not specifically Christian tone" (Ormond *Scottish Writers* 131) used as evidence of the unholy woman's inherent tragedy. Indeed, McGowan attests that the end of the play shows "a heroine whose illusions have made even God forget her. Her ascension into heaven is not a joyous miracle but only a melancholy afterthought" (207). Later in this chapter, I will use a close-reading of the final act to argue against such evaluations of *Mary Rose* as being condemnatory of unconventional womanhood. However, even in Act One the prominence of the peacock tapestry is suggestive of Barrie's own disavowal of any single religious orthodoxy. As stage furniture, it emerges as a medium representing alternative means of expression for those rendered voiceless within a society prioritising narratives of heteronormative, patriarchal and imperial dominion. Overall, the multiple sociohistorical connotations of tapestry and artistic subject combine to evoke the sense of there being no definitive story or lone deity, as well as adorning the walls of the domestic space as a silent yet enduring check on the finality of the patriarchal word.

Somewhat ironically, that congenial figure of last-bastion Victorian patriarchalism, Mr Morland, is often responsible for the increased visibility of these alternative or divergent narratives. During a conversation with his wife he alludes to the miraculous recent invention of the "wireless . . . [There] is an article about it in that paper. The fellow says that before many years have passed we shall be able to

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her exposition of its symbolic evolution reveals an overwhelming, cross-cultural tendency to link the bird with positive traits such as compassion, incorruptibility, feminine divinity (320) and peace (321).

talk to ships on the ocean" (Barrie *MR* 251). Discussion of the wireless directly pre-empted the couple's first acknowledgement of their own rather troubling miracle - the disappearance and return of Mary Rose on her Hebridean island - with the implicit relationship between the disembodied voices on the radio and her own marginalised voice developed by Barrie as the scene progresses. Dismayed by his wife's suggestion of romance between Simon Blake and his daughter, Mr Morland announces his intention to interfere:

MR MORLAND: It's not nice of you to put such ideas into my head. I'll go down to the boat-house at once. If this new invention [wireless] was in working order, Fanny, I could send him packing without rising from my seat. I should simply say from this sofa, "is my little Mary Rose there?"  
*(To their surprise there is an answer from Mary Rose unseen)*  
 MARY ROSE: *(In a voice more quaking than is its wont)* I'm here, Daddy . . . I am in the apple-tree (252).

Mere pages earlier, Mr Morland lauds the wireless's revolutionary capacity to build connections between the comforts of home and the strange remoteness of life upon the waves. His excitement stems from the invention's conduction of perspectives from outside into the home space. In theory, the wireless would amplify alternative voices within the domestic sphere, imbuing them with the power to derail and decentralise longstanding hierarchies of information therein, and therefore representing a symbolic challenge to the traditional seat of domestic power: the husband and father.

Mr Morland's praise for this new invention is, as such, an unwitting acknowledgment of his own inadequacy as a chronicler of things he has not

experienced; yet he evinces no awareness that every attribute of the wireless is applicable, too, to his own daughter. Not only does the wireless's contact with "ships upon the ocean" foreshadow (with heavy irony) his unborn grandson's years of silence after running away to sea, it invokes the radio, a symptom of modernity, to make explicable Mary Rose's communion with the ancient mysticism of her island - at times expressed in the call<sup>155</sup> it exerts upon her. Wixson points out a similar contradiction in his essay on Barrie's use of 'new' media in *Mary Rose*, noting that as technological connectedness increasingly became a commodity of the late-Victorian middle-classes, the precariousness of true human connection was exposed:

Advances in communication media since the mid-nineteenth century eradicated distance between people, bringing the otherwise inaccessible closer. At the same time, however, the wireless, prominently mentioned in Barrie's play, lacked a wire that connected a specific here and there . . . Inherent to the technology is the potential to be both a medium and a barrier, dangling possibilities of both communion and rupture. The characters' experiences in *Mary Rose* as well as the audience's mimic the ghostly simultaneity of the new media that allows one to be in two places at once, two moments at once, never fully present in either.  
(Wixson 218)

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<sup>155</sup> The "call" of the island is referenced on numerous occasions within the script of the play, but most dramatically in Mary Rose's exits at the end of Act Two and Three. Barrie worked extensively with the play's original producer, Holman Clark, and the musical director at the Haymarket, Norman O'Neill, to refine the sound and instrumental effects which would become the signature music summoning Mary Rose to her island (Ormond *Scottish Writers* 130). Furthermore, Wixson points out a fascinating sensory contrast developed in the 1920 staging of the island itself. Noting that eminent scenic artist Joseph Harker was berated for a "fussy" and "dowdy backdrop" (Wixson 217), Wixson argues that such juxtaposition between the unmistakable aural signature of island music and the indeterminacy of its visual form in fact enhances the notion that: "the border between the domestic and the exotic, the real and the antireal, is porous, that these realms thoroughly haunt and thus inhabit one another in irreconcilable paradox" (217). See the discussions of Mary Rose's liminality and the Morland attic, later in this chapter, for further discussion of this 'porousness'.

The dramatic juxtaposition of Mr Morland's championing of the wireless with Mary Rose's response from the apple tree therefore not only highlights the fragmented nature of meaningfully connected communication within the secretive Morland family, but makes explicit the parallels between the liminality of the wireless and that of Mary Rose herself. Mary Rose's voice emanating from beyond the window is quite literally a perspective from elsewhere; she too is "in two places at once, two moments at once, never fully present in either" as she hovers on the threshold of the window and of her parents' conversation. As such, her opening dialogue in the play neatly prefigures an exploration of how her physical placement onstage is translated into her symbolic and social status within the domestic space.

As this thesis has determined, windows figure across Barrie's work as instruments of narrative in addition to functioning as images which convey ideas about chances, boundaries, communication and freedom. Although in *Mary Rose* it appears non-critical to plot development,<sup>156</sup> the protagonist's entrance into the action of the play via the window in Act One is an important spatial moment which clarifies her position as a woman on the fringe of conventional Victorian life. Having spoken to her father in response to his "call" through the wireless, Mary Rose crosses into the drawing room – a move signifying her transition from one world into another:

*If there is anything strange about this girl of eighteen who steps from the tree into the room, it is an elusiveness of which she is unaware. It has remained hidden from her girl friends, though in the after years, in the brief*

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<sup>156</sup>In relation to texts such as *Peter Pan* and *Dear Brutus*; in these texts, the windows are crucial aspects of the storyline, as well as thematically meaningful.

*space before they forget her, they will probably say, because of what happened, that there was always something a little odd about Mary Rose . . . [N]ever can she be one of those secret women so much less innocent than she, yet perhaps so much sweeter in the kernel, who are the bane or glory, or the bane and glory, of greater lovers than she could ever understand. She is just a rare and lovely flower, far less fitted than those others for the tragic role (253).*

Barrie's introductory instructions for Mary Rose are typically, anecdotally impressionistic. However, in his allusions to her oddness and her innocence, her forgettability and her rarity, her lack of sweetness "*in the kernel*" and the "*tragic role*" she is pre-ordained to fulfil, he designates his heroine as an irresolvable contradiction; a problematic girl-woman breaching institutionalised feminine categories. Discussing Wendy Darling, Roth argues that for Barrie, the "middle-class girl is also a liminal figure, who, in some ways, marks the boundaries between the various landscapes and tempestuous borderlands" (55); equally, in Mary Rose we may discern not only a thematic and sexual in-betweenness but a figure whose presence simultaneously indicates – perhaps even instigates – both spatial limits and spatial permeability. Aligning a description of Mary Rose's personal liminality with her movement through the window and into the consciousness of the play is therefore stylistically self-aware, a gesture of otherness which mirrors her divergence from the common social and conversational pathways of the home-space as represented by traditional entries and exits. Barrie emphasises this contravention of middle-class behavioural etiquette by contrasting Mary Rose's clambering through the window with hopeful-fiancé Simon's sombre entry to the home:

MR MORLAND: Is this some game? Where is Simon?

MARY ROSE (*in little mouthfuls*): He is at the foot of the tree. He is not coming up by the tree. He wants to come in at by the door. That shows how important it is (253).

For the remainder of Act One, Mary Rose's presence (or absence) is increasingly reflective of how the domestic space reinforces the concept of her marginality, or her relative "unimportance" within a traditional social hierarchy. Unseen levels of the set are exploited to suggest that she retreats to the attic space because she fears the adult responsibility of a conversation concerning her engagement to Simon – with the engagement itself a concession to her following the expected cycle of female maturation. Mary Rose's contribution to accounts of both her history (as voiced by her parents) and her future (of which Simon himself is representative) is thus reduced to an exchange of taps on the drawing room ceiling, intended to confirm if "things were going well" (257). As the scene draws to a close, the territories of drawing room and attic thus become increasingly polarised between submissive and rebellious femininity, as affirmed by dialogue at the positive conclusion of the marriage talks:

SIMON: (*He mounts the chair again, and knocks triumphantly. A happy tapping replies*) You heard? That means it's all right. You'll see how she'll come tearing down to us!

MRS MORLAND: (*kissing him*) You dear boy, you will see how I shall go tearing up to her. (*She goes off*) (261).

It is no accident that Mrs Morland's affectionate correction of her prospective son-in-law manifests as a dispute over the divided territory of the house. Simon makes

an assumption that Mary Rose can be summoned into the adult realm of the drawing room, replete with its elisions, suppressions and diversions of the transgressive female identity. In answering his summons, Mary Rose would effectively be acquiescing to her own assimilation into the dominant narrative of middle-class heteronormativity by which this space is characterised. Simon is contradicted by an older generation of woman who, as this thesis has demonstrated, is both victim and survivor of this literal incorporation into the domestic sphere. Thus, Barrie includes the dialogue of their disagreement to accentuate the fact that Mrs Morland leaves the site of her own symbolic bodily incarceration in order to seek out her daughter in the territory of introspection, 'madness', and creative utility: the attic.

We may briefly remind ourselves how Barrie's own correspondence informs his utilisation of multi-level spaces in *Mary Rose*. Whilst the transition scene staged in the drawing room earlier in Act One closely mirrors parts of a letter he wrote in 1918, that same letter also alludes to the upper level of the home. Upstairs is for Barrie a realm of "queer" (Meynell 89) feelings and dissociated, unrecognisable, split or doubled selves. Echoing Barrie's musings, in their extensive critical study of female autonomy in relation to domestic space Gilbert and Gubar argue for the existence of a "tension between parlour and attic, the psychic split between the lady who submits to male dicta and the lunatic who rebels" (86). We may also recall that Bachelard relates phenomenological fulfilment to a diverse and spatially elaborate domestic environment; the attic is a haven of solitude (Bachelard 10), the cellar a trench of unsettling thoughts (19) and an intricate interior layout a

foundation upon which "a great many of our memories are housed" (8). As this thesis has explored in relation to the character of Tommy Sandys, Bachelard deems the attic an inherently creative space which "furnishe[s] the framework for an interminable dream, one that poetry alone, through the creation of a poetic work, could succeed in achieving completely" (15).

With this analytical context in place, the fact of mother and daughter coming together offstage in the attic of this play transforms Mary Rose's girlish retreat into a re-evaluation of her own identity, and an awakening of previously dormant "queer" feelings. It transforms her movement of capitulation (in which she "submits to male dicta") into one of potential subversion (in which she become the "lunatic who rebels"). This nascent rebellion is referenced in the unease that the women's attic reunion appears to occasion within Simon himself ("I almost wish her mother hadn't gone up to her. It will make Mary Rose longer in coming down" [Barrie *MR* 261]). Instead of responding to Simon's call, Mary Rose returns to the drawing room emboldened with maternal solace and wisdom – the "nicer things to say . . . than [Simon] could think of" (261) - which, in occurring beyond the reach of the men's patriarchally-sanctified observation and control, is the source of their discomfort.

Finally, reading Mary Rose's return from the attic against Bachelard's theories transforms her spatial isolation as a character ignorant of her own peculiar history, into a reclamation of creativity. Being cloistered in the attic reproduces facets of nebulous memories Mary Rose has long suppressed. Her isolation reanimates, in corporeal form, parts of that "interminable dream" (Bachelard 15)

world which cohabits with reality in her mind. Barrie's jarring denouement to Act One is thus not merely a statement of the liminal woman's perpetual proximity to the uncanny, but an indication that Mary Rose's creative energy is gaining power as it manifests aspects of her fantasy island world in spaces governed by the hierarchies and expectations of Victorian reality:

MARY ROSE: Isn't it funny, I had almost forgotten about that island, and then suddenly I saw it quite clearly as I was sitting up there. (*Senselessly*) Of course it was the little old woman who pointed it out to me.

(*Simon is disturbed*)

SIMON: (*gently*) Mary Rose, there are only yourselves and the three maids in the house, aren't there?

MARY ROSE: (*surprised*) You know there are. Whatever makes you ask?

(Barrie *MR* 263)

Unequivocally, the attic enables Mary Rose's recall. It resurrects from her subconscious mind aspects of an unquantifiable experience which have been heretofore subdued in the main social spaces of the home. Her "*senseless*" mention of a "little old woman" of whom, mere sentences later, she professes no knowledge, is a symptom of the forgetful oblivion that characterises so many of Barrie's characters as they traverse the precincts of real and fantasy worlds; yet in this case, the appearance of the crone signifies an incursion of the fantasy island afterlife *beyond* its geographical limits, as far, indeed, as the liminal girl whose body itself has evolved to mark "the boundaries between the various landscapes and tempestuous borderlands" (Roth 55). This encroachment of the wild and inexplicable into the cosy tedium of domestic territory reflects the intensification of

Mary Rose's 'otherness' – with the properties of the attic as articulated by Barrie, Gilbert and Gubar, and Bachelard forming a convenient spatial metaphor for her metamorphosis. Sequestered in the attic space, Mary Rose's dream world is made explicable "through the creation of a poetic work" (Bachelard 15); namely, her own narrative of queerness, dissociation, rebellion and haunting which takes shape in opposition to the story being told of – and for – her in the drawing room below.

Rather than interpreting the apparition of the old woman as "retribution for her parents' silence" (McGowan 191), then, it is more apt to read this collision of worlds in the attic as testament to Mary Rose's blossoming consciousness of her own empowering duality. Poised between reality and fantasy, life and death, and between visitations from the paradigmatic feminine figures of mother and crone, Mary Rose re-enters the drawing room revitalised with visions and voices from each side of the veil.

Indeed, although the world on the other side of the veil – the place to which Mary Rose disappears as a child and, later, as a mother – is not explicitly seen in the play, the Hebridean island of Act Two is portrayed as the threshold to the supernatural:

*An island in the Outer Hebrides. A hundred yards away, across the loch at the back, may be seen the greater island of which this might be but a stone cast into the sea by some giant hand: perhaps an evil stone which the big island had to spew forth but could not sink. It is fair to look upon to-day, all its menace hidden under mosses of various hues . . . A blessed spot it might be thought, rather than sinister, were it not for those two trees, a fir and a rowan, their arms outstretched forever southward, as if they had been struck while in full flight and could no longer pray to their gods to carry them away from this island (MR 264).*

In contrast to the fantasy worlds depicted across the other primary texts in this thesis, Barrie deflects any ambiguity in his writing of Mary Rose's island. Its every geographical touch is evocative of damnation, from being cast out by a "*giant hand*" to its unholy survival ("*an evil stone which the big island had to spew forth but could not sink*"). Additionally, Barrie decorates the island set with allusions to its status as a "border-place" or a domain susceptible to mystical forces where the separation between reality and fantasy is more easily breached. The particular species of ancient anthropomorphised trees (Henderson 10) begging for mercy from "*their gods*", the moss-covered tree-trunk (Barrie *MR* 265) where Mary Rose would sketch as a child, and the way the island is itself reached "across some sort of water barrier" (Henderson 36) are unmistakable topographical signifiers of the uncanny.

That Mary Rose shares an essential part of her identity with the island is stressed in her rapturous dialogue; "Darling rowan tree, are you glad to see me back! . . . I shall tell you a secret. You too, firry. Come closer, both of you. Put your arms around me" (Barrie *MR* 265); Simon's wry observation that "it was obviously made to fit you, or you to fit it" (264); and the ominous lexical coincidence which twins her name, carved into the island's tree-trunk, with the act of doing harm:

MARY ROSE: I believe – I believe I cut my name on it with a knife.

SIMON: This looks like it. "M – A – R –" and there it stops. That is always where the blade of the knife breaks.

MARY ROSE: My ownest seat, how I have missed you (265).

Mary Rose's use of the knife in branding the island with her legend 'prefigures'<sup>157</sup> Harry's dexterity with his wartime knife in Act One's drawing room of the future, but it is also mirrors an eerie moment in Act Three when, believing him to be responsible for the disappearance of her baby son, she considers killing him:

*(A sudden thought makes him cross with the candle to where he had left his knife. It is gone.)*

HARRY: Where is my knife? Were you standing looking at me with my knife in your hand?

*(She is sullenly silent)*

Give me my knife.

*(She gives it to him)*

What made you take it?

MARY ROSE: I thought you were perhaps the one . . . The one who stole him from me (295).

The fact that the "blade of the knife breaks" always at the point where it will "mar" parallels the circumvention of her murderous intent in Act Three. Mary Rose is not literally lethal, but her body and voice represent, without doubt, an unquantifiable threat to the authorities of knowledge and power in this play. In addition, the partial cutting into the trunk of the name which is also a verb, binds her to the island which has in turn claimed her with its call; the act is declarative of their connection, as well as gesturing towards the otherworldly danger of which they are both capable.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Although in terms of the play's structure, Mary Rose's rediscovery of her carved tree-trunk comes after Harry's use of the knife in Act One, the analeptic chronology of the story situates Act Two a quarter-century earlier.

<sup>158</sup> As is customary in traditional fairy tales - generally of Scottish or Celtic origin - this act may also have been construed by the fairy folk as a violation of sacred territory, and thus potentially provides a

Within this context, Mary Rose's return early in Act Three is lent a frame of strangeness. She is made sinister by association with the discomfiting stage effects which accompany her departure from the island ("*[T]he call has come to Mary Rose . . . in a fury as of storm and whistling winds that might be an unholy organ, it rushes upon the island, raking every bush for her. These sounds increase rapidly in volume til the mere loudness of them is horrible*" [278]), but yet more so in those which herald her return. After a lapse of twenty-five years, the Morland estate – and its inhabitants – bear little evidence of Mary Rose's disappearance: the parlour, "*not much changed*" (280) is hosting the same cosy trio: "*The fire is burning, and round it sit Mr and Mrs Morland and Mr Amy, the Morlands gone smaller like the apple-tree, and Mr Amy less bulky, but all three on the whole still bearing their apples. Inwardly they have changed still less*" (280).

Consensus is that their daughter, though venerated, is lost to their minds: "MRS MORLAND: You have forgotten much but so have I. Even that room (*she looks towards the little door*) that was hers and her child's during all her short married life – I often go into it now, without remembering that it was theirs" (285). The repeated silencings which typify Mary Rose's life within this domestic space have come full circle, resulting in the complete spatial elision of her existence.

However, the alarming undercurrents glimpsed in her character throughout Act One have been strengthened by her time on the island. Her arrival with Cameron is, therefore, presaged by a pathetic fallacy of her supernatural rage and

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reason for Mary Rose's original disappearance. Her adoration of the island as an adult suggests, however, that any perceived transgression as a child was not only forgiven during her first absence, but is preserved and exalted by the fairies as a hallowed part of island lore.

devastation. Peering out of Mary Rose's window as they await Simon's arrival, the Morlands witness "*twilight running across the fields*" (283) and seek to shut it out ("Draw the curtains, dear"),<sup>159</sup> just as Simon reveals, shortly afterwards, that "I left the fields to the other two people . . . [o]ne of them was a lady; I thought something about her walk was familiar to me, but it was darkish, and I didn't make her out" (286). As she approaches the house from across the fields, the many facets of liminality latent in Mary Rose are elementally expressed as the enclosure of darkness upon the home space. She shares with that time between night and day a purgatorial, threatening quality to which Barrie alludes in the coming together of Mary Rose and her mother:

*She is just as we saw her last except that we cannot see her quite so clearly. She is leaping towards her mother in the old impulsive way, and the mother responds in her way, but something steps between them.*

MARY ROSE: (*puzzled*) What is it?  
(*It is the years*) (290)

This conceit of the temporal becoming bodied references similar ideas which have surfaced across the texts discussed in this research, not least those articulated in the separate selves witnessed in the "journey through the house" upon which Barrie embarks in his "Dedication to the Five". Mary Rose, caught between worlds,

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<sup>159</sup> Significantly, the curtains are mentioned as a spatial expression of the Morlands' desire to forget Mary Rose, and impede her demonic return. We may recall Harry's allusion in Act One to those same curtains as being one of his favourite hiding places as a child (243); it is suggestive that these articles of the home incorporated by Mary Rose's son as part of his innocent play, are later (in the play's chronology) specifically referenced as a way of symbolically keeping out her influence. Once again, a transcendent spatial connection is established between the unnatural mother whose presence in the domestic space is dreaded, and the runaway son, whose family yearns for his return.

is rendered physically imprecise and, as such, unable to engage with the mother who formerly came closest to understanding her. In Act Three, Mrs Morland remains entangled with the oppressive trappings of domesticity, instigating greater distance between herself and the daughter who has succumbed almost entirely to the infinitely rebellious world beyond the veil. Act One's wordplay on "*smiles that she has left lying about*" (247), suggestive of Mrs Morland's masked desperation within the home are made, if possible, still more disingenuous here: "*If chintzes have faded, others as smiling have taken their place*" (280). Furthermore, she strives to maintain a "brightness" (283) which although even Mr Morland suspects is mere "pretence" (284), is her only salvation, pleading: "We have to live in the present, for a very little longer" (285).

Deprived of this ability to communicate meaningfully with the mother whose wisdom has guided her through formative moments of her girlhood,<sup>160</sup> Mary Rose, returned to the home space in search of her lost baby, becomes increasingly isolated in her fury and grief. Only when the action of the play moves back to the 'present' of Harry reclining in the armchair does Mary Rose alight upon a fitting translator for her experience. As the first part of this chapter has outlined, the ferocious energy of her thwarted creativity has, over the years since her return with Cameron, re-invested itself in the unsettling restlessness of the drawing room as a "demonism that destroys all families and all houses" (Auerbach 4). Harry, whose presence 'completes' the room, is simultaneously established as Mary Rose's

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<sup>160</sup> See discussion of the attic space earlier in this chapter.

missing creation – her lost baby – and as the force needed for his mother's story, buried in the textures of the domestic space, to be told.

Yet mother and son's reunion in the parlour is not merely spiritually fulfilling; it is also a clear evocation of their shared exposure to violence. Alongside the link established across temporal and geographical chasms by the motif of the knife, Mary Rose and Harry are bonded through the muting of their respective experiences by the discourses enshrining patriarchy and empire within the middle-class British home. Indeed, context for Harry's own troubled history follows a similar pattern to the revelation of his mother's ordeal, with explication limited to ominous snippets of dialogue often voiced by fellow characters. During a discussion with Mrs Morland in the past drawing room of Act Three, for example, Simon is briefly optimistic that a telegram may be, "from my Harry – at last. Mother, do you think I was sometimes a bit harsh to him?" (Barrie *MR* 287). Similarly, Mrs Otery divulges in the present day that Simon died at sea,<sup>161</sup> though "the war made a great man of him" (292), to which Harry replies enigmatically: "Hard I used to think him, but I know better now" (292). These references, though purposefully oblique, indicate

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<sup>161</sup> In *The Little White Bird*, Barrie's first-person narrator notes the importance of names in his storytelling: "I spent much of my time staring reflectively at the titles of the boys' stories in the booksellers' windows, whistling for a breeze, so to say, for I found that the titles were even more helpful than the stories" (*LWB* 251). Barrie's own mischievous attribution of metonymic names to his characters is referenced in this thesis' discussion of "Peter Pan"'s etymology, but is likewise demonstrated in his repeated play on "Darling" as an adjective, and in the Dearths' names echoing the sense of lack which is threaded through their life together in *Dear Brutus*. Though not directly relevant to the present discussion, then, Barrie's decision to use 'Mary Rose' as the name of his heroine (which, we may recall, was something over which he deliberated) acquires additional symbolic significance with the disclosure of plotting which reveals that Simon died at sea. The Mary Rose was a warship, operational between 1511-1545, which was part of Henry VIII's fleet; its sinking during the battle of the Solent resulted in the drowning of hundreds of its crew. Whilst investing too much meaning in this historical equivalence would be unwise, the fact that Mary Rose shares her name with a ship notorious for drowning seafarers at war is an artful touch belying her attitude of innocent, playful passivity in her relationship with Simon.

that the strain of their relationship is anchored in father and son's differing approaches to late-Edwardian concepts of manliness. Harry, resistant to the internalisation of both paternal and imperial rhetoric extolling the need for "hard", "harsh" masculinity in the years leading up to the Great War,<sup>162</sup> flees a home-space which offers no maternal counterbalance to Simon's unimaginative, militaristic rigidity. Whilst seafaring life for Harry's father has signified a career of conquest and imperial dominion, in making a "great man" of him the ocean also claims Simon as a sacrifice of the conflict; Harry, who seeks only escape, solace and "fortune" (243) on the ocean, survives the war but returns from it as something less than before.

Trapped between worlds like his mother, Harry's journey embodies the crucial conflict of *Mary Rose* just as much as that of its titular character. In a far starker, more historically relateable manner than the conceptual in-betweenness which suspends *Mary Rose* in a socio-symbolic limbo, Harry's inassimilable experience of war withholds from him a sense of belonging in the home-space of peacetime Britain. Equally, whilst he is othered by the trauma which detaches him from ordinary life, as a survivor Harry is not permitted to follow his fallen comrades into an afterlife devoid of pain. The overall effect conveyed is that Harry too is a lost

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<sup>162</sup> Mangan, Gilmore and Hynes separately remark the militarisation of Edwardian manhood. Mangan notes that the preservation of British society depended on "boys [steeling themselves] . . . [they] must be prepared by various sorts of tempering and toughening and must accept the fact that they are expendable" (14), concluding that, "[t]he sons of the upper middle classes could not escape, even if they wished, which was often unlikely, [the] sustained attack" of jingoistic propaganda (14). Gilmore similarly perceives an "austerity" (18) in the species of "training and testing" exercised upon nineteenth-century British men in order to produce an "artificial" concept of masculinity. Finally, Hynes, discussing the cultural response to the Physical Deterioration Report of 1904, and the publication of Elliot Evans Mills seminal pamphlet, "The Decline and Fall of the British Empire" in 1906, identifies a mounting anxiety concerning the condition of the nation's young men; culminating in, he asserts, General Baden Powell's use of the Scout Movement to "prepare the next generation of British soldiers" (27).

soul in danger of "going with the wrong lot, a dead man with the living, a living man with the dead" (Meynell 90), rent between worlds and burdened with a life-narrative which refuses to be sanitised – and is consequently intolerable - within the four walls of home.

In spite of the fact it is located almost exclusively in one domestic setting, *Mary Rose* renounces the very existence of the concept of 'home', reversing traditional understandings of family, safety, comfort and the known. Furthermore, as the female protagonist whose return from the fantasy world traditionally signifies the triumph of the social status quo, Mary Rose Morland is deliberately unconvincing. Any interpretation of her exit from the play as a redemption<sup>163</sup> facilitated by the forgiveness of the son she abandoned in infancy, is misleading since, in Barrie's eyes, she is not condemned. Mary Rose's Act Three departure to the cacophony of "*celestial music*" (MR 298) in fact signifies a glorification of transgressive womanhood – a narrative arc with which Barrie has experimented more subtly in the characters of Grizel, Mrs Darling, Wendy, and Alice Dearth. In such a context, the conclusion of *Mary Rose* is not the amelioration of a tragedy, but a decisive salvation.

With the domestic sphere symbolising the suppression of her creativity, the defeat of her autonomy and the elision of her disquieting words, Barrie uses the ending of the play to liberate the marginalised, liminal girl-woman from a home-

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<sup>163</sup> McGowan concludes that, "[i]n the final scene, Barrie demonstrates . . . it is faith and not fantasy that brings peace. As Harry is the only one to understand the nature and power of Mary Rose's fantasy, only he can destroy it and set her free. The salvation of her soul, the call to heaven, is God's answer to Harry's prayer" (205). Ormond concurs that Harry's, "kindness releases her" (126) from the torment of her half-life.

space unrelenting in its aggression against her character-type. In having Mary Rose leave the set with "*arms stretched forth . . . trustingly she walks out through the window into the empyrean*" (298), Barrie ultimately frees his heroine from a conceit of domestic incarceration which appears time and again across literature of the nineteenth - and early twentieth - centuries.<sup>164</sup> Perhaps even more importantly, however, Mary Rose's departure is not figured as a saccharine ascension to a spiritual afterlife. Rather, in cultivating a narrative circularity with the window as both entry into and exit from this account of Mary Rose's life, Barrie exploits the development of its multivalent imagery throughout his career. As a place which exists on the cusp of domestic and fantasy worlds and facilitates passage between them, the window is a profoundly elegant spatial metaphor for the liminality and transgression which characterises Mary Rose's strange history. As such, she leaves the play, creatively fulfilled, and symbolically immortalised in the myths of which the window is emblematic.

By way of contrast, Harry Morland is himself a collection of unfinished stories, a fractured soul fresh from an international conflict which for Barrie created so many ghosts on both sides of the veil. When one considers Harry's plight – a lost mother, difficult familial relationships, a nomadic adolescence spent upon the world's seas, conscription to a wretched war replete with hollow glory, and an

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<sup>164</sup> This theory forms the basis of Gilbert and Gubar's research in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. They find that "[a]lmost all nineteenth-century women were in some sense imprisoned in men's houses. Figuratively, such women were, as we have seen, locked into male texts, texts from which they could only escape through ingenuity and indirection. It is not surprising, therefore, that spatial imagery of enclosure and escape, elaborated with what frequently becomes obsessive intensity, characterises much of their writing . . . anxieties about space sometimes seem to dominate the literature of both nineteenth century women and their twentieth century descendants" (83).

uncertain future suffused with memories of the dead - it seems inevitable that his will be the life condemned to greater suffering. Certainly, if we accept that *Mary Rose* is a triumph of feminine non-conformity, the source material for the play – Barrie's 1918 letter – locates its haunted quality in a different character altogether:

One can see them asking each other which side of the veil they are on, not afraid that they may be dead so much as surviving. And then the veil thickening a little and the two lots going their different ways . . . Perhaps it is of this stuff that ghosts are made (Meynell 90).

Read in light of this letter, the climactic scene of Act Three can be interpreted rather differently:

MARY ROSE: . . . I am so tired; please can I go away and play now?  
 HARRY: Go away? Where? You mean back to that – that place?  
*(She nods)*  
 What sort of a place is it? Is it good to be there?  
 MARY ROSE: Lovely, lovely, lovely.  
 HARRY: It's not just the island, is it, that's so lovely, lovely?  
*(She is perplexed)*  
 Have you forgotten the island too? . . . The island, the place where you heard the call? (Barrie *MR* 295)

By reading the series of questions which mark the disintegration of Mary's Rose's verbal agency<sup>165</sup> as, simultaneously, a statement of Harry's wistfulness about being confined to this world, the masculine forbearance of his demeanour - and accordingly, his superiority in the power dynamic of this scene - is undermined. The

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<sup>165</sup> See earlier in Chapter Six

fundamental sameness of mother and son is articulated in the staging of a conversation in which can be identified a version of souls "asking each other which side of the veil they are on"; an equality of sentiment countering the idea that Harry's altruism is responsible for the deliverance of his mother to a spiritual afterlife at the end of Act Three. Unsure of where or what 'home' might be, and meandering through the world in perpetual mild horror of humanity's insignificance ("What a night of stars! . . . I dare say they are in the know, but I am thinking you are too small a thing to get a helping hand from them" [MR 298]), Harry's beneficent role is in no way an endorsement of a return to paternalistic social order, nor is it an exaltation of the soldier figure and all he represents. It is, in fact, within the character of Harry Morland Blake that Barrie recognises the true hauntedness of the living: for him, it is "of this stuff that ghosts are made" (Meynell 90).

As such, despite the fact that it has been widely read as a narrative of exorcism<sup>166</sup> – of the fantasies we nurture so as to maintain some kind of grasp on real life, of Barrie's own demons regarding family and death, and of the spectre of problematic womanhood – *Mary Rose* is in fact more persuasively read as a statement of authorial defiance. Though it explicitly unites on stage these multi-faceted themes, this play is not an expulsion of what haunts J.M. Barrie. Rather, through the overt theatrical display of the conflicts inherent to the home, identity, and the act of creation itself,<sup>167</sup> *Mary Rose* brings to a crescendo motifs and

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<sup>166</sup> See Geduld's discussion of *Mary Rose* as an expression of Barrie's own psychological state (157-8). Similarly, McGowan's asserts that, "[t]hrough *Mary Rose*, Barrie examines the process which leads to the loss of one's soul" (179).

<sup>167</sup> Either human or artistic

concepts which have been consistently expressed in Barrie's writing over a period of twenty-five years.

## Conclusion

J.M. Barrie has been portrayed as a writer ineffably associated with the world of make believe. Despite modern attempts to resituate his work in a broader context which establishes the credibility of his legacy as both accomplished novelist and serious playwright, the enduring, inter-generational appeal of *Peter Pan* and Never Land has complicated any such efforts to fully distinguish him from that play's ethereal magic. There have been seemingly inexhaustible critical attempts to trace Barrie's inspirations and motivations for the creation of Never Land. Whether born of a desire to inhabit an "artificial world" (Meynell 21) made more explicable than the chaos of reality, and subject to his control; as a nostalgic tribute to his boyhood fascination with islands ("Dedication" 78-9); or – what was probably most likely – as a fictional thread of "The Boy Castaways of Blake Lake Island"<sup>168</sup> which organically flourished into the story we now know; the only certainty is that, while Never Land persists to this day as one of literature's most iconic representations of a world existing beyond the bounds of our adult realities, Barrie's interest in the narrative potential of a magical domain was neither ignited nor sated by its manifestation in *Peter Pan*. As evinced in Tommy Sandys' mythicised versions of rural Scottish life in his stories to London street-children (1896), the recasting of Kensington Gardens as a terrain which comes alive after dark with the activities of fairies and anthropomorphic vegetation (1906) *Dear Brutus'* inclusion of a transformative

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<sup>168</sup> Hollindale describes "The Boy Castaways" as: "a photographic record with mock adventure-story captions of Barrie's summer holiday with the Llewelyn Davies family, a holiday which supplied many of the imaginary incidents later immortalised in *Peter Pan*" (xviii).

forest in which characters may live their lives anew (1917) and the appearance of another island in which seduces children from their homes (1920), the resurgence of fantasy worlds of all descriptions across Barrie's career speaks of a desire to escape from reality. His repeated flights into fantasy suggest that his works' correspondent spaces of domestic life merit closer analysis and critical interrogation than has previously been attempted in the field of Barrie studies.

This thesis has documented the attribution of inherently feminine characteristics to the domestic sphere in Britain throughout the nineteenth century. Ruskin, Ellis, and Dickens represent a mere handful of writers who, at different periods, were responsible for the cultivation and propagation of "the angel of the hearth" as an ideal for all women – but, specifically, an ideal attainable largely for the middle-classes and above. The paradigmatic angel-woman's civilising, beautifying influence was perceived as responsible for transforming the world of home into a safe, knowable and unswervingly moral haven, in which husband and children could seek retreat from the viciousness of public life. As the years of Queen Victoria's reign gave way to the Edwardian era, however, this idealisation of the domestic sphere was challenged by the simultaneously linguistic and ideological disintegration of concepts of 'home'. Alongside the advent of child-saving movements which employed a rhetoric re-appropriating the home as a place of institutionalisation, various legislative and social developments pushed for the collapse of gendered spatial dichotomies of public and private territory. Increasingly, the home world was becoming distanced from its previous, comfortably conservative connotations of femininity, unity, family and peace.

Indeed, by the time war was declared in 1914, 'home' was a term equally evocative of hierarchy, imprisonment, and division.

Within this context, Barrie's professional and personal writings consistently evince a fascination with the identity-forming properties and social roleplay embedded within the domestic space. The idea that the individual is embroiled in a symbiotic, evolving relationship with his or her environment is expressed in a long-running series of images aligning selfhood with the objects and interior geography of the home, which surfaces across Barrie's correspondence and is explicitly expressed in his work. Such imagery - revealed in the extensive descriptions of town hall, cottage, and farmhouse in the *Tommy* novels and developed in the precise explication of staging notes for the nursery of *Peter Pan*, the drawing room of *Dear Brutus* and the parlour and attic chamber of *Mary Rose* - places emphasis on the sentient properties of the home, stressing its essential harmony with the creative, nostalgic impulses of the human mind. Barrie's approach to renderings of domesticity in his work find resonance in the phenomenological philosophy of Bachelard nearly twenty years later, whose *Poetics of Space* offers a theoretical framework for interpreting this interaction of self, home, and creative energy.

Although in some of his later dramas, Barrie obliquely addresses the 'woman question' by producing characters distant from the angel of the hearth stereotype seemingly present in Grizel, Mrs Darling, or Wendy, his work has been beset with accusations of misogyny by omission. Suffering from an alleged inability to portray female characters with nuance and depth, critics have persisted in attempting to link Barrie's perceived awkwardness with the female subject to his idealisation of

his own mother, his self-proclaimed struggles to engage romantically with the opposite sex, and his rumoured inability to consummate his marriage.<sup>169</sup> In few instances has literary criticism's over-reliance on biographical material been better exemplified. Such pursuit of a personal dimension to Barrie's portrayal of women in his work has resulted in reductive conclusions, which fail to acknowledge the progressive subtexts of his writing. Yet by considering female characters solely in relation to the fantasy worlds of their respective fictions, these reductive conclusions appear partially justified. Male protagonists overwhelmingly exit their stories as figures who have earned our admiration, and whose agency remains intact; conversely, the women of these same texts are unanimously conveyed as tragic heroines who depart, demure and in possession of some hard-learned wisdom which, although morally enriching, leaves them materially disempowered.

This thesis has concentrated upon analytical readings of the home space and refers to the composition of fantasy realms only insofar as they relate to, or inform, the domestic worlds to which they are connected. It has traced the evolution of various, thematically consonant counter-narratives embedded within and beneath the individual plots of *Sentimental Tommy* and *Tommy and Grizel*, *Peter Pan*, *Dear Brutus* and *Mary Rose*. In each text, Barrie develops his artistic exploitation of the physical composition of the home – furniture, windows, entries and exits and varying levels of space – to enable a non-verbal, symbolic storytelling explicitly formulated to redistribute creative agency to his female characters.

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<sup>169</sup> See Morse (282); Jack (*Road* 200); Ormond (*Scottish Writers* 4); Dunbar (51-2); R. Green (4)

My identification in this research of a proto-feminist aesthetic to Barrie's portrayal of domesticity may not have been termed as such in his day, vocalised elsewhere in the form of philanthropy or activism, or even expressed overtly in the majority of his work. Yet, in the renderings of home which appear across Barrie's career, there emerges an unmistakable preoccupation with affording agency to the marginalised bodies and voices of women. This rebalancing of narrative agency not only resituates 'heroic' men in a context where they are manifestly not the arbiters or keepers of power; it exposes them as, variously, the products (Will Dearth, Harry Morland Blake) or rejects (Tommy Sandys, Peter Pan, Lob) of a toxic heteronormative masculinity that covertly shames the non-progenitive man, and precludes bodily or sexual indeterminacy from expression within the patriarchal construct of the Victorian or Edwardian home.

On one level, Barrie's writing enshrines the message that, by seeking adventure, answers or escape in spaces where imaginative scope is the only frontier, characters and readers alike sacrifice something of the safely bounded spaces of home. Whilst each of the primary texts in this thesis offer rather different perspectives on the consequences of forsaking what one knows for what one desires, they share a thematic emphasis upon this essential instability of fantasy. On a deeper level, however, Barrie exploits the enduring cultural currency of the separate spheres in order to acknowledge and, ultimately, undermine a selection of intersecting oppressions associated with the innately feminised territory of the house. These texts' domestic sites of cottage, nursery and parlour communicate with the disruptive energies of their individual fantasy worlds – and with one

another - so as to enable a parallel storytelling in which Barrie re-invigorates, subverts, or derails the very idea of 'home'.

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