

## **When Reality Isn't Enough: The Cult of Girlhood in Wonderland and Neverland**

Megan Waycaster

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“While the laughter of joy is in full harmony with our deeper life, the laughter of amusement should be kept apart from it. The danger is too great of thus learning to look at solemn things in a spirit of mockery, and to seek in them opportunities for exercising wit.”

-Lewis Carroll

Stories of fantasy have been passed down for ages. Audiences and readers find it appealing to experience a place of make-believe where anything can happen. For once, reality is able to be pushed aside and imaginations are able to run wild. Two authors in particular have withstood the test of time through their writing and have made a huge impact on children's literature with their works. Lewis Carroll's *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* started out as an oral tale told to a family friend, Alice Liddell. Carroll was familiar with the seven-year-old because he was friends with her father, who was a dean at Oxford University. She asked him to tell her a story to entertain her and *The Adventures of Alice and Wonderland* was created in 1865. The sequel, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* was published six years later in 1871. It is now more commonly shortened to *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.

his famous play *Peter Pan*. Barrie's play was first titled, *The Boy Who Would Never Grow Up* in 1911, but was later revised to *Peter and Wendy*. It was not until 1928 that the most popular title, *Peter Pan* was used. Unlike Carroll, Barrie was a natural born narrator. He was a storyteller at heart and his creation of *Neverland*, along with Carroll's *Wonderland*, became one of the best known fantasy worlds in literary history. Between the two works by Carroll and one by Barrie, these authors produced some of the most captivating and rewarding children's literature pieces. They also enabled adult audiences and readers to escape the responsibilities of reality and become emerged in a childhood dream. *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*, and *Peter Pan* shaped the fictionalized character of a female heroine and also made Victorians interested in young female protagonists. Not only have these three stories built an empire of entertainment and a cult following, but they have captured the hearts of children and adults alike. This fascination would later evolve into the theme of the *Cult of the Little Girl* making *Alice* and *Wendy Darling* two of the most iconic literary figures in the fantasy genre.

Tales of Childhood

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson would not appear to be capable of imaging one of the greatest childhood stories of all time. Born in Daresbury, England to an extremely reserved family connected to the High Anglican Church, Dodgson was forced into the world of religious conviction as a young boy. Once he began writing, he used the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. His first works were mathematics books containing problem solving and arithmetic. Carroll “worked primarily in the fields of geometry, matrix algebra, mathematical logic and recreational mathematics” (Wikipedia). He was also known as the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson after becoming a graduate from Christ Church College. At Oxford University, Carroll became a lecturer and spoke to other religious driven students like himself. Later on in his life, Carroll tutored math at Oxford for extra money and was often seen playing with children outside at Oxford.

Carroll “evidently possessed a special gift for understanding children that continually endeared him to them” (Cohen 1). Carroll never experienced the picture perfect tale that he created for his beloved friend Alice Liddell since his childhood was overshadowed by the strictness of his family. Religious pressures caused Carroll to believe that “a stray thought, a lighthearted indulgence, a careless pleasure could instantly damn an unrepentant soul” (Cohen 120). Because of this, Carroll was unable to escape the tribulations of the real world and sought out a place where he could get away. He found his niche when he created Wonderland. Wonderland was not only a place where Carroll was able to connect on a deeper level with children and their feelings, but a place where it was safe for him to indulge in his imagination.

James Barrie was also in need of an escape and instead of searching for one; he created a place called Neverland. Barrie was born into a religious family in Kirriemuir, Scotland. James was the ninth of ten children of a Calvinist family and was known for his storytelling talent at a very young age. Tragedy struck Barrie during his youth when his brother David died in an ice-skating accident. Barrie was just six with this occurred and David’s death came as a shock days before he was to turn fourteen. Barrie was haunted throughout his childhood from this tragedy. He stated in a biography that David was his mother’s favorite and it was hard growing up without a real maternal figure that cared about all her children. Through this horrible time, one positive experience did emerge. Barrie’s most famous character Peter Pan was inspired by and is shaped after his brother, David. The play became more than a story Barrie told and more of what Walker calls a “chasm between dreams and reality; the connection between death and rebirth; and the male longing to return to a maternal presence” (130). Barrie expressed his interest in being an author to his family, but was dissuaded.

Like Carroll’s family, the Barrie’s wanted James to take up a career in religion, telling him that is what David would have done if he were alive. He

ended up branching out on his own and attending the University of Edinburg to study literature. This play facilitated Barrie to be able to step outside of his brother's shadow and provided Barrie with an escape out of reality and into Neverland where his dreams were in the forefront. Each author became tied to child-like worlds through their writing and was able to produce stories that could transport adult minds back to their adolescents.

Lewis Carroll said himself that he was amazed by the "child nature" and "awe that falls on one in the presence of a spirit fresh from God's hands" (Cohen 105). Carroll's stronger connection to children, such as Alice Liddell, enabled him to be able to create a character that could have child-like qualities in an adult world. The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland led to the invention of these type characters that grow with Alice through her childhood state until maturity. J.M. Barrie was partial to Carroll's Alice and became fond of the idea of working with the girl-child figure in his works. "Barrie often borrowed prototypical characters and dilemmas from texts associated with the Cult of the Little Girl, especially Carroll's Alice" (Roth 53). Each author started "a revolution in the perception of children" and was able to demonstrate the "child as a moral icon, emblem of purity, to a craze for the child as fun-loving playboy hero" (Roth 51). *Alice-Sit-By-The-Fire* published in 1905 was a play written by Barrie. It was named after Alice and was "driven by the nostalgia for her lost girlhood" (Roth 53). Carroll and Barrie were able to give their adult readers "a kind of erasure, clearing a space for the expansion of an adult imagination and for the pursuit of adult desires within such a fantasy space" (Roth 24). This idea of being able to transport the adult mind to a childhood-like dream made Carroll and Barrie two of the most influential children's literature writers in the Victorian era. They invented characters that were icons for literature and entertainment for Victorians.

### The Victorian Era

The Victorian Era brought along some major changes. Religion was starting to become questioned, new science and technology were being developed, and authors were writing more about the innocence of children. This aided in the Cult of the Little Girl because there had become "such a fascination with the dual nature of the girl" (Roth 48). Victorian writers focused on the "paradoxical construction of the little girls that relies on a tension created by the irreconcilable schism between the fantastical and the mundane" which is why characters like Alice and Wendy Darling became popular icons (Roth 48). They were two of the first characters to escape reality for a new world where they could still grasp concepts of reality and have a meaningful life without growing up. This was a major breakthrough thought for the time period. It became a type of phenomenon among writers because the stories that were being written were written for an adult audience.

The Alice books are considered among the best known works of

literary nonsense which makes them appealing to both young and mature readers. Lewis Carroll and J.M. Barrie were able to commemorate the “essential autonomy of an innocent or mythic child” (Roth 23). Not only did Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan give children the opportunity to recreate a new world, it gave adults a getaway as well. Since both settings are reached through make-believe, they are both obtainable through just believing in them. This gives the reader a unique experience since they too are able to access the Wonderland and Neverland that Alice and Wendy escape to.

It is not a new fad that people are looking for a getaway just as adults in the nineteenth century were looking for an escape from everyday experiences, just as people are still doing today. People try to escape the pressures and stress of the world through entertainment and relaxation. Reading these fantasy books gives adults a relaxing way to forget about approaching tasks and enables them to have some freedom from reality. These imagined stories paved the way, not only a new generation of children’s literature, but a new generation of adult readers. Other fantasy fiction, such as nursery rhymes or poetry does not give the same effect because the characters and settings are not as paradoxical to the real world as the stories Carroll and Barrie created. The fascination with these tales came from the 1860s when “...English female children were constructed and obsessively worshipped as *amie-enfants* between 1860 and 1911, a period of time spanning from the heyday of music hall through the cultish interest in girls at Oxford in the 1860s to the publication of Peter Pan” (Roth 48). The Victorians had not only become obsessed with the ideal of childhood, but more so with the character of female childhood itself.

### A New Protagonist Emerges

The young girl became characterized as both innocence and guilt, weak and empowered, and the gate between fantasy and reality. Carroll and Barrie are able to “create juvenile characters who bridge the chaotic, unconstrained world of childhood and the safe, enclosed world of adult domestic culture, enabling adult authors/readers to look out on a world of childhood fantasy through the eyes of figures who have access to experiences and perspectives that would otherwise be inaccessible to them” (Roth 25). A cult-like fixation with little girls became popular by authors such as John Everett Millais, John Ruskin, and Ernest Dowson (Roth 48). The Victorian era started the cult of the little girl and looked at characters of Carroll and Barrie’s to model other female protagonist after.

It all started with Alice. Alice embodies the innocence of a child, but is able to grasp onto and merge into a mature young girl. The idea of a child growing up through extremely imagined experiences and still learning about real life in a fantasy world interested readers. Not everyone is able to grow through a make-believe land and meet the kind of characters Alice encounters.

Her experience was new and innovative, something readers longed for in books. Wendy Darling was also able to have a childhood that was built around fantasy. She aged rapidly in Neverland, but was still able to keep her childlike qualities that many adults lose after facing reality. Each story plays off a different dynamic that send readers into the alternate reality that they crave.

Alice and Wendy both have a need or want to escape their own world. Growing up and facing the reality of responsibility becomes a fear for the characters. The settings that Carroll and Barrie create for their characters give Alice and Wendy a world to escape to. The authors have “attempted to reconnect with that sequestered world by using child subjects as mediators between spaces of childhood and adulthood” (Roth 23). Ironically, both little girls go through the same trial of growing up in such a childish setting.

### Changing Landscapes: Wonderland and Neverland

In many children’s literature, “the folklore in the British Isles fairyland seems to exist in parallel to the mortal world, a kind of alternate reality, than can be entered in a number of ways” (Wiggins 84). Alice begins her journey into the fairyland by falling down a rabbit hole. The rabbit hole carries her down into Wonderland and she immediately is faced with impossible things and silly games cause her some confusion. Alice’s childlike nature instantly takes over once she is in Wonderland. She begins to cry “shedding gallons of tears, until there was a large pool all round her, about four inches deep and reaching half down the hall” (Carroll 27). Her crying fit shows that she is afraid of the new world. Her fear proves that she is merely a confused little girl that needs to be cared for. The characters of Wonderland are able to guide Alice through her journey into adulthood.

The make-believe setting of Wonderland is juxtaposed with the setting in *Through the Looking Glass* which mostly takes place at the Red Queen’s castle. In *Alice in Wonderland*, Wonderland is representative of the child or fun-loving side of life. It is also full of Carrollisms such as logic, games, opposites, and impossible things. Flowers who sing and daily tea parties are all found in the mystical Wonderland and these impossible things are part of the reason Alice is able to stay young and innocent while she is visiting. Wonderland is also a place where Alice can be nurtured by the other characters. Her childhood is still preserved until Alice is rudely awakened by the change from innocent games to being introduced to the adult world at the castle. This transition of settings can be compared to the growth of Alice as a child into the more mature adult character she becomes at the end of the sequel. Even though Alice goes through some feelings of adulthood, Carroll is able to show Alice “childhood as a sanctified spiritual and temporal space- a charmed miniature lifetime that leads inevitably to a figurative death and adulthood” (Roth 26). The young girl must learn that she is no longer a child, and has to rapidly mature to be able to

handle all the hardships Carroll constructs for her in the sequel.

It is important for Alice's character to evolve as her settings change. Throughout Wonderland, responsibility does not exist; however, in *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice is a pawn in a huge chess game. She has to learn how to overcome to game that she is stuck in and make her way towards becoming a queen. It is her destiny to become transformed into a young female heroin that learns through her experiences and is able to face her fears. Alice's revolution comes alongside her exit out of the make-believe world and back to reality, but before she departs, Carroll illustrates throughout both books the change between Alice, her settings, and the characters that are responsible for her growth as a character.

The setting of Neverland is described as an island that you can reach only by flying. Barrie seems to make it clear that Peter is in charge of Neverland because when he is gone, "the fairies take an hour longer in the morning, the beasts attend to their young, the redskins feed heavily for six days and six nights, and when pirates and lost boys meet they merely bite their thumbs at each other. But with the coming of Peter, who hates lethargy, they are all under way again: if you put an ear to the ground now, you could hear the whole island seething with life" (Barrie 43). Barrie found his inspiration for creating such a inspired world from being an "avid reader of American literature and a close friend to many authors on both sides of the Atlantic. His fascination with the American frontier is the force that shapes Neverland" (Walker 150). Neverland is somewhat more realistic than Wonderland because it doesn't have talking flowers or giant mushrooms. It is merely an island that can be reached only by flying with magical pixie dust.

Once in Neverland, the Darling children encounter the first characters besides Peter and Tinker Bell: the Lost Boys. The Lost Boys are Slightly, Nibs, Tootles, The Twins, and Curly. Almost every boy besides Slightly, who is the most conceited cannot remember how or why they are lost. They are characters that have no responsibility of parents, time, or reality. A dualistic nature comes out in the Lost Boys as well because they each have child-like qualities than evolve into adulthood. Tootles seems to be the little brother that always gets left out of the mischief. He wanted to be involved in the Lost Boys adventures but "the big things constantly happened just when he had stepped around the corner" (Barrie 43). Tootles child-like nature comes from him wanting to be involved in the trouble his brothers cause, but his adult-side prevails and he is "quite the humblest of the boys" (Barrie 44). The next two brothers mentioned in the play are Nibs, "the gay and debonair" and Slightly, who "thinks he remembers the days before he was lost" (Barrie 44). Curly is the biggest trouble maker; although, he always owns up to his mistakes when scolded by Peter. The last of the Last Boys are the Twins "who cannot be described because we should be sure to be describing the wrong one" (Barrie

44). Peter and Wendy each have to act as a parent figure to the Lost Boys while in Neverland.

Hook also seems to be a character like the Red Queen who is adult because of their violent actions. Hook is always trying to kill Peter Pan so that he can be in charge of Neverland, but he never succeeds. Tinker Bell is another character that shows the qualities of a dualistic type character. Barrie describes Tinker Bell as “exquisitely gowned in a skeleton leaf, cut low and square, through which her figure could be seen to the best advantage” (Barrie 23). She is child-like because she plays games and likes to play tricks on Peter just like a little girl would do, but her adult-side comes out when she becomes jealous of Wendy for stealing Peter’s attention away from her. Both Alice and Wendy have to depend on other characters to aid in their growth.

#### Symbolic Transformations

Many of Carroll’s characters are built from people he knew or met throughout his life such as the Do-Do bird that he created to make fun of his own stutter or the dormouse that attends tea parties. Carroll chose the dormouse because it was actually used as a pet in the Victorian ages and children would keep “them in old teapots filled with grass or hay” (Gardner 17). Carroll included over twenty prominent characters in *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*. Some characters weren’t as prominent such as Bill the Lizard who tries to retrieve Alice after drinking too much growing potion from the White Rabbit’s house, but each character serves a purpose; however, only a few characters actually aid Alice through her childhood and into her maturing stages. These characters are: The White Rabbit, Absalom the Caterpillar, The Cheshire Cat, and Mad Hatter. Each of these Wonderlandians represents a two-part or dualistic character-type created by Carroll. They become dualistic characters for a few reasons, but mainly because each character represents a child-like and an adult-like quality. Their dualism is what makes Alice evolve into a dualistic character herself. These four characters also have to pass through the realm of childhood in Wonderland and into the more adult world in *Through the Looking Glass*.

The White Rabbit is the first glimpse of Wonderland that Alice is introduced to, which is ironic, because the White Rabbit is obsessed with time making him the most adult-like of all the Wonderland characters. His ability to be completely obsessed with time gives him an adult-like quality because almost all adults are consumed by the aspect of a ticking-clock. Carroll does give the White Rabbit somewhat of a childish piece to him by making his attire be a waistcoat and a pocket watch and donning him with a worried attitude that comes across humorous like when he is running around saying, “The Duchess! The Duchess! Oh my dear paws! Oh my fur and whiskers! She’ll get me executed as sure as ferrets are ferrets!” (Carroll 40). The rabbit signifies adulthood here as well while talking about how he will be executed by the

Queen is he can't find whatever he has misplaced. His adult attitudes and knowledge make him the most adult Wonderlandian.

Alice meets a caterpillar in Wonderland as well and takes on the "role as intermediary through her meeting with a creature who traditionally symbolizes transformation and growth" (Roth 29). Absalom has his fair share of grown-up qualities as well. He is in the same state as Alice which is transition between childhood and adult life. Although Absalom is in a childhood state, his disposition seems much more mature. He is looked to by the other inhabitants of Wonderland for advice and peace of mind; however, when Alice does this, she only becomes more confused. He starts off by asking, "Who are you?" Alice doesn't rightly now anymore and says, "I-I hardly know, Sir just at present-at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then" (Carroll 49). He sits atop a mushroom like Buddha on top of his shrine acting as a mentor; however, his attitude is paired with the playful vision of a big, blue bug atop a mushroom.

The invisible cat is one of the most crazed characters that Carroll invents. The Cheshire cat's attitude can be seen smeared across his face by his famous, toothy grin. Not only is the cat full of pranks, but he has no need for time, responsibility, or stress. He literally floats through Wonderland coming and going as he pleases. He picks on Alice throughout Wonderland and follows her around to the Queens Croquet game. His adult side comes from his philosophical advice that he rants about to Alice, just like Absalom tries to do; however, his tricky personality makes him more of a child-like character. The Mad Hatter is the true kid-at-heart in Wonderland. Quirky and playful, the colorful Hatter's free spirit guides Alice through her adventures in Wonderland. His daily tea parties with the March hare and a few mice show the Hatter has no intentions of work and no deadlines to meet. He simply has nothing to do besides through parties and frolic with his friends. Hatter is only conscious of time if it is six o'clock because that is when his tea parties start. Originally, the Hatter was sentenced to death by the Queen, but escaped it by making his own concept of time. In other versions of Alice in Wonderland, we see the adult character of Hatter and Alice start to develop an intimate relationship which poses the adult topic of sexuality. Hatter is faced with feelings he has for Alice and the harsher feelings of heart break when she returns back to reality.

Hatter is not the only character to go through the mature feeling of heart break. In *Through the Looking Glass*, the White Queen feels the same sadness when she is constantly battling her sister, The Red Queen, for the most attention and the throne. The Red Queen takes over her sister's castle with no remorse. She is by far one of the most adult characters that Carroll created. The Red Queen is vicious and embodies one of the major adult themes in both books: violence. The infamous saying, "Off with their heads!" was coined by the Queen. There is no longer a world of fun and innocence

when Alice has to come onto the Queen's playing field.

Carroll uses the two different settings to show the transformation from child to adult. The characters each play a role in morphing along with whichever setting that are in, just as Alice is able to do. Carroll creates as to sustain an "intermediary perspective through the figure of Alice herself who seems to embody the telescopic link between adult/outsider and child/native" (Roth 27). Alice's character grows along with help from her setting and other characters. J.M. Barrie also used this technique with Wendy Darling to demonstrate her growth from young Edwardian girl into a mother-like figure in *Peter Pan*.

Wendy Darling is the eldest of the Darling children. John is the middle child and Michael is the youngest of the three. Wendy's exact age is never revealed, but Barrie states that she is the same age as Peter, whom still has all of his baby teeth. The Darling family lives in London, England which is the setting for the beginning of the play. The children are looked after by their mother and father, George and Mary, but do not see their father that much because of his work. Just like Barrie, Wendy Darling has a passion for storytelling and keeps her brothers busy by telling them stories and daydreaming about becoming a mother one day. The first mention of Peter Pan comes when Mary Darling says that she caught the shadow of a boy who was looking through her window. When she went to see who the boy was he "leapt lightly through the window" and she thought he was hurt. She ran down the street looking for him, but saw "nothing but what she thought was a shooting star" (Barrie 15). She returned back inside to see the impossible, her dog holding the young boy's shadow in his mouth.

The audience also becomes introduced to Peter's sidekick, Tinker Bell when Peter comes back to the Darling home to find his lost shadow. It is from this point in the play that the children are introduced to the boy who wouldn't grow up and are taken away to Neverland. In Wonderland, there were the characters that Alice knew in real life like her family and cat Dina, and there were also the characters from Wonderland and from the Red Queen's Castle. Barrie used this same division of three when creating the characters for the play. In *Peter Pan*, there is the Darling family in London, the Lost Boys, and the characters of Neverland such as Hook and Tiger Lily. Carroll and Barrie also used ideas that were adult and child-like while molding their characters and "ideas about sex, romance, growing up, sense of place, and the importance of story" to make Alice and Wendy's stories become appealing to older audiences (Walker 128). Neverland became the "sense of place" that started audiences and readers to fall in love with this classic.

### The Cult of the Little Girl

The Victorians associated womanhood with motherhood. This applies to Alice and Wendy. Alice takes on the role of mother after she has started

to morph into more of adult. She has to become more of a mother-figure in *Through the Looking Glass*, not as much for other characters like Wendy, but more for herself. Alice has to find mother-like qualities such as bravery, endurance, and survival. In her make-believe world, Alice is able to become more of a maternal figure in order to defeat the White Knight and ultimately find her way back home.

Wendy Darling's mother-like qualities take over immediately in Neverland. It seems that she does not have to find her maternal instincts, but inherently has them to help her look after her two younger brothers. Wendy instantly becomes transformed from child to woman and mother in the fantasy world. Peter and Wendy care for the Lost Boys like parents care after their children. Her maternal roles are able to cease when Wendy returns from Neverland and back under the care of her own mother.

Because female characters weren't often written about or very well represented in the Victorian era unless they were written about in reference to a relationship they were in with a man or a man writing about the woman he was in love with. Young girls were hardly ever written about and certainly were not the major characters. Characters like Alice and Wendy were innovative and struck up interest. They represented all females through being children, but morphing into adults. They could relate to women as well through their adventures and experiences such as learning about violence, jealousy, intimacy, and growth. Alice and Wendy represented The Virgin, a popular figure in art during the time as well. Carroll and Barrie's protagonists are able to represent the everyday Victorian which also drew the Victorians to these characters. Alice and Wendy are the creative influence that started the fascination of the cult of the little girl.

Barrie modeled Wendy after Alice; although, their characters have quite a few traits that are unique from each other. The difference between the two protagonists is that Wendy wants to grow up. For example, at the beginning of the play, Barrie recounts "to us two year old Wendy's first appreciation of the fact that she is an individual subject who will age. Barrie writes the scene as the child's becoming self-aware, of comprehending the adult realities of life and time, and he specifically emphasizes 'knowledge' as the basis of the traumatic change in the child's perception" (Fox 24). Wendy knows she has to grow up and accepts it; however, Alice is unable to grasp this concept. Barrie creates Wendy so that she would be a character who "fell to earth and grew up" (Roth 65). Wendy Darling enters Neverland as a girl, but takes on the role of her sibling's mother. Even though she is not grown herself, Wendy "must always return to her place as mother-figure- a relatively 'old lady' who will resume her filial role only after she returns to her own mother" (Roth 62). Her evolution starts before she even enters Neverland, but for Alice, her evolution causes her to lose the childhood she entered Wonderland with and ultimately

her innocence has been stolen.

Carroll puts Alice back right where she left the real world. She is studying outside with her sister and Car, Dinah. Alice seems to be able to go from her child-world of Wonderland, into the more adult world in *Through the Looking Glass*, and back into her childhood state without being phased. She re-enters reality a child again, leaving her more mature character behind. Almost the same experience happens to Wendy Darling. The major difference between the two protagonists is that before Wendy escapes to Neverland, she knows and accepts that she will one day have to grow up. Wendy is more mature than Alice before they enter their own make-believe worlds, but is still able to return to her child state when she returns home. She also seems to be unaffected by the adult experiences that she encounters while away. As soon as Wendy returns to her home in London, she is able to give up the role of being a mother and let her child nature come out again.

Alice and Wendy have the ability to go from being innocent children, to mature adults in Wonderland and Neverland, back to children when they return home without being affected by the mature experiences that they have encountered. This is another fascination that the Victorians had with these children's literature tales. Adults in the real world are never able to forget the more mature aspects of life after they have learned about them. Adults can never learn how to forget about time, responsibility, war, work, and the everyday pressures of life; however, Alice and Wendy are able to do this which makes their characters have uniqueness to them. Carroll and Barrie invented these characters in such a way that their innocence would still be preserved even after learning the true nature of adulthood.

Alice is able to grow from a confused child into a mature adult, but had to go through the confusion of growing up along the way. She becomes confused as to if she is a child in Wonderland. On her arrival, Alice begins "to recognize that she is neither child nor adult, and she cannot say who or what she is at any moment" (Roth 30). The same thing occurs to Peter Pan.

Peter is unable to realize where and even sometimes who he is. In *Peter Pan*, "the narrator reminds readers that Peter is often unable to distinguish make-believe from reality. One role is just as real as the other. The lines between childhood and adulthood blur completely, and he is both father to the boys and 'devoted son.' He is completely polymorphous, while the girl figures remain incarnations of two extremes between which Barrie constantly negotiates Peter's paradoxical boy/man image" (Roth 63).

Peter's character is interesting because he falls into some of the same categories that Alice and Wendy do encompassing the theme of the little girl; however, he is obviously a boy. Barrie might have used Peter's character to have some of the same or similar characteristics of a young girl because that is one reason people wanted to read *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*. The

fascination of watching a child grow in a make-believe land and come back to earth with life lessons, but still being able to grasp onto their childhood is remarkable. It proves that even though Alice, Wendy, and Peter were all exposed to adult subjects like sex and violence that they can still hold onto their innocence as a child and cherish the time that they have to be young.

These three characters become defined by the cult of the little girl and create a sense of impossibility that adults also miss out in once they grow up. Adults know that Neverland and Wonderland can't exist, but they also know that it is impossible for the three protagonists to be able to preserve their innocence child-like nature after facing reality. I think this is why Carroll and Barrie had to create a place where this task of remembering your childhood could be found and that it would not be as impossible as it seems. Peter Pan most defiantly fits into the cult and his character shows how similar he is to Alice and Wendy.

Peter Pan's first entrance into the play reveals that he is a young boy traveling alone. There is no mention of family and Barrie reveals that he is young enough to still have all of his baby teeth. It is obvious that there is something magical about Peter when he flies into the window "to suddenly pop into existence, surprising the other characters in the novel as well as the other readers" (Walker 128). Peter's dilemma can be compared to Wendy's troubles. Both of these characters are young children that have to act as a parental figure to several others. For Peter, his dualistic nature comes from him being extremely child-like and adult-like at the same time. The physical description of Peter lets the audience know he is a child and his actions prove the same. He loves mischief, impossible things such as flying and using fairy dust, and hates to think about growing up and responsibility, which is ironic because Peter seems to be king of Neverland. This is when his adult side shows. Peter has to act as a father figure to the Lost Boys and sometimes to the Darling children. He also had more mature feelings for Wendy than a young boy would. Him and Wendy kiss, but the jealousy of Tinker Bell shows more adult themes and is "the story's clearest and most constant symbol of threatening female sexuality. And, of course, it is Tink's rage over the girl's affection for Peter that inspires her to have Wendy shot down to earth" (Roth 62). From this experience, the audience becomes aware that Peter and Tink may also have an intimate relationship also demonstrating Peter as more of an adult than child.

Wendy has the same dynamics as Alice and Peter combined. As a character, Wendy is like Alice because she is a young girl growing through her experiences in a make-believe world. She gains more knowledge about life in a place that doesn't exist as opposed to reality. Her maternal instincts seem to have already kicked into gear and she takes the Lost Boys, her brothers, and even at times, Peter under her wing to care for them. There are times in the play where Peter and Wendy's relationship evolves into more of parenting

roles together. For example, the Lost Boys look to Peter as their leader and to Wendy as their mother figure. There are also times where Wendy and Peter seem intimately involved making both of their major relationships more adult than child-like.

The Victorians fascination with the kind of interlinking adult and child relationships with young female figures rooted from Alice and her growth in Wonderland. Authors after Carroll sometimes changed certain characteristics about their female protagonist, but still reverted back to the class Carroll figure. Alice is the defining heroine for children's literature because she was "created a hundred years before most of the other classic figures" (Pilinovsky 182). The idea of the Cult of the Little Girl falls directly from this archetype and "various iterations proceed along a trajectory depicting a heroine who shoots along the path of her life from Carroll's own innocent seven-year-old, based on Alice Liddell herself, to John Tenniel's only slightly older version, modeled on the similarly aged Mary Babcock, to Arthur Rackham's more adolescent depiction of 1907 and the similarly styled, still dominate Disney version of 1951, into the even older versions featured in works such as *The Oz/Wonderland Chronicles* and *Return to Wonderland*, to stop at a point that can only be described as 'nubile'"(Pilinovsky 182).

Each of these characters represents the obsession Victorians posed with little girls. It seems that this theme would not have been as common because women and children were not looked at in the same way as men were during this era; however, this creation of character was innovation and new to literature, making it boom with success. Many are surprised to find out that Carroll's Alice is modeled after a real Alice. His fascination with the child is vague; however, his "fondness for and interaction with little girls is undeniable, but the nature of those interactions, and what motivated them, is still a mystery" (Pilinovsky 183). No one will ever know the intentions behind Lewis Carroll's relationship with Alice, but it is important to keep in mind the possibility of an intimate relationship between the two to understand the Alice books. The relationships between Alice and other people start to take shape into more mature relationships rather than the playful relationships that Alice first encounters. This could be from Carroll wanting his relationship to evolve with Alice, but it will never be proven. The cult of the little girl was invented by Carroll and later used by Barrie because of influences that children had on them. They were able to create the idea of a child losing their innocence, and the progression of growth from youth to adult.

#### The Future of Alice and Wendy

These two innovative authors who made the cult of the little girl popular have also become icons themselves. Today, *The Adventures in Alice and Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* were done by film director, Tim Burton. The movie grossed over "one billion worldwide" and at the "83rd

Academy Awards, Alice in Wonderland won Best Art Direction and Best Costume Design” (Wikipedia). Peter Pan is currently showing (April 2011) in Atlanta and received 4.5 stars out of a five star review from Ticketmaster.com. Previously to these latest performances, both works have been re-done in several movies, plays, books, and even video games. It is easy to find a Kindle cover of Alice or an iPhone clip of Peter and Wendy.

Ultimately, the Victorians started a fascination with the cult of the little girl that developed from Carroll and Barrie’s characters. The protagonists are able to represent a new type of character that the Victorians has never experienced before, causing these stories to become classics. Children’s literature became more loved by adults and it gave them a chance to indulge in a fantasy world. Adults also want to be able to act as Alice and Wendy do in the stories. Alice and Wendy are able to go from innocent children, to maturing women, back to children without being corrupted It is nearly impossible to do that in reality, but it leaves the readers with a glimmer of hope that one day their own childhood could emerge again. These stories fill hearts and minds with fun-loving, make-believe worlds that everyone needs a vacation to every once in awhile. Little did Carroll and Barrie know that they were creating an empire or success when they started storytelling about children in a make-believe land, but their stories have brought obvious success to the literary world and touched many lives throughout the years.

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Alice's Adventures in Wonderland provides an inexhaustible mine of literary, philosophical, and scientific themes. Here are some general themes which the reader may find interesting and of some use in studying the work. Alice's initial reaction after falling down the rabbit-hole is one of extreme loneliness. Her curiosity has led her into a kind of Never-Never Land, over the edge of Reality and into a lonely, very alien world. She is further lost when she cannot establish her identity. Physically, she is lost; psychologically, she also feels lost. Neverland is a fictional island featured in the works of J. M. Barrie and those based on them. It is an imaginary faraway place, where Peter Pan, Tinker Bell, the Lost Boys and other mythical creatures and beings live. Although not all people who come to Neverland cease to age, its best known resident famously refused to grow up. The term is often used as a metaphor for eternal childhood (and childishness), immortality, and escapism. The concept was first introduced as "the Never Never Land" in the We've all heard quotes from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, but have you ever stopped to wonder what they mean? Here are 10 life lessons from Alice in Wonderland. In fact, I believe that I've learned at least ten life lessons from Alice in Wonderland, and now I'm going to share them with you. We're All Mad. According to the cat, in Alice in Wonderland, we are all mad. While that may seem silly to say; when you think about it, it has to be true. I don't mean we're all angry human beings walking around shouting and glaring at people, and I don't mean that we're all a bit unhinged. Instead, I mean we all have our unique quirks that others may think make us bonkers.