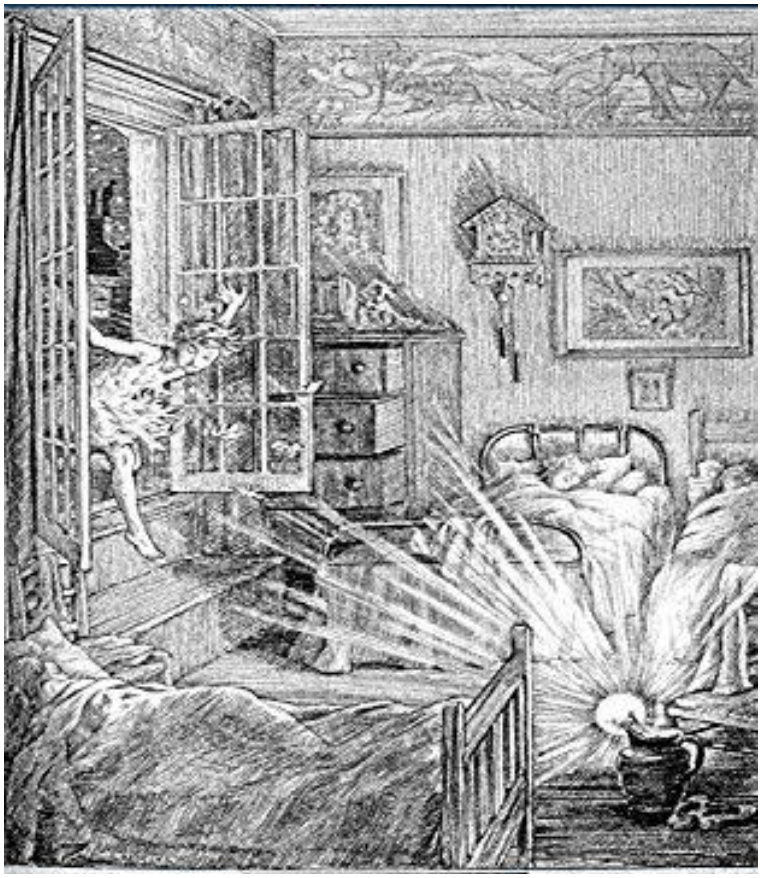
NEVERLAND:

Uniting Adults and Children Through Play



Original cover artwork for J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan, illustrated by F. D. Bedford.

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Folklore and Mythology 128

December the 9th, 2016

Hurry, hurry — we have not a moment to lose! Time is tinkling by, or is that the voice of our fairy guide in the distance? But I forget myself. Forgive me, dear reader, for I am not as young as I once was… However if you would allow me, it would be my pleasure to escort you on a journey to a most wondrous place. You see, Neverland is a rather marvelous island, and yet being of a capricious nature, it shall prove impossible for us to find unless, of course, it wants to be found. Yet Neverland calls to the children of our land, and unfortunately you and I departed that world years ago.

Now worry not, for I shall let you in on a secret — for Peter Pan himself instructed all the fairies to bathe this fine vessel in fairy dust such that we might pass through the veil into Neverland. Grownups, passing into Neverland! Fancy that. You must keep it hushed, you understand, dear reader? For we are breaching the youthful sanctity of Neverland, us grownups. It shall suffice to say that we promise, with every ounce of solemnity in our grownup bodies, that we shall remain silent spectators, shall content ourselves with gazing longingly upon and examining in whispers not only its inhabitants, but the Neverland itself.

But first, a tour! None other than Mr. Johan Huizinga has most courteously agreed to lead us in our exploration of that most cherished and curious pastime, play. Here and there I shall chip in my own two bits, which I hope you shall find both interesting and illuminating, for they concern our friends and foes on a certain island, at the second star to the right and straight on till morning. (Did I not promise, dear reader, that Neverland itself awaited us further along our journey?) For now, however, let us give Mr. Huizinga our fullest attention…

I.

In his book, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Huizinga investigates not only the nature of play but also its importance as an integral part of culture and society. First and foremost, Huizinga asserts, play must be voluntary, else it loses the crucial quality of freedom that "separates it from the natural process." Of course, humans and animals could survive without play — play is "superfluous" in terms of biological survival — yet as Huizinga so eloquently states, "the enjoyment of it makes it a need." Whether it be honing physical skills, releasing pent-up energy or frustration, exploring creativity and imagination, or even escaping ordinary life via distraction, play has established itself as a universal and omnipresent aspect of human culture. Most importantly, it carries an innate sense of *fun* that is simply irresistible to us, whether children or grownups.

If play is indeed freedom — why then, freedom from what? For Peter and all the children who experience the intoxicating allure of Neverland, it is freedom from growing up, from the responsibilities, burdens, and solemnity of adulthood. We might even consider the freedom from physical gravity afforded by flying; the ability to fly in Neverland could even be symbolic of escaping the seriousness, the gravity, of ordinary life. Generally, it seems that play embodies the freedom from the mundanity, the tedious constraints of ordinary life. For Huizinga illustrates that with play, we have the opportunity of "stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (Huizinga 8).

This brings us to seriousness — oh yes, dear reader, for play is as saturated with seriousness as it is with amusement — and we shall see just how serious play in Neverland truly is. Seriousness implies a sense of being grounded in reality, an antithesis to the realm of

‘make-believe or ‘pretend.’ According to Huizinga, “every child knows perfectly well that he is ‘only pretending’, or that it was ‘only for fun’.” And yet at the same time, this in no way prevents play from “proceeding with utmost seriousness, an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture.” It is this rapture that allows play to transcend the “only for fun” sentiment and thus encapsulate its own version of reality (Huizinga 8).

There is no better example of this than mealtimes in the Underground Home. For you see, you never knew “whether there would be a real meal or just a make-believe, it all depended on Peter’s whim” (Barrie 114). The other children, poor things, must do their best to conform with equal sincerity to these make-believe meals, and treat them as real even though they are aware of their stubbornly make-believe quality. Play requires complete immersion in the game — yes, even if it means pretending to stodge when one’s tummy is dreadfully empty. Curiously, “make-believe was so real to him [Peter] that during a meal of it you could see him getting rounder” (Barrie 114). This almost makes us wonder whether Peter is living in a kind of limbo between seriousness and make-believe, in which he either cannot or will not distinguish between the two…

It is here that we see the “fluidity” between play and seriousness as described by Huizinga in *Homo Ludens*; “play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play.” Throughout play children retain a “deep-seated awareness” of the make-believe nature of the game, and thus when make-believe starts to bleed into and meld with reality, when the boundary between the play-world and the real world starts to fray, play might become alarming rather than fun. When Wendy, Michael and John are spirited away to Neverland, they are at first first utterly captivated by the excitement, the adventures, the sheer wonder of it all. Yet as time passes, the memory of

their real home starts to fade from John and Michael especially; “what did disturb her [Wendy] at times was the John remembered his parents only vaguely, as people he had once known, and Michael was quite willing to believe that she was really his mother” (Barrie 116) Armed with her examination papers and stories, Wendy tries to reestablish the concept of Neverland as a play-world, to “fix the old life in their minds” and remind the boys that their life in Neverland was make-believe, for the idea of losing the ability to distinguish between the two terrified her (Barrie 116).

II.

Before we go any further, dear reader, I must impress upon you a most important qualification. I am sure it has not escaped your attention just how dangerous Neverland is — what with the ravenous beasts, frequent battles and injuries, massacres and death. Death is very real on this island. Why then, how on earth can I call it play? To answer this I turn to Peter, and his stoic declaration, “To die would be an awfully big adventure” (Barrie 143) So naive and yet so brave! It is precisely this mindset, that every moment on Neverland is part of an adventure, that suggests an overall essence of play despite the island being fraught with danger and death.

Now do excuse me while I digress for a moment — I believe the difference between children and grownups with regards to play is as follows. Play is a given part of the life of a child; it is almost a right in itself. In fact, we see culturally that forcing children into a situation that deprives them of the ability to play is a vile crime. Consider child labor during the Victorian era or in modern day developing countries; it is wholly inhumane, not only because of the terrible health conditions, the injuries and deaths inflicted upon children, but also because it snatches away the most precious and fleeting thing of all — youth.

Children shut away in factories have no time to play, no time to be children. A similar phenomenon is happening with education in highly competitive pockets across the world; children spend all their time either in school working or doing schoolwork at home. The time when children returned home from school and could go out to play is slowly but surely dying. Which brings us now to grownups’ relationship with play. Whereas play is naturally associated with childhood, a defining characteristic, it is a coveted luxury for grownups. Regrettable though

this is, grownups deprived of play are seen as perfectly normal — in fact, they might be congratulated as ‘extra hardworking’ or some jot of the like.

It is at this point in our journey that I shall invite you aboard our vessel, and set our course towards the second star to the right and straight on till morning. Cast your eyes upon the horizon, dear reader — can you make out what lies ahead? There, shimmering at the crux of a thousand golden arrows. Why, it is Neverland, of course. Now I must warn you, we are about to play a rather cruel trick on the Neverland. While we have it in our sights, I propose to peek through two special telescopes, if you will, that of playground and that of heterotopia. Although Neverland should hate us for squeezing it into such frameworks, I hope we shall be forgiven, as poor stubborn scholars who are unable to help themselves.

Lift the playground telescope to your eye, go on… It has been exquisitely crafted by Mr. Huizinga, do you not agree? Behold, the Neverland is indeed a world with “a disposition all of its own” (Huizinga 8). I am sorry to remind you, dear reader, that you cannot find it unless it wants to be found. Did I ever tell you that Wendy, Michael and John arrived at Neverland “not perhaps so much owing to the guidance of Peter or Tink as because the island was looking for them?” For it is “only thus that any one may sight those magic shores” (Barrie 64).

Neverland’s existence as an entity separate from the globe, as an island floating within the dreams of children, is a tribute to the “limitation as to space” characteristic of playgrounds. It is, as Huizinga describes, “marked off beforehand, either materially or ideally,” or perhaps both in the case of Neverland (Huizinga 10). Materially, it is land apart from any on this earth, its border marked by a thousand golden arrows; ideally, it lies in that state at the blurred intersection of waking life and sleep, within both and neither at the same time.

It is within this distinct playground that “an absolute and peculiar order reigns” (Huizinga 10). The rules of the game, the laws that govern the land, bring not only structure but meaning to all play that takes place within the playground. “The least deviation from it ‘spoils the game,’ robs it of its character and makes it worthless” (Huizinga 11). Ah, here we come to the question of ‘good form.’ Most sacredly upheld in Neverland, good form dictates not only all battles within Neverland but more broadly the manner in which one treats others. Hook, faced with the internal turmoil over good form, actually displays bad form on multiple occasions. For instance, when Hook and Peter are fighting on Marooner’s Rock, Peter, ever innocent and true to good form, offers Hook a hand up only to be bitten by the pirate in a scandalizing transgression of good form. I must emphasize that Peter’s shock comes not from the bite itself but from the fact that Hook broke the rules by showing bad form. Might we then consider him a cheat within the game? I leave it up to you.

Yet however badly Hook shocked Peter with his bad form, it did not wound Peter in the same way that Wendy’s decision to return home did. Although it seems rather harsh, in that moment Wendy represents the archenemy of all play, not a “cheat,” but a “spoilsport.” It is she who “shatters the play-world itself,” by reminding them all that Neverland is little more than that — a play-world. By “withdrawing from the game,” Wendy has torn away the film, muted the glow, dissolved the magic of the playground and thus of the game itself (Huizinga 11).

III.

Now let us set aside the playground telescope and take a peep through the heterotopia one instead — this telescope is the work of one Mr. Michel Foucault, perhaps you have heard of him? Through this lens the Neverland appears as a vibrant heterotopia, but I apologize — I am getting ahead of myself. According to Foucault, a heterotopia, in contrast to a utopia or a dystopia, is primarily characterized by its sense of "otherness," a space that is "neither here nor there." Neverland lies precisely at this junction between waking reality and dreaming, "for it is in the two minutes before you go to sleep [that] it becomes very real" (Barrie 10). Furthermore, while Neverland resides in the minds and dreams of all children, it is "simultaneously physical and mental," for it is also a tangible place somewhere that Wendy, Michael and John, then eventually Jane and Margaret, travel to (Foucault).

"Of all delectable islands the Neverland is the snuggest and most compact, not large and sprawly, you know, with tedious distances between one adventure and another, but nicely crammed" (Barrie 10). As a heterotopia, Neverland combines "in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault). Thus we do not question how a mermaid lagoon, pirate ship, and forest landscape, how pirates, redskins, and fairies can all exist with rhythm and harmony on one small island.

The heterotopia is neither perfect like the utopia nor degenerate like the dystopia, but contains elements of both. It incorporates joy and futility, safety and danger, good and evil — it is "messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled" (Foucault). Neverland could not be a more perfect example of this duality, although I suppose I am quite partial to it and thus my words should be taken with a grain of salt. You may recall how abruptly the shimmering beauty of the lagoon,

with the children playing with the mermaids in the sun, turns into stormy shadow — and the coming of the pirates holding Tiger Lily captive. Or else consider the peculiar juxtaposition of said Victorian pirates and the ancient redskins. Adventures in Neverland consists of battles and bloodbaths as well as dancing and pillow fights. Peter Pan exhibits both eternal youth as well as the capacity for injury and even death. Finally, perhaps the greatest contrast of all, is simply the presence of adults in a world that fundamentally accessible only by children.

It is in part this limited accessibility that renders Neverland a heterotopia, that both "isolates it and makes it penetrable" (Foucault). All children lovingly construct their own Neverlands, and thus the Neverland is unique to each child. These Neverlands lay freely visible to the eyes of mothers "tidying up their children's minds" (Barrie 8). I must confess my jealousy for mothers in this regard, for that seems the closest to the Neverland any grownup will reach… However, Neverland itself shall not be found unless it wants to be found; it remains isolated, obscured by a "film" (Barrie 15). And how else to reach it but by flying? That in itself is a sort of ritual, a rite of passage, if you will, requiring the presence of 'happy thoughts' and 'fairy dust.'

Well, that is quite enough of that — are your eyes not tired of squinting, your arms aching from the weight of the telescopes? We shall soon be ashore. I propose, dear reader, that we disembark and wander about for as long as we can in Neverland, for I am sure once it realizes the fraudulent nature of our arrival, we shall be flung back through the film and thus our journey halted most unceremoniously.

IV.

But, dear reader, let us return to play and playgrounds and games, for Neverland awaits! Step into the waves now — isn't the water lovely and clear? — yes, and heave, just so… We may leave the boat here, no harm will come to it, for this is a rare patch of deserted shore. And now, onwards, for there is much to explore in our heterotopic playground, Neverland.

Being the manifestation of a child's imagination, perhaps Neverland brings out the inner child in its grownup inhabitants. Smee, for instance, retains all the stunning ignorance of a child. Smee possesses none of the cunning elegance of Hook; rather, he constantly in childlike awe of Hook's ability to concoct dastardly plans. And Smee's good form, an attribute of this ignorance — innocence, we could call it — haunts Hook in much the same way as Peter's unknowing good form does. Hook himself, in his last moments, is transported back to his childhood days. Rather traumatic memories are these, and we undoubtedly feel a stab of pity for the man, "slouching in the playing fields of long ago, or being sent up [to the headmaster] for good" (Barrie 229). His final act is partly childish in nature, jeering "bad form," at Peter before plunging "content to the crocodile", as if desperate simply to have the last word (Barrie 230).

I would venture that play in Neverland is the element that unifies children and adults, that imbues the boundary between childhood and adulthood with a brief permeability. In battle, for instance, children and adults are equals — that is, they are united in their immersion within the game. Children and adults alike run the risk of injury or death in battle; children are spared no mercy by their grownup foes, while grownups seem to have no special advantage over children like they would ordinarily. Of the pirates in the final battle, "man to man they were stronger, but they fought on the defensive only which enabled the boys to hunt in pairs and choose their

quarry" (Barrie 225). It is around battles that most of the adventures in Neverland revolve; as a playground, Neverland relies on the tension between the redskins, pirates, and Lost Boys to spark play. If one party should stop hunting the other, all sense of direction and purpose would be lost. As always, "the lost boys were out looking for Peter, the pirates were out looking for the lost boys, the redskins were out looking for the pirates, and the beasts were out looking for the redskins" (Barrie 76). Do try not to chuckle as you watch them slink past, dear reader — we are outsiders to this play-world, and thus cannot hope to grasp the intensity of the game.

V.

Neverland, through play, provides a space not only for children to explore and somewhat experiment with adulthood but also for grownups to reconnect with and briefly escape back into childhood. It is mostly during battles that this occurs for the inhabitants of Neverland — although Peter we will address later, as he is rather a special case. Recall, if you would, the brush between the Lost Boys and the redskins at Slightly Gulch, when in a moment of caprice Peter decided to "suddenly change sides," and become a redskin that day (Barrie 119). Of course, all the Lost Boys followed suit. Clearly it would be preposterous for this to occur in an ordinary battle, but being a battle in the Neverland, a game within a playground, the redskins could at once mimic this odd behavior, and just like children who got bored with their roles, "agree to be lost boys for that once" (Barrie 119).

On the other hand, there is the household built largely by Wendy, who takes on the rather grownup role of mother of all the boys. Wendy is only too keen to commence her duties as the perfect mother, sewing and darning the boys' clothing, cooking, telling stories and tucking the boys in at night — all the things mothers so lovingly do for their little ones. She and Peter play mother and father so formally that at times we must remind ourselves that they are only children. However, this is exactly the kind of experimentation, flirting with adulthood, that a playground such as Neverland allows. Although I would point out, dear reader, that while Wendy rather enjoyed this courtship of adulthood in her role as mother, Peter did not share her feelings toward his role as father.

Which brings us at last to the problem of Peter Pan. It might be said, and here I feel half sorry and half envious, that Peter Pan is the only constant being in Neverland. Why, are the Lost

Boys not granted a similar immortality, you ask? They are also children, after all. But no — it seems that the lost boys "vary, of course, in numbers, according as they get killed and so on; and when they seem to be growing up, which is against the rules, Peter thins them out" (Barrie 76). How brutally unfair! While the Lost Boys as an entity may be a constant within Neverland, no single member is guaranteed that same everlasting youthful presence as their leader, Peter Pan.

VI.

Wendy, Michael and John depart Neverland — Wendy is eventually replaced by her daughter, and later her granddaughter. Hook, O noble fiend, meets his end at Peter's hand, and is thus vanished from Neverland as surely as he is from Peter's memory. Even Tinker Bell, on account of being a fairy, is granted only a short life, although we have it on good authority that fairies "are so little that a short time seems a good while to them" (Barrie 256).

So we are left with Peter, and those pearly teeth of his. Peter, who swore upon running away that he would remain a child forever. Peter, who outlives countless Lost Boys, Hook, and even Tinker Bell. Peter, who is the epitome of both childish and childlike. Existence within Neverland is temporary for all except Peter, suggesting that play is a temporary activity for all except Peter. There is no distinction between ordinary life and play to Peter because he so fully inhabits the playground of Neverland.

It is Peter's unwillingness to explore adulthood, lest its dark and sinister forces invade the purity of his youth, that keeps him a constant being in Neverland. Whereas Wendy fully inhabits her role as mother of a household, Peter remains at heart a little boy and his feelings toward Wendy "those of a devoted son" (Barrie 159). In fact, the concept of treading so closely to adulthood frightens Peter; one evening he asks Wendy, with that anxious innocence so characteristic of children, if his role as father is indeed simply make-believe. Upon receiving confirmation, Peter rejoices with "a sigh of relief," blissfully ignorant of Wendy's disappointment (Barrie 158). Wendy, you see, knew that her household in Neverland was make-believe, and yet we know that somewhere beneath the little girl dwelt a mother, waiting

shyly to emerge. Later we find, perhaps with a nip of betrayal, that Wendy was "one of the kind who likes to grow up," and grow up she did, "a day quicker than other girls" (Barrie 257).

Ah, that reminds me! We cannot speak of the household without speaking of games. Have I forgotten to mention the phenomenon of playgrounds within playgrounds? Pooh-pooh if you will, dear reader, but I fear that categorizing Neverland as a single playground is to overlook the richness and complexity of the island. Let us consider the home underground as one such entity. This remarkable place is the source of many games within the larger game of simply being in Neverland. Playing a family, with Mother and Father, children and Baby is one such game. Participating in make-believe teatime or supper could be another. Even Wendy's examinations might be seen as a game, for I am afraid the boys do not take them seriously at all and are concerned simply with seizing first place — poor Wendy, for she worked so diligently on them.

The lagoon — now there is another playground within the playground of Neverland. Not only is it the site of the mermaids' games, but also of the children's, almost as if it were a lovely holiday spot in which they frolic all day under the sun. It is also where Peter's famous rescue of Tiger Lily took place, during which Peter not only toyed with Smee and Starkey through a masterful impersonation of Hook, but also engaged the pirates in an elaborate guessing game.

I have saved the best for last, for of course you must be wondering about the *Jolly Roger* herself. It is here, we might argue, that the most dangerous of all games take place. Once again, Peter assumes a disguise, this time as the terrible ticking crocodile, playing a rather nasty trick on Hook. The episode with the mysterious doodle-doo — another game, almost a hide-and-seek, before the real battle erupts. All the while Slightly is playing a counting game as the pirates are vanquished, one by one. That the playground of Neverland gives rise to so many smaller

playgrounds, layered and intertwined, seems reflective of its heterotopic nature. Not only does Neverland support the compatibility of different spaces, but also the compatibility of different playgrounds within its overarching structure.

VII.

Now, dear reader, perhaps you are starting to question a basic assumption I have made about the boundary between childhood and adulthood. Well, what is the nature of this boundary? Perhaps it is a solid stone barrier, never to be crossed again by a child who has passed through. Or else the boundary might be made of glass, all the more for adults to gaze longingly back at the world they have left behind. Perhaps this is too rigid a construct, and the boundary is actually a delicate net through which children and adults like poke their fingers longingly into each other's worlds. Why, the boundary could even be a gate guarded by a careless watchman — sing him a lullaby and one might successfully creep past into the forbidden lands of the opposite world, children into adulthood and adults into childhood. There they may rejoice in having escaped to the more superior side until the watchman awakens, now in a temper, and hauls them back. … Or perhaps we have got it all wrong, and there is no boundary after all. What say you to that?

Certainly there exists a boundary between Neverland and ordinary life — that thin film that Mrs. Darling sees torn in her dreams. I hesitate to generalize Neverland as Childhood and the ordinary world as Adulthood, but surely there is something to be said about only children being allowed into Neverland? It is possible, then, that children enjoy a greater mobility than grownups, and can flit back and forth between the two worlds so long as they remain "gay, innocent and heartless" (Barrie 260).

Oh, it is the bitterest sorrow in life to see children so eager to leave their youth behind. If only they knew, the ungrateful little devils! Ignorance is at once their salvation and downfall. For childhood heavy with the knowledge of its transience defies the carefree nature of childhood

itself. And yet without this knowledge children feel utterly at ease chasing after Adulthood, not noticing Childhood skipping off into the distance, never to return.

Furthermore, it seems that socioculturally we favor children flirting with adulthood early and disapprove of adults clinging onto childhood. While those children who exhibit an adultlike nature are often considered ‘well-behaved,’ ‘intelligent,’ ‘mature,’ or even ‘charming,’ the poor adults who attempt the reverse are looked down upon as ‘silly,’ ‘juvenile,’ ‘foolish,’ and ‘naive.’ I ask you, dear reader, can you blame them? For Time, who seemed so enchanting a figure in our youth, escorting us on towards new and exciting heights, has now turned cruel master, and is prodding us on through yet more responsibility, solemnity, and burden. It is no wonder we should want to slip away into the past sometimes…

One would easily lose hope, if not for play. Although associated most inherently with childhood, play, as Huizinga suggests, is omnipresent across all stages of life. I believe that grownups crave play perhaps even more acutely than children, for we know what it is to miss playing. And yet from sports games to costume parties, even to playing hide-and-seek with our own children one day, play is always accessible to grownups. You may challenge me here, dear reader, but I contend that play forms a bridge between the two worlds, childhood and adulthood. Or rather — and this may be more accurate — play creates a bridge to another world entirely, one in which children and grownups are equally welcome. Our playgrounds reside in a sphere outside both childhood and adulthood, and thus may represent any possible combination of the rules, characteristics, and essences of the two worlds.

What, then, constitutes crossing between childhood and adulthood themselves? Briefly, I would like to return once more to Peter. He shall be our case study, but do not indulge him — he

would think himself frightfully clever. Let us gaze upon his final battle, this time with Mrs. Darling, in which he eventually decides unbar the window and thus relinquish Wendy. In my eyes, old and tired though they may be, this is Peter's finest moment. The moment in which he quells the selfish desire to keep Wendy to himself and realizes that he does not have the heart to deprive a mother of her daughter. At first, Peter, eternally childish being that he is, "was angry with her now for not seeing why she could not have Wendy" (Barrie 243). By the logic of children, precious, pure and primitive, Wendy must be his because he wanted her so — "We can't both have her, lady" (Barrie 243). And yet there is a curiously beautiful and heart-wrenching moment of empathy, for Peter is unable to bar Mrs. Darling's grief from his heart; "it was just as if she were inside him, knocking" (Barrie 243). Make of this what you will, dear reader, but I believe this is as close as Peter comes to adulthood, for it is here that he recognizes the importance of another's feelings and musters the strength to act against his own selfish desire.

VII.

Would it be truly awful of me to say that children are "the most heartless things in the world?" (Barrie 166). Oh, they do not mean any harm, of course — it is just that their capacity to empathize, to broaden their perspective beyond their individual selves, is as yet undeveloped. Thus children enjoy "an entirely selfish time" (Barrie 166). Wendy, Michael and John swoop off to Neverland and there they remain, gorged upon adventure, while their poor parents are left in a state of perpetual grief back home. It is only the fear of being forgotten in turn, of returning home to a barred window, that galvanizes the children into leaving Neverland.

Here I shall hope that Peter is off on another adventure and not listening to these words, lest he think I have finally forsaken him for accursed grownups. Yet grownups, for all their pomp and seriousness, a seriousness so despised by children, understand sacrifice in a way that children cannot. They know what it means to sacrifice their own freedom to provide for a family, to forsake their own dreams to remain beside their loved ones. Unlike children, who are "ever ready, when novelty knocks, to desert their dearest ones," grownups — especially parents, and mothers most of all — set aside their own happiness so that their children might always experience the fullest joys (Barrie 172).

Perhaps then growing up is not all bad — oh, now I have truly lost Peter for good! It seems growing up represents an exchange between the freedom and carefree abandon of childhood, and the empathy and dedication of adulthood. Yet I believe that freedom is not totally lost to grownups, for there is still play. In play, we may leave behind all responsibility, solemnity and burden of ordinary life, for "into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection" (Huizinga 10). Play is at once a child's window into adulthood,

and a grownup's ticket back to childhood — if they wish it. So let our children have their Neverlands, as we once had them. Let them romp and play and be heartless while they still can. If I leave you with anything, dear reader, let it be this. Do not forget to play and seek out playgrounds — although we may not be able to return to our childhood, play is something from which we shall never be truly barred.