



“A mother’s last words to her children”: Wendy’s Roles in *Peter Pan* and film adaptations

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Introduction

The name Wendy became popular after J. M. Barrie used it for one of his characters in his novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911), and Wendy houses, playhouses for children, were named after the little house Barrie's lost boys build for Wendy Darling in Neverland (Hanks, Hardcastle, and Hodes; Tyzack). This suggests that Wendy, and thus, Barrie, had an impact. It is therefore relevant to discover what has become of this literary character over the years. As far as her name is concerned, it has gone out of fashion. In 2015, it was ranked 1297th place (McLaren). However, her character and story have remained popular. Evidence of this are the many adaptations of the story that have been released, though indeed Wendy's name has often been deleted from the titles. However, research on Wendy is relevant as it can reflect the developments of our view on girls, and which roles are assigned to them.

This BA thesis will compare the portrayal of Wendy in the original novel to Wendy in film adaptations. *Peter and Wendy* was published in 1911, and based on Barrie's play *Peter Pan* (1904). The novel has been adapted numerous times, but not all film adaptations are authorised or follow the plot of the novel. The focus of this BA thesis will be on two authorised film adaptations, which follow the plot and which are set in the same time as the novel, the beginning of the 20th century. Due to the scope of this BA thesis, the silent film adaptation *Peter Pan* from 1924, which meets these requirements, has to be left out of the analysis. The earliest adaptation that will be discussed is the animated musical film produced by Walt Disney, which was a commercial and critical success (Box Office Mojo). The American film was released in 1953 and directed by Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske and Jack Kinney. The second adaptation that has been selected is a more recent adaptation, namely from 2003. It is a live-action film directed by the Australian director P. J. Hogan, but released by American studios. This adaptation was no commercial success, but received good reviews from critics (Box Office Mojo). The difference in film style will be taken into account in the analysis, as will the difference in length of the films, 76 and 113 minutes respectively.

Wendy's character in the novel has been addressed before in the academic discussion on *Peter Pan*. Critics mostly focus on Wendy's role as mother in the story. Maaïke Bleeker argues that after meeting Peter, Wendy instantly assumes the role of mother (165). Similarly, John Griffith claims that it is important to Peter that Wendy is only a make-believe mother (31). Others discuss Wendy and her complicated relationship with Peter. Lois Gibson compares Wendy to Persephone, Hades's wife. She concludes that, unlike Persephone, Wendy does not become Peter's wife (178). A reason for this, Nell Boulton suggests, may be that Peter is unable to understand Wendy's flirtatious advances (310). However, Ann Wilson reasons that Wendy cannot express sexual agency because of "middleclass femininity" (604). Some critics focus on Wendy's background as a middle-class Edwardian girl. Christine Roth calls Wendy a "middle-class daughter" and "mother of the savages" (57). Roth analysed Barrie's description of the Edwardian girl. She recognizes the various roles Wendy has and calls her a "liminal figure" (56). Although Wendy's role in the novel has been much discussed, film adaptations have also been considered. Heather Shipley analysed gender roles in the 1953 adaptation of *Peter Pan*. She argues that Wendy has no agency, and categorizes her in the role of Mother (156). Deborah Cartmel and Imelda Whelehan call Wendy "the quintessential English little lady" in that film (98).

Yet, no case-study has been done comparing Wendy's roles in the novel and the film adaptations. To analyse Wendy's portrayal, her appearance and behaviour will be categorised into three roles: daughter; mother; and romantic interest. These roles are chosen because critics use them most when describing Wendy, and they make it easier to observe changes in the portrayal of Wendy. By close-reading excerpts from the novel in which she exhibits one of these roles, and comparing those to scenes from the film adaptations, the analysis will show that the film adaptations do not portray Wendy as the little Victorian mother she is in the novel, but demonstrate other dimensions of her character. Wendy remains a complex character in the most recent film adaptation, but her role has diminished in the 1953 film.

The first chapter will contain the literature review for this research and will discuss adaptation studies. The second chapter will analyse the portrayal of Wendy in *Peter and Wendy*, also in relation to Victorian gender norms. In the third chapter, the various roles Wendy has in the 1953 film adaptation *Peter Pan* will be looked at. The last chapter will focus on Wendy in the more recent film adaptation, *Peter Pan* (2003). The conclusion will summarise the outcome of the research, and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review: Adaptation Studies

One of Linda Hutcheon's definitions of an adaptation is: "An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works" (8). This can involve a "shift of medium" (7), which is what this BA thesis deals with, namely from novel to film. This transposition raises the question of fidelity, which adaptation theory has often been concerned with. Robert Stam writes that adaptation criticism has been moralistic in nature, as if films have in some ways wronged the original novels if they are not completely faithful (3). Stam rightly raises the question of which aspects a film adaptation should be faithful to, since it is impossible to adapt every detail (15). Moreover, a film adaptation is "automatically different and original due to the change of medium" (Stam 17). It is unrealistic to expect a film to be some sort of copy of the original novel, and thus a character cannot be a copy either. Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins rightly suggest "not only that sameness is impossible, but that difference, in fact, makes art possible" (17). This BA thesis will not focus on whether Wendy has changed in the film adaptations, but on how she has been changed and how this influences the roles she plays in the story. As Hutcheon suggests, the move from telling to showing requires "re-accentuation and refocusing" of characters (40). Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins argue that adaptation could be viewed as "responses to other texts that form a necessary step in the process of understanding" (17). Although Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins overstate the necessity, an adaptation can highlight new or other aspects of the original story and influence the interpretation of the original work. An important question for adaptation theory then would be: "Why has this film taken this particular path through this particular novel?" (Albrecht-Crane and Cutchins 18). By dividing Wendy's portrayal into three roles, the "path" the film adaptations took to adapt Wendy can be identified.

Hutcheon acknowledges that the shift from novel to film also includes a shift from "a solo model of creation to a collaborative one" (80). This applies to both film adaptations. The film adaptation from 2003 is a live-action film, and thus is influenced by at least the director,

screenwriter and performers. The actors have their own take on the characters they are performing, and thus affect the portrayal of those characters. In the live-action film adaptation from 2003, the American Jeremy Sumpter and the English Rachel Hurd-Wood play Peter and Wendy, respectively.

However, the 1953 film adaptation differs from most film adaptations, as it is an animation instead of a live-action film, thus is influenced by animators, directors, writers and a producer. Animation film is a “distinctive film-form which offers to the adaptation process a unique vocabulary of expression” (Wells 199). Animated films do not depend on the skills of the actors or the availability of good film locations, as live-action films do. Nevertheless, as Paul Wells argues, animation films have received less attention in adaptation studies than live-action films (2006: 199). Wells, on the other hand, values animation films highly and he goes as far as to argue that animation “transfigures the literary intention and transubstantiates the reader/viewer’s imagination into a visual mode” (2006: 213). Wells is right in his idea that the animation film is more free to produce a film that shows the exact imagery of the story, as the animators have more freedom in their creation of images on screen than other filmmakers. Besides, *Peter Pan* (1953) is not just any animated film, but it was produced by the successful Walt Disney production company. Deborah Cartmell shows that most of the highest rated Disney animated films are adaptations, of which some “overtake the source text as the original in most people’s minds” (172). Although the Disney adaptation influenced the later film adaptation of *Peter Pan*, which shows the dominance Cartmell suggests, the later film also adds its own elements. To say that *Peter Pan* only brings to mind the Disney adaptation in most people’s mind, it to underestimate the complexity of *Peter Pan* and its reception.

Chapter 2: Wendy in the Novel *Peter Pan*

In *Peter Pan*, Wendy is the protagonist of the story, as Shelley Rakover suggests. Wendy is a round, complex character who takes on various roles, namely mother, daughter, and romantic interest. The prominence and elements of each role assigned to Wendy will be analysed, as well as their relation to Victorian gender expectations of women. Although the novel was published in 1911, and is strictly speaking an Edwardian novel, the play whereupon it was based was published seven years earlier, in 1904. The Victorian period officially ended in 1901, with the death of Queen Victoria (Shepherd). The Victorian period had barely ended when the play was released, thereby Victorian norms and values may have influenced J. M. Barrie while he was writing the story. Gorham asserts that the ideal middle-class Victorian woman could be described in one word: “feminine” (5). Femininity could be defined as “dependency, self-sacrifice and service” or as asexual “purity” (Dyhouse 30; Gorham 7). Furthermore, the ideal woman was not supposed to feel anger or hostility (Gorham 4-5). Though these characteristics might be stereotypical, clear definitions are needed for the analysis.

Wendy’s most prominent role in the novel is her role as mother. Roth argues that when Wendy is shot by an arrow in Neverland, “Wendy the little girl has died; Wendy the mother awakens” (59). However, Wendy’s roles cannot be linked to specific stages or locations of the plot, as she continuously switches between her roles, but a certain role might be more dominant at a certain stage. Nevertheless, her roles cannot be clearly divided between a pre-Neverland, Neverland and post-Neverland. Her actual role as mother already begins in the nursery in England, when she plays at being mother and father with her brother John (19). However, it is with the promise of being able to fulfil her role as mother that Peter convinced Wendy to go to Neverland: “‘Wendy,’ he said, the sly one, ‘you could tuck us in at night’” (Barrie 37). Still, it was Wendy who first suggested that she could go with him to Neverland to read stories to the Lost Boys (Barrie 36). Once in Neverland, Peter tells the Lost Boys he has brought them a mother (Barrie 67). The Lost Boys then formally ask Wendy to be their mother, and she

becomes terribly excited: “‘O Wendy lady, be our mother.’ ‘Ought I?’ Wendy said, all shining. ‘Of course it’s frightfully fascinating, but you see I am only a little girl. I have no real experience’” (Barrie 74). Wendy accepts the role as their mother, and she calls the Lost Boys her “naughty children” (Barrie 74). The dominance of Wendy’s motherhood becomes clear when the Pirates, although they are grown-ups themselves, imagine Wendy can be their mother too: “‘Captain,’ said Smee, ‘could we not kidnap these boys’ mother and make her our mother?’” (Barrie 90). After her refusal to be their mother, Hook gives her one last moment to talk: “‘Silence all,’ he called gloatingly, ‘for a mother’s last words to her children’” (Barrie 139). It shows the extent to which the Pirates regard Wendy as a mother and not a girl. Before she leaves Neverland, as Clark argues, she tries to “discontinue her pantomime of adult women’s roles” (Clark 306). She reminds her brothers of their real parents by quizzing them (79) and makes her brothers want to go home by telling a story about their real parents and their mother’s love (112). Yet, Wendy’s role as mother is re-established post-Neverland when she becomes the real mother of Jane (174). Thus, throughout the story, Wendy’s role as mother is dominant.

Wendy’s role as mother corresponds with the late-Victorian idea of motherhood as her role as mother keeps Wendy in the Victorian female sphere of the home. Although women did not need to be mothers to live in that sphere, it is an important element of Wendy’s motherhood in the novel. In middle-class Victorian society, the world was divided into “separate spheres” for men and women (Dyhouse 139). As Gorham explains, “sharp division between the private world of home and the public world of commerce, professional life and politics” influenced the way in which middle-class women and girls were seen in Victorian society (4). Wendy, in her role as mother, is confined to the private world of home: “Really there were weeks when, except perhaps with a stocking in the evening, she was never above ground” (Barrie 78). Wendy’s role as mother puts her in charge of the household and she takes pleasure in doing domestic tasks

like cooking, washing and sewing for the boys. As Bleeker argues, Wendy assumes and carries out the role of mother without protest (165).

Wendy's role as daughter is only small in the novel, and she takes on this role mostly before she goes to Neverland, and after. When Wendy takes on this role, she is subject to the Victorian female gender norms. The ideal of sexual purity of middle-class Victorian women is hard to combine with the idea of motherhood (Peters 24). This causes a contradiction within the ideal woman. Yet, these opposites can be united in girls. Girls could be seen as a combination of "feminine dependence, childlike simplicity and sexual purity" (Gorham 7). Wendy plays at being a mother, before and in Neverland. Yet she remains sexually pure, as the Lost Boys are not her biological children, which Wendy realises. She reminds her brothers of the greatness of their real mother's love (Barrie 112) and puts herself in the position of daughter. Moreover, as Dyhouse writes, women and daughters were expected to serve their family (30). Wendy does this, like an ideal Victorian daughter should: "I know where it is, father,' Wendy cried, always glad to be of service," (Barrie 22). Lastly, at the end of the story, when Wendy says Peter so needs a mother, Mrs Darling replies: "So do you, my love'" (Barrie 167). Wendy's role as mother disappears when her own mother is present, and she takes on the role of daughter again. Furthermore, as Roth argues, Wendy looks "ladylike and knowing" when interacting with Peter (57). The Victorian separation of spheres also applies to Wendy's role as daughter before she goes to Neverland. Peter tries to stick on his shadow with soap. Wendy smiles at this and exclaims: "How exactly like a boy!" (Barrie 30). This situation again shows the girl's dominance over the sphere of the home. The few characteristics that are attributed to Wendy as daughter correspond to the Victorian gender norms. However, her role as daughter is only small.

Thirdly, Wendy's role as love interest is mostly implicit. Wendy's appearance and age are not described in the novel, though she is most likely a pre-teen. She still attends "Miss Fulsom's Kindergarten school" (Barrie 9), and Peter "is just [her] size" (14). Thus, these characteristics do not contribute to her portrayal as a love interest. However, Wendy has

romantic feelings for Peter, but she has no sexual agency. Wendy asks Peter about his feelings, and is then reduced to a mother-figure to him: “‘Peter,’ she asked, trying to speak firmly, ‘what are your exact feelings for me?’ ‘Those of a devoted son, Wendy’” (Barrie 107). Peter is confused by her question, and tells her: “‘You are so queer,’ he said, frankly puzzled, ‘and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother. ‘No, indeed, it is not,’ Wendy replied with frightful emphasis” (Barrie 107). Peter is ignorant of the role Wendy and Tiger Lily are referring to, namely their lover. As Boulton suggests, it is impossible for Peter to experience “natural sexual curiosity” (310). Wendy does not push the matter or explain it to Peter. Morse argues that Wendy’s “inability to gain sexual control of Peter” reduces the power she has (297). However, Wendy cannot be blamed for Peter’s inability to have romantic feelings. Wendy would like to become Peter’s lover, but she remains passive in her sexual advances. She asks Peter to kiss her, instead of kissing him: “so you may give me a kiss” (Barrie 35). Moreover, Wendy gives Peter a thimble, instead of actually showing him what a kiss is when he admits he does not know (Barrie 32). As Wilson argues, it is because Wendy conforms to “middleclass femininity” that she cannot express sexual agency (604). Additionally, Wilson also argues that each of the three female characters “recognizes the other’s desire for him” (603). However, even after Tinkerbell pulls Wendy’s hair when she kisses Peter (Barrie 35-36) and calls her ugly (34), Wendy is not aware of Tinkerbell’s jealousy: “She did not yet know that Tink hated her with the fierce hatred of a very woman” (53). Wendy is unaware of the sexual desires of Tinkerbell at this point. Wendy’s inability to recognize Tinkerbell’s jealousy shows that she is not aware of the sexual agency of other girls, as she has none herself.

Chapter 3: Wendy in the 1953 Film

The animated film adaptation *Peter Pan* was released in 1953, and was produced by Walt Disney. Wendy's character is not as complex as in the novel, and her role has diminished. As Linda Hutcheon argues, a novel "has to be distilled, reduced in size, and thus, inevitably, complexity" when it is adapted (36). As the film is only 76 minutes, and the book has 176 pages, it is understandable that some scenes needed to be cut from the film. Wendy's part in the story is not as dominant as it might have been if the film had been longer.

Wendy's role as mother is smaller and not as explicit in this film adaptation as it is in the novel. Many explicit references to her position as mother from the novel are not in the film, as Wendy is less of a mother-figure to the other characters. Wendy never calls the Lost Boys her children, nor do they call her their mother. Furthermore, in the novel the Pirates regard her as a mother figure, and Hook calls the Lost Boys her children. However, in this film, she does not have "a mother's last words" before she is forced to walk the plank, she just says goodbye to the boys (01:06:33-01:006:45). However, she is still introduced to the Lost Boys as their mother. In the last chapter of the novel Wendy is an actual mother, and has a daughter, Jane. This is left out of this film adaptation, but Disney used it for the sequel, *Return to Neverland* (2002). However, in *Peter Pan*, her role as mother is smaller than in the novel.

Furthermore, Wendy's motherhood is expressed differently and does not consist of the same elements as in the novel. When she needs to do domestic tasks in the film adaptation, she is not as happy about it as in the novel, in which they are a vital part of her motherhood. When Wendy and the Lost Boys are at the Indian Camp, an Indian woman looks at Wendy angrily and says: "Squaw, no dance. Squaw, get 'em firewood" (51:00-51:07). Wendy clenches her fists and looks indignant, but does listen (51:07-51:11). When it happens again, Wendy replies: "Squaw no get 'em firewood! Squaw go home." (52:32-52:40). She pushes her chin up in the air and walks away (fig. 1.1). Unlike the novel, Wendy resents having to do domestic tasks. Instead, the emphasis of Wendy's motherhood is on story telling. Wendy herself believes telling stories is a

main characteristic for mothers. In the film, Peter does not know at first what mothers are, and Wendy explains: “Why, Peter, a Mother is someone who loves and cares for you and tells you stories” (14:27-14:35). Peter’s expectations of her role as mother are not the household tasks that conform to the Victorian female sphere of the home. Wendy explains to Peter that it is her last night in the nursery. If she grows up and leaves the nursery, she would no longer be able to tell stories, so Peter invites her to come with him to Neverland (13:53-14:07). In the novel, it was Wendy’s idea that she would go with him to tell stories, but there was no mention of her having to leave the nursery (Barrie 36). Unlike in the novel, in which Peter’s expectations of her include tasks like darning pockets, he takes her with him as story-teller. When he introduces her to the Lost Boys, he says: “I bring ya a mother to tell stories” (30:55-30:59). Storytelling is thus linked to Wendy’s motherhood.

Secondly, Wendy’s role as romantic interest is mostly implicit, even more than in the novel. Wendy is portrayed as a slender, little girl, and most likely also in her pre-teen years (fig. 1.2). Her body is still very girly and not yet developing. This downplays Wendy’s portrayal as a romantic interest. However, Wendy shows more sexual agency than in the novel. She offers to give Peter a kiss, instead of suggesting he should give her one: “Oh, but Never Land. Oh, I... I’m so happy I... I think I’ll give you a kiss” (14:46-14:56). Wendy leans in, and purses her lips, but Peter steps back (fig. 1.3). She does not remain as passive as in the novel, but their romantic relationship is implicit. Wendy never makes clear that she wants to be something else to Peter than his mother, but she does reveal her feelings when she becomes jealous of Tiger Lily when she dances with Peter. She goes home and sits sulking on the bed (56:43-56:49). When Peter comes home, dancing, Wendy responds coldly, and he reacts by saying, “Ah, Wendy, is that all you have to say? Everyone else thinks I’m wonderful. -Especially Tiger Lily. -Tiger Lily?” (56:59-57:12). At the mention of Tiger Lily, Peter scratches his head and looks confused. He is unaware of why that would make Wendy cross. In the novel, Peter says that Tiger Lily and Wendy want him to be something to them, that he does not understand. In the film adaptation,

that conversation is replaced by him scratching his head in confusion. Thus, apart from her offer to kiss him and her jealousy, Wendy's role as romantic interest is even more implicit than it was in the novel.

Wendy's main role in this film adaptation is Victorian daughter, though it is also small. This role starts at the beginning of the story, when she finds out that this will be her last night in the nursery (06:58-07:02). Peter tempts Wendy by saying she would never grow up in Neverland, and she replies: "Oh, Peter, it will be so wonderful" (14:18-14:23). Unlike Wendy in the novel, this Wendy is first tempted to go to Neverland, not to be their mother, but to escape growing up, thus remaining a girl. The film adaptation adheres to the gender norms of late-Victorian society with regards to Wendy as daughter. Wendy exhibits "feminine dependence" (Gorham 7) associated with Victorian girls. For example, when Wendy and the Lost Boys are captured by the Pirates, the Pirates make them sign up to become a pirate or walk the plank. Wendy waves her finger and says: "Oh, no, we won't. Peter Pan will save us" (01:03:24-01:02:27). She is dependent on Peter Pan to save her. Moreover, as in the novel, Wendy shows her dominance over the sphere of the home, as it is supposed to be in Victorian society, by explaining to Peter how to fix his shadow: "It needs sewing. That's the proper way to do it" (12:40-12:46). Wendy puts herself in the position of daughter, and regards herself in that role in the 1953 film. For example, when Peter invites her to come to Neverland with him, Wendy wonders what her mother would say if she left (14:24-14:26). She places herself in the role of daughter by mentioning her own mother. As in the novel, it is Wendy who reminds the boys of the reality, that she is not their actual, biological mother, but a daughter and sexually pure. She explains this by singing a song about motherhood and mothers to the boys, titled "Your Mother and Mine". She begins singing this song when the Lost Boys ask Wendy what a real mother is like (57:39-58:17). She sings about motherhood to remind the boys they are sons, and that she is a daughter.

Although animation might be the most appropriate form to “express the mental visualizations of images suggested by literary forms” (Wells 201), *Peter Pan*’s Wendy is quite different from the one portrayed in the novel. In the 1953 film adaptation, Wendy’s role has diminished. Her role as mother exhibits different features as in the novel, since the focus shifts from domestic tasks to storytelling. Her role as romantic interest is even more implicit than in the novel, although Wendy shows slightly more sexual agency. Thirdly, her role as daughter exhibits mostly the same features, as she knows how to sew and is sexually pure. She also shows feminine dependence. The film downplays Wendy’s roles as mother and as romantic interest, but does not replace it by something else. Instead of her role as mother, her role as daughter is the dominant one in the film adaptation, though it is big as her whole character has been diminished.

Chapter 4: Wendy in the 2003 Film

Peter Pan (2003) is a live-action film adaptation of the novel, directed by P. J. Hogan. The film is longer than the 1953 animated version, namely 113 minutes. Because of this, the story and characters can be more fleshed out, and Wendy is a round character. However, the focus has shifted from her role as mother to her role as romantic interest, which is made explicit. One way that the film does this is by “placing Wendy and Peter in early adolescence” (Duschinsky). Although Hutcheon believes the performers are more connected to the adapted work than the original work, and thus not real adapters (85), their looks and age directly influence the portrayal of the characters. Peter and Wendy are played by fourteen- and twelve-year-old performers, respectively (fig. 2.1). They are older than in the novel and the previous film adaptation, which contributes to Wendy’s role as love interest.

Wendy’s role as romantic interest is dominant in the 2003 film adaptation. Lester Friedman agrees that Hogan’s film “sexualized” the story (210). As White and Tarr suggest, the film adaptation “makes clear the seductive relationship” between Peter and Wendy (xix). Important additions to the film adaptation that increase Wendy’s role as romantic interest are a dancing scene and a kissing scene. In the former, Peter and Wendy sneak away from the others and watch fairies dance in a hollow tree trunk. Peter glances at her, and smiles flirtatiously, while she is still watching the fairies dance (53:38-53:42). His look makes clear that he likes Wendy (fig 2.2). When she looks back at him, he quickly glances away. They then start dancing together, while flying in the air. The scene is very romantic, with the lights of the fairies around them and a full moon in the sky (54:24-54:40). The scene establishes Peter and Wendy as a romantic couple, until Peter interferes. As in the novel, he questions Wendy: “Wendy? It’s only make-believe, isn’t it? That you and I are...” (55:50-56:02). However, he does not finish his sentence. He might have been referring to them as a couple, or them as father and mother of the Lost Boys. Because of this, Wendy questions Peter about his feelings, and love, to which he replies: “I have never heard of it.” (56:47-57:13). Wendy contradicts him and says: “I think you

have, Peter. I daresay you've felt it yourself for something or... someone" (56:47-57:17). Peter denies knowing anything about love, but the way he looks at her suggests otherwise. In the novel, Peter was incapable of such feelings and he did not consider Wendy a romantic interest at all. However, this scene shows how Wendy's role as romantic interest has grown in the 2003 film adaptation.

The second added scene revolves around Wendy's hidden kiss, which again establishes her as a romantic interest and gives her sexual agency. As in the novel, when Wendy is shot by the Lost Boys, it is Peter's *kiss* that saved her (35:28-35:31). However, the film adds a scene in which Wendy's actual kiss saves Peter when he is struck down by Hook. Wendy's kiss that saves Peter is called her "hidden kiss". When she kisses him, Peter regains his power, and he starts glowing (fig. 2.3). He shouts, flies up and manages to defeat Hook. As Wiggins argues, Wendy's hidden kiss could be "the symbol of her adult sexuality" (91). Wendy shows sexual agency when she gives her hidden kiss to Peter. In the novel, Mrs Darling has her hidden kiss, which she saves for Peter. Attributing this hidden kiss to Wendy, and making Peter more aware of his romantic feelings, expands Wendy's role as romantic interest.

Moreover, Wendy in the 2003 film can be seen not only as a romantic interest to Peter Pan, but also to Captain Hook. Before being saved by Wendy's hidden kiss, Peter is struck down by Hook, because Hook realises Peter has feelings for Wendy. He uses this against him: "She was leaving you, Pan. Your Wendy was leaving you. Why should she stay? What have you to offer? You are incomplete" (01:26:12-01:26:28). Hook attacks Peter on his inability to express his romantic love for Wendy. When Wendy is frustrated with Peter for not recognizing her romantic feelings, she rebels by comparing him to Captain Hook. She says, "I find Captain Hook to be a man of feeling" (01:05:21-01:05:31). Wendy hereby emphasises the fact that Hook is mature enough to identify his feelings, while Peter is not. Moreover, when Wendy first sees Hook, the voice over says: "She saw the piercing eyes and was not afraid, but entranced" (44:53-45:03). Hook invites Wendy to become a pirate, and as Duschinsky argues, he does this

“flirtatiously”. This indicates the implicit romantic aspects of Hook and Wendy’s relationship. By not only being a love interest to Peter, but also implicitly to Hook, Wendy’s role as romantic interest is the most prominent one in this film adaptation.

Wendy’s role as mother is downplayed in the 2003 film adaptation, and no longer conforms to the Victorian female sphere of the home. However, the Lost Boys still view Wendy as their mother. After they build her house, they ask her: “Please be our mother” (37:24-37:32). As in the novel, Wendy exclaims she has “no real experience” (37:32-37:53). The Lost Boys only care about her ability to tell stories, and after assuring them that she can, she is accepted as mother-figure. Wendy herself focuses on her story-telling to suggest she could go to Neverland with Peter: “But I know lots of stories, stories I could tell the boys” (20:31-20:34). She does this in the novel as well, but she needs more convincing by Peter, who sums up domestic tasks she could do. Thus, the domestic part of her role as mother, which was dominant in the novel and which Wendy was very interested in, is left out of this film adaptation too. Furthermore, Peter does not introduce Wendy as mother to the Lost Boys, like he did in the novel. Instead, he focuses on her story-telling ability too (34:38-34:33). This focus on story-telling follows the 1953 film adaptation, where story telling was mentioned as an important aspect of motherhood. The elements that are connected to motherhood in the novel, which Peter Hollindale called “the trappings of precocious mothering,” like cleaning and cooking, are not a part of her role as mother in the film. Her role as mother is no longer subject to the Victorian gender norms of separate spheres.

Besides having different elements, Wendy’s role as mother has also decreased. The Pirates do not see Wendy as a mother-figure, like in the novel, and their view on Wendy affects the audience’s interpretation of her. Hook, instead of offering Wendy the position of mother of the Pirates, tells Wendy: “There’s still room for a storyteller” (01:14:05-01:14:10). As in the novel, Wendy is allowed to say goodbye to the others before she has to walk the plank. However, in this film it is just to Peter, whom Hook is about to kill. Hook says: “Silence, all, for

Wendy's farewell" (01:29:02-01:29:06). As in the 1953 film, Wendy is not called a mother in this situation. Moreover, the last chapter of the novel, in which Wendy is a grown-up mother, is not included in the film, although it is available as an alternative ending on the DVD. Thus, her role as mother has diminished.

Wendy's role as daughter is bigger than it is in the original novel. It is Wendy's fear of growing up, and no longer being a daughter, that makes her go with Peter to Neverland: "Come with me where you'll never, never have to worry about grown-up things again" (23:50-23:56). This differs from the novel, as in the novel Wendy leaves to become a mother, while in the film adaptations, she goes to Neverland mainly to remain a young daughter. Before she leaves, as in the 1953 film, Wendy is told that she has to grow up tomorrow, and that she needs "a young lady's room" (05:41-05:45). Mr Darling tells Wendy: "It's time for you to grow up!" (10:02-10:05). However, in the 2003 film adaptation, it is not Mr Darling who had this idea in the first place, but Aunt Millicent. The film introduces her as a new character. Aunt Millicent functions as the grown-up who encourages Wendy to grow up. She makes Wendy spin around in front of her family, and concludes that: "Wendy possesses a woman's chin" (04:50-04:53). Aunt Millicent addresses the importance of being able to marry well, and she believes Wendy needs instruction first to become a proper Victorian daughter and lady. She sees Wendy's playing with her brothers as a bad influence: "She must spend less time with her brothers, and more time with me" (05:37-05:40). The fact that Wendy has to meet certain requirements for her role as daughter is not present in the novel. The 1953 film adds that Wendy has to leave the nursery, and the 2003 film adds that she has to marry well and needs lessons on how to become a proper lady. Thus, not her role as mother but her role as daughter makes her follow female gender norms.

Wendy retains her various roles in the 2003 film adaptation and she remains a round character. However, her role as mother is overshadowed by her role as romantic interest. Her role as mother is only small, and does not exhibit the same features as in the novel. Wendy's

motherhood is not about her performing domestic tasks, but revolves around her storytelling ability, or is absent. Wendy's most dominant role, that of love interest, is expanded by new scenes that were added to the film adaptation. Peter and Wendy dance together in a romantic setting, and Wendy gives Peter her hidden kiss. Moreover, Wendy is also presented as a possible romantic interest to Captain Hook. Furthermore, Wendy's role as daughter has new elements as well. Her role as daughter is bigger than in the novel, which is caused by the addition of a new character, Aunt Millicent, who focuses on Wendy's daughterhood and the importance of growing up like a proper Victorian lady. Thus, the adapted Wendy keeps her various roles, but the role that was dominant in the novel becomes smallest in this adaptation.

Conclusion

In the original novel, Wendy is a round character and she has multiple roles. Her role as mother is dominant, and mainly involves her doing domestic tasks. Secondly, her role as daughter is small, and consists of her being sexually pure, and serving her family. Both these roles correspond with the Victorian female sphere of home. Thirdly, Wendy's role as romantic interest is implicit. She has romantic feelings for Peter, which he cannot return, but she has no sexual agency. In the 1953 film adaptation, Wendy's role has diminished, and she becomes a flatter character. Yet, she still takes on the three different roles. Her role as mother is no longer dominant, and does not revolve around Wendy doing domestic tasks. Instead, her motherhood consists of storytelling. Wendy's role as a daughter is the biggest one in this film adaptation. She shows feminine dependence and is sexually pure. Thirdly, Wendy's role as romantic interest is more implicit than in the novel, although she shows jealousy and some sexual agency when she tries to kiss him. The opposite is true for the 2003 film adaptation, in which Wendy is a complex and round character and Wendy's role as romantic interest dominates. New scenes, like a dancing and kissing scene, contribute to Wendy's portrayal as romantic interest and give her sexual agency, as does her relationship to Hook. Wendy's role as mother is very small, and like the 1953 film does not involve domestic tasks, but storytelling. Thirdly, Wendy's role as daughter has increased. In the 2003 film, it revolves around Wendy having to grow up as a proper Victorian lady and to marry well, which is encouraged by the new character Aunt Millicent. Thus, the film adaptations do not portray Wendy as the little Victorian mother she is in the novel, but demonstrate other dimensions of her character.

The film adaptations have refocused Wendy's character, as Hutcheon argues is necessary when changing medium (49). This shift of medium can be one of the reasons for the changes in Wendy's portrayal. The 1953 film adaptation is a Disney musical, which could also account for Wendy's portrayal in that film, as it was produced by the popular Walt Disney. Although both films address children, the 1953 film is rated suitable for all ages, while it is advised for the

2003 film that parents watch with children under six years old. The Disney film is more an adventure film, while the 2003 film could also be categorised as romance. Wendy's appearance and age also account for the roles she takes on. In the 1953 film adaptation, she is around the same age as in the novel, pre-teen. Her body is very girly and slender. On the other hand, in the 2003 film adaptation, Wendy is played by an adolescent twelve years old girl. This increases her portrayal as a romantic interest in comparison to the other film adaptation and the novel. Lastly, the biggest influence on Wendy's portrayal might be time. As Hutcheon argues, an adaptation is "framed in context – a time and a place, a society and a culture" (142). The difference between the release of the novel and the 2003 film is more than ninety years, and more than forty for the 1953 film. Expectations of girls have changed, as value systems are "context-dependent" (142). This is visible in the changes of Wendy's roles. There is a shift in attention, as motherhood is not the focus anymore in the film adaptations. Moreover, the 1953 film is American, not British like the novel. The 2003 film is British-American-Australian, thus also not purely British. This could also have affected the films interpretation of Victorian gender norms and roles.

Because of the scope and time span of this BA thesis, Mrs Darling is not addressed when discussing motherhood, nor are Tinkerbell or Tiger Lily addressed when discussing female roles. For further research, it might be interesting to include Mrs Darling, or the other girls in Neverland when discussing female roles. It could also focus in more detail on one of the roles Wendy takes on, and include loose adaptations that do not follow the original plot. It would be interesting to discover whether other film adaptations, or future film adaptations, differ from the discussed film adaptations in their portrayal of Wendy.

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Appendix A



Figure 1.1. Wendy puts her nose in the air and refuses to carry the firewood.



Figure 1.2. Wendy in the 1953 film adaptation.



Figure 1.3. Wendy tries to kiss Peter.



Figure 2.1. Wendy (Rachel Hurd-Wood) in the 2003 film adaptation.



Figure 2.2. Peter looking at Wendy in a romantic way while she is looking at the fairies.



Figure 2.3. Peter starts glowing after Wendy gave him her hidden kiss.



Faculty of Humanities
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