

## **Emerging adulthood and the Peter Pan Generation in Damion Dietz's *Neverland* (2003)**

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### **1. Introduction**

The literary legacy of James Matthew Barrie is peculiar. He was hugely successful while he was alive, and some of his contemporaries, like Robert Louis Stevenson, another Scottish writer, praised him as a man of genius.<sup>1</sup> However, after his death, the interest in his work decayed. One possible reason for this is to be found in George Blake's influential book *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (1951). Blake misunderstood Barrie's literary project and presented him in an unfavourable light. According to Andrew Nash, Blake excluded Barrie's best works and included the weakest in his analysis (Nash 2007: 228), and as a result, in R. D. S. Jack words, he ended up blaming Barrie 'for doing badly what he never intended to do in the first place' (Jack 2007: 334). Fortunately, this situation has changed over the past few decades, and nowadays there are many studies that acknowledge the interest of Barrie's plays and novels, both in the context of Scottish literature and worldwide. In this regard, his works concerned with Peter Pan are obviously the ones that have attracted most attention. This article intends to follow that trend by focusing on one of the many film adaptations of *Peter Pan*.<sup>2</sup>

'Peter Pan' is one of those rare cases in which a modern author is able to create a character so memorable that it turns into a myth. Definitely, the fact that its literary roots were in Greek mythology – the god Pan lent his name to the new character (Muñoz-Corcuera 2012a: 350-6) – and in Celtic mythology – specially in everything related to Neverland as a legendary island-paradise inhabited by fairies (Wiggins 2006) – helped a little. So did that sensation of timelessness all Barrie's work transmits (see Cartmell and Whelehan 2001). But this would have been to no effect if it had not been that, because, with a little luck and some genius, Barrie managed to encapsulate in Peter Pan one of the most omnipresent psychological archetypes in the contemporary world, so much so that it has given a name to what is known as the Peter Pan syndrome (see Kiley

1983). Not only that, but for many people, the character created by Barrie is appropriate to define a whole generation of young people born in the last decades of the twentieth century: the Peter Pan Generation (see Shaputis 2004). Thus, many artists have been interested along the years in the figure of Peter Pan to shape their own interests in novels, comics, drawings, sculptures, TV series and, as one would expect, movies (see, e.g., Stirling 2012).

Since its first film adaptation by Herbert Brenon in 1924, we can find at least eight more filmic versions that have tried to submit their own unique vision of the myth of Peter Pan,<sup>3</sup> from sweetened versions that tried to entertain an audience of children while passing on them the moral values of a patriarchal society – as the 1953 Disney film did – to transgressive and minority movies that tried to explore the most controversial aspects of the character – for example *El río de oro* (Chávarri, dir., 1986). As I have noted elsewhere (Muñoz-Corcuera 2010: 90-1), if we pay attention to the plot, we can classify film adaptations made of *Peter Pan* in two groups: those which tend to be more literal, and those which tend to be more loose. However, this does not mean that literal adaptations are *better* adaptations. It does not mean either that these literal adaptations are more faithful to the original work with regard to their theme. For example, the Disney version is quite literal with regard to the plot, but the ideology behind it is completely different from that of Barrie's works. On the contrary, *El río de oro* completely ignores the plot of the original play, but it develops the same themes and worries Barrie addressed in his works.<sup>4</sup>

In the next few pages, I will focus on a film that has received less attention from Peter Pan critics: Damion Dietz's *Neverland*. This film can be included in the group of loose adaptations of Peter Pan, although it is not as loose as *El río de oro*, since it roughly follows the original plot. However, it moves the action to the present day and forgets all the fantastic elements of the original work; this forces some major changes. Nonetheless, *Neverland* is quite faithful to some of the themes of the original work, which it develops in a more extensive way. Thus, the film shows why we can speak of the Peter Pan Generation today.

Before starting this analysis, it is worth saying something about the theoretical framework on which it is based. In recent times there has been much debate over theoretical approaches in adaptation studies. On the one hand, there is the adaptation as translation approach, which considers fidelity to the original literary text as the main virtue a film adaptation can have. On the other, there is the approach that a film

adaptation should not be judged as a derivative work, but as a work of art as valuable as the original source. In this sense, the film adaptation could be considered as a development and expansion from the source text, so that it can enlighten some aspects of the literary work, as well as add interest (MacCabe 2011: 5-6), just as our knowledge of the original source can enlighten and make more interesting the film adaptation. The latter position is, by far, the dominant view within the contemporary debate.<sup>5</sup> However, as Kranz and Mellerski note, these positions are best conceived not as watertight compartments, but as the opposite ends of a continuum: the in/fidelity continuum (see Kranz & Mellerski 2008). Moreover, if we are addressing film adaptations, we must consider that the concept of adaptation involves that of fidelity, since it requires a 'mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty' (Hutcheon 2006: 114). Indeed, the pleasures of adaptation *qua adaptation* require that we pay attention to both aspects at the same time (see Kranz & Mellerski 2008: 4). Thus, although one can acknowledge that one should not judge the merits of a film adaptation as depending exclusively on its fidelity to the original work, that does not mean that one should reject to talk about fidelity issues. Instead, one can endorse a hybrid or pluralistic approach.

This will be the position taken in what follows. In this sense, this article will analyse the relationship between *Neverland* and Barrie's *Peter Pan*, showing how the film draws inspiration from this literary source. It will further show that *Neverland* does not draw inspiration from Barrie's *Peter Pan* only, but also from many other sources. Besides, we should remember that Barrie's *Peter Pan* is not a single source, but a set of several published and unpublished manuscripts which include, among others, a dramatic play, a novel, and a film script. In this sense, Barrie's creation has been open to adaptations, additions, and contributions from the very beginning. Considering it as a single closed and univocal 'original' literary text is misleading. Instead, it is better to conceive it as a modern myth with multiple originals scattered in different media. And, as ancient myths, this modern myth is and will always be open to new versions and reinterpretations (Muñoz-Corcuera 2012a). In fact, *Neverland* could be considered as an adaptation of Disney's *Peter Pan* as well, since this movie is, arguably, equally important culturally as any original. The article will show that a fruitful analysis of *Neverland* cannot stop at comparative study, but must also analyse how the film develops further some of the themes of the original work, thus shedding light on some of the darkest features of the contemporary myth.

The structure of the argument will be as follows: first, a brief overview of the film pays special attention to the use of postmodern resources like pastiche and intertextual

references. The bulk of the argument will be in the following section, in which two of the main subthemes of the film and how they contribute to its main theme are analysed: the tension between the adult's world and the youth's world and how that tension takes form in contemporary society in the Peter Pan Generation. Finally, special attention is paid to the role played by Wendy with regard to the main theme of the film, showing how Dietz moves away from the original work to create a much more complex female character.

## 2. Entering Neverland

Nearly a century after the premiere of the play *Peter Pan or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* (1904), U.S. director Damion Dietz presented *Neverland* at the 2003 New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. This independent film is perhaps one of the most interesting adaptations made of *Peter Pan*, as it provides an original vision, and not without controversy, as against the J. M. Barrie classic. It is a low-budget U.S. production that has had little commercial impact, something that has affected its spread worldwide. In fact, it has not been dubbed into any other language, and the DVD does not even include subtitles. For this reason, its reception by Peter Pan critics has been rare, and only Cristina Manzano-Espinosa (2006: 264) and the present author (Muñoz-Corcuera 2011: 150-3) consider it as an adaptation of *Peter Pan*.

As the introduction highlighted, the film moves the action to nowadays, forgetting the fantastic elements of the original work. *Neverland*, thus, becomes a dilapidated amusement park in which Peter, a juvenile delinquent, lives in the company of the lost boys hiding from Hook, the janitor of the park, a pervert obsessed with the idea of destroying in others all traces of the youth and beauty he desperately envies. The fairy dust here is the cocaine to which Tinker Bell and the other fairy-drug addicts are hooked, who along with a man dressed as a crocodile and a group of drag-queens who dress up like Indians complete the stable population of *Neverland*. For its part, the Darling family is formed by a wealthy high-society married couple whose three children, who are in their twenties and to whom they do not pay too much attention, are adopted. Finally, the action trigger, the loss of the shadow of Peter Pan, is also brought into the real world, so what the young man goes looking for at Wendy's house are the keys of his car, which in its rear window bears a sticker with the words, 'My Shadow'.

As an adaptation of Barrie's work, *Neverland* makes use of the postmodern resource of pastiche, taking words from the original work and placing them in a new context, just as *Hook* (Spielberg, dir., 1991), one of the most popular adaptations of *Peter Pan*, did (see Muñoz-Corcuera 2011). In this sense, the first words of the film, which will be repeated twice, thus constituting its leitmotiv, are actually a rewrite of the beginning of the eighth chapter of the novel *Peter and Wendy*, which describes how Neverland can be seen from the real world:

If you close your eyes, and you are lucky enough, you'll see a shapeless pool of lovely pale colours hanging in the darkness. And if you squeeze them tighter, the pool will begin to take shape, and the colours will become so vivid that with another squeeze they must catch on fire. But just before they catch on fire, just before they do, you'll see it.<sup>6</sup>

Dietz's film, however, does not draw on a single source. In addition to using the novel *Peter and Wendy*, the American director embodies aspects of the play *Peter Pan or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* – such as that Peter completely rejects any physical contact (Barrie 1995: 98) – and the Disney film, whose influence we will review a little later. We can even think that the fact that Neverland is an amusement park is related to the film *The Lost Boys* (Schumacher, dir., 1987), which was also developed in such a scenario, because although it is not really an adaptation of Barrie's work, the original title shows an obvious debt to *Peter Pan*. However, this inclusion of explicit references to irrelevant aspects of other works sometimes calls the attention of the viewer by their lack of adaptation to the context. In this sense, when Peter explains what Neverland is to the Darling brothers, he asks them first to imagine how it is. John replies that he imagines a lagoon with flamingos flying over it, while Michael says he sees a flamingo with lagoons flying over it. The scene is taken from *Peter and Wendy* (Barrie 1991: 74), but while in the novel it is believable that two small children imagine something like that, it is not in the movie, where the characters are more than twenty years old.

On the subject of the influence of the Disney film, besides noting some minor aspects as the costumes of John and Michael or that Peter's address is 'the second star to the right' instead of simply 'the second to the right' as in Barrie's work,<sup>7</sup> two elements that affect the structure of the film should be highlighted. First, it is remarkable that when they arrive to Neverland, the lost boys decide to go with John and Michael to see Tiger Lily, the drag-queen star of the Indians' show, while Peter is left alone with Wendy to show her Neverland, in the same way that in the Disney movie the lost boys go to capture

an Indian, while Peter goes with Wendy to the Mermaids' Lagoon.<sup>8</sup> However, in the animated film Peter Pan and Wendy meet in the lagoon with Tiger Lily, who has been kidnapped by Captain Hook, and has to be rescued by the leading character, while in *Neverland* Tiger Lily is safe. Thereby, Dietz's film loses the Mermaid's Lagoon scene, which nevertheless is transformed into the story that Tiger Lily tells the lost boys on how Peter saved her life once.

The other aspect to highlight about the Disney film's influence is the way in which Captain Hook finds where Peter Pan's hideout is. It is worth recalling that, in the original play, the pirate sat by chance on top of the mushroom that concealed the fireplace of Peter's underground hideout, not needing any help to find his enemy (Barrie 1995: 109-10). However, in the Disney film, in a rather interesting twist of the plot, Captain Hook strikes a deal with Tinker Bell, who being jealous of Wendy, confessed the place where Peter Pan was hiding in exchange for the pirate's promise to take Wendy out of Neverland. Similarly, in *Neverland*, the fairy decides to look for Hook to tell him where Peter is. In Dietz's film, however, the result of the betrayal is different. In Disney's, Captain Hook betrays Tinker Bell after having obtained the information he wants, so the fairy, noticing the treachery, leaves the pirate ship to save Peter Pan from the bomb that Hook has placed to kill him. Peter, thus, is not aware of Tinker Bell's treachery, so that, after the fairy has been injured, Peter decides to save her life.<sup>9</sup> In Dietz's film, Tinker Bell is free after telling Hook where is Peter's hideout, but her remorse makes her consume all the drugs she has and confess, too late, her betrayal to the main character. Peter is unable to forgive the fairy, so, unlike the Disney movie, he decides to let her die of an overdose while he goes to rescue Wendy from the hands of Hook.

### **3. The dark side of Peter Pan**

As the Introduction notes regarding the theme of *Neverland*, the film specially addresses the tension between the adult's world and the youth's world and how that tension takes form in contemporary society in what has been labelled as the 'Peter Pan Generation': a generation of young people who seem to have the objective of never assuming the role society expects of them. The youngsters referred to are not teenagers any more, since they are more than twenty years old. But they do not seem adult either: they do not take full responsibility for their actions; they have not married and started their own family; they do not have a long-term job (see Arnett 2004). Some of them are not even interested in these issues, and, after finishing their studies, go back to their

parents' home and, apparently, spend their time there without thinking about their future, as if they were going to be young forever (see Robbins & Wilner 2001; Shaputis 2004).

This section of the article shows how two subthemes of *Neverland*, which derive from Barrie's original work – the idea that Captain Hook is the adult double of Peter Pan and the fear of growing up – contribute to the development of the main theme of the film, thus showing why it makes sense to talk about the Peter Pan Generation today. The next section pays special attention to the role played by Wendy in this regard.<sup>10</sup>

First, Dietz gives full expression to one aspect that was latent in the original work: the idea that Captain Hook is the adult form of Peter Pan. This aspect, although not well known, had already been discussed in the aforementioned *Hook* – in which the adult Peter Pan has become a ruthless attorney, a pirate in the eyes of Wendy – and would be treated again, with considerable ingenuity, in Geraldine McCaughrean's novel *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006), which shows a Peter Pan moving towards becoming his own archenemy. However, although the motif is present in both *Peter and Wendy* and *Peter Pan or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* (see Egan 1982: 53-4; Stewart 1998: 49), the explanation of why this is so, and how the fact that Captain Hook attended Eton College<sup>11</sup> is related to all of this, requires us to take a few steps back.

The textual history of *Peter Pan* is complicated. Although the play premièred in 1904, it was not until 1928 that Barrie decided to publish the final text, which is the result of the numerous changes the writer used to introduce for each new season of performances (Jack 1991: 165). However, we know that the first reference to the link between Captain Hook and Eton College does not occur until the publication of the novel *Peter and Wendy* in 1911 (Green 1954: 118). The reason for this is that Barrie could not think about the possibility until the young Peter Llewelyn-Davies – who had lent his name to the character of the child who would not grow up a few years before – began studying at Eton in 1910, and this prestigious school became a symbol of the end of childhood for the writer.<sup>12</sup> In this context, when, in the play, Peter Pan is about to kill Captain Hook and Hook pronounces his last words – 'Floreat Etona'<sup>13</sup> – we cannot stop thinking that Eton's motto sounds like a curse casted as revenge against Peter Pan: 'you will grow up and become what I am', since Hook is the adult form of Peter Pan. This provides an interesting perspective on the fact that Captain Hook lost his hand fighting with Peter Pan, because it seems to tell us that his inability to accept his maturity causes him to become a symbolically castrated man. This, however, is another story requiring attention elsewhere (see Muñoz-Corcuera 2012b).

To return to the way Dietz reflects in his film that Hook is the adult form of Peter, we can see that the pirate's two monologues in the movie insist on the fact that he was young too, which allows him understand the lost boys. However, he is unable to accept that he has lost his appeal and now he is the target of the lost boys' taunts. Therefore, in the final monologue he is quick to affirm, as if he were cursing him, that however much Peter mocks him, when he grows up he will inevitably become him:

Hook: None of these boys loves me. They despise me. They all despise me and they love Peter Pan. The youth! The beauty! [...]. But, Peter Pan, even if you mock me today, you will undoubtedly become me tomorrow.

Thus, Dietz's *Neverland* shows one of the reasons why nowadays many young people are afraid of growing up: our society places great importance on physical appearance as the most significant component of our potential for seduction. And seduction itself is one of the most important abilities for contemporary life. As things change increasingly fast around us, we must try to keep ourselves ready for those changes. Our romantic relationships are shorter and more numerous than ever, and thus we need to be able to seduce new partners in the future (see Bauman 2003). This is not only in our personal lives; we need our potential for seduction in our professional lives too. We have to be able to find a new job just in case we lose our present one (see Bauman 2007). That implies that we must be able to keep our potential for seduction not only to find a sexual partner, but also to seduce our potential employers (see Cuenca 2013). As our physical attractiveness is likely to decrease with age, this means that we will be less seductive as we grow up. We will have fewer opportunities to find a gorgeous sexual partner, or a new and more exciting job. Hook's complaint about his lost beauty can thus be related to both his failure to seduce any of the lost boys and to his uninspiring job as the janitor of an amusement park. Peter's perspective on ending up like Hook if he grows up, unable to seduce anyone and sentenced to have an anodyne job, makes us understand perfectly why he prefers to be forever a young boy.

This aspect of Peter Pan, as if he was a child destined to become an adult, connects with the second theme of the movie highlighted here: the fear of growing up. The subject was already present in Barrie's *Peter Pan*. While, however, other adaptations were inclined to highlight the relationship between the fear of growing up and the fear of death – the crocodile that has a clock inside itself plays this role in both

Barrie's work and the aforementioned *Hook*, for example – in Dietz's film the fear of growing up is mainly linked to the fear of being subsumed into society, of being integrated as just another worker. This is not an innovation, but is a significant development of the original work, in which Peter Pan tells Mrs. Darling he does not want to grow up because he does not want to become a man and have to go to work in an office (Barrie 1991: 216-7). Thus, in *Neverland*, Peter's panic at the adult world is focused on the fear of losing his identity to become just another member of the system. He does not want to stop being special. But Peter is living a lie, since he does not know who he is or why he should be considered special, as it is demonstrated in the only confrontation he has with Hook:

Hook: Proud and insolent youth, prepare to meet thy doom. Peter Pan, who and what art thou? Are you youth? Are you joy? Are you freedom? Are you that little bird that has broken out of the egg?

Peter stays silent, and blinded with rage, he draws his knife and stabs the janitor without a word, showing he has no answer to the question.

In fact, the image that Peter has of himself is a feature of immaturity, the fruit of our society's conception of youth as a stage of life to be (over)protected from the evil of the 'real' world. This results in the inability of Peter – and many other young people today – to face the adult world.<sup>14</sup> As Wendy says at the end of the film, Peter is not a character from a fairy tale, or the idealisation of eternal youth, characteristics that made the character created by Barrie special. *Neverland's* Peter is just a normal guy, confused, hurt by having been abandoned by his mother, something that makes him look for refuge in a fantasy world that exists only in his head. One can think that Barrie's fantastic *Peter Pan* could be the story that Dietz's one imagines while the other characters face much more prosaic reality. *Neverland* is for all of them a decadent amusement park, while Peter imagines an island inhabited by fairies, Indians and pirates. In this context, Wendy works as a hinge between Peter's perception and the real world, trying to make the main character see that *Neverland* is not the wonderful world he says, that fairies do not exist and that the real world is not as hard as he believes. The story that Wendy tells the lost boys in the movie, just before the Darlings decide to go back home, can be interpreted from this point of view:

Wendy: But, as careless and self-obsessed as the Darlings were, the children soon realised that maybe the grass wasn't that much greener in *Neverland* or anywhere else. I guess everyone's living in their own world

whatever you go. And maybe there isn't some perfect place where everything is wonderful all the time. Maybe Neverland is all in your mind. And so the kids decided to go home.

Lost boy: Why did they go back home?

Wendy: Well, I think that they understand that everyone has to grow up eventually and everyone has to assume responsibility for their own actions and that nobody can live in a fantasy world forever.

. . .

Peter Pan: You have no idea what reality is! This is reality!

Wendy: This is your reality!

In Arnett's terms, the characters in *Neverland* are in a stage of life which has been neglected by scholars until recently: emerging adulthood. This stage of life, which is typical of contemporary western society, runs from the late teens to the late twenties, and is characterised by five features:

1. It is the age of *identity explorations*, of trying out various possibilities, especially in love and work.
2. It is the age of *instability*.
3. It is the most *self-focused* age of life.
4. It is the age of *feeling in-between*, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult.
5. It is the age of *possibilities*, when hopes flourish, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives.

(Arnett 2004: 8)

This stage of life is specially troubling, since emerging adults have to take many decisions about how they want their life to be, but they have no guide about how to do this. They feel that it is the time to 'nail down the meaning in their lives' (Robbins and Wilner 2001: 9) and this is so overwhelming that some of them come to experience what it is known as a 'quarterlife crisis'. Moreover, they are constantly being told that emerging adulthood is going to be the best period of their lives. This makes them feel like weirdos, as they are not enjoying that supposedly wonderful time, and so the crisis deepens (Robbins & Wilner 2001: 4). Emerging adults realise that they are freer than they ever were in childhood or ever will be once they take on the full weight of adult responsibilities (Arnett 2004: 3). But they do not really know what to do with that freedom. Thus, they have an ambivalent view of adulthood. It is seen as a stage of their life which will end

their present insecurity and instability. But, at the same time, it also represents the end of their current independence and sense of wide-open possibilities (Arnett 2004: 6).

Faced with that bind, many emerging adults decide to forget about their future for a while and try different things just for fun. They are not really looking for a way out of their quarterlife crisis, but just having a good time, gaining a broad range of life experiences before 'settling down' (Arnett 2004: 10). It could seem that this is the case of Peter and Wendy at the beginning of the film: they want to sniff some cocaine, and to experience something fun. They just want to forget about their futures for a while and enjoy their present. However, throughout the film, and specially at the end, we realise that both characters are in different positions. Wendy enjoys her stay at Neverland, but for her it is just a break. She knows that life cannot be like that. She knows that the real world is out there, waiting for her, and, even if it is not as much fun as Neverland, it is what life demands: she has to grow up eventually, abandon her emerging adulthood and become a responsible adult. In contrast, Peter does not think about Neverland as a break. He just does not want to come back to his quarterlife crisis, and think about who he is and what he wants to do when he grows up. Emerging adulthood is the age of possibilities, and people in this stage of their lives usually think that they will get what they want from life (Arnett 2004: 222-3). However, many fail and then some lose their hope (Arnett 2004: 158-60). When they do so, they can react in different ways. Peter's is to procrastinate as much as he can (Robbins & Wilner 2001: 8). He does not think that he will get what he wants from life, and so he wants to extend his emerging adulthood so that he does not have to become Captain Hook: a lonely man whom no one loves and who has a miserable dead-end job. Neverland is an escape mechanism for him.

Barrie's Peter Pan is perhaps six or seven years old, and he wants to stay like that forever. Dietz's Peter Pan is not a child anymore, but his refusal to grow up is analogous to the original Peter Pan's. He wants to remain as free as only an emerging adult can be. But he does not want to feel the pressure to nail down the meaning in his life, mostly because it is unlikely that he is going to like his future. Surely we should not worry about him. He is just a fictional character, and his problems will stay within his fictional world. However, Dietz's film is a just reflection of contemporary society. Many emerging adults react in the same way his Peter Pan does. Regardless of how our society is going to address this problem, *Neverland* explains why it is a good reason to talk about these emerging adults as the 'Peter Pan Generation'.

#### 4. When Wendy Grew Up: An Afterthought

The role played by Wendy in Dietz's film deserves we pay a little more attention to it since one of the problems of Barrie's *Peter Pan* is precisely the limited number of roles that it allows women in general and Wendy in particular. In this sense, even though the girl could be considered the real hero of Barrie's story (as she is the one who travels to a strange land, has some adventures, and then comes back to her home with some newly acquired knowledge), she hardly appears in *Neverland*. Her performance on the island is limited to the role of the 'little mother' of Peter and the lost boys, while outside the island she is simply her mother's replacement, especially in the sense of being the representation of female life creation's power – childbirth – which is associated with artistic creation, as is reflected at the end of Barrie's novel (Jack 1991: 181).

In contrast, in *Neverland*, the Victorian idea of the angel in the house is dismantled from the beginning of the story. As noted earlier in this article, the Darling children are actually adopted and their parents do not worry too much about them. Despite the fact that Michael is ill, they decide to go in a weekend trip and ask Wendy to take care of her brothers. However, Wendy completely rejects that role. She does not want to be that 'responsible young woman' her mother wants her to be, because that would be to accept the traditional role of women in a patriarchal society. So, when Peter comes into her house that night and offers her an alternative, a wonderful world in which one can be happy without any responsibility, Wendy does not hesitate to accept the fairy dust – the cocaine – and fly away to Neverland with Peter.

Once, however, the lights from the carousel stop fascinating her, it does not take long for Wendy to realise Neverland is not the paradise Peter says, and that taking refuge from the real world in an amusement park is an act of immaturity leading nowhere. Wendy understands that maybe living with an adoptive family in the real world is not the perfect life, but it is better than this other option. So, Wendy faces Peter, thus becoming the real main character of the film and offering all the lost boys, that Peter Pan Generation that does not want to grow up, an exit. She offers to take them out of Neverland and to help them find a better place in a world that it is not the happy world that Peter has to offer, but at least it is real. Thus, the film is brought to an end leaving the strange feeling that happiness is a luxury that only children and emerging adults can afford, while growing up involves getting one's life together to try to accept reality in all its harshness.

The voiceover of the girl at the end of the film goes into this in depth. After repeating how it is possible to see Neverland from the real world – remember that this monologue was the leitmotif of the film – she adds that although closing your eyes you can see it, if you do it long enough you will see Peter getting older and you will understand that Neverland is just a reflection of a story you used to believe in ‘when you were young and happy and heartless’. Just a story.

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Notes.

- <sup>1</sup> 'I am a capable artist; but it begins to look to me as if you are a man of genius,' Stevenson would say to Barrie in a letter. Quoted by Andrew Birkin (2005: 18).
- <sup>2</sup> In order to facilitate the composition of the article, from now on I will use the name *Peter Pan* to refer jointly to the two most important works of Barrie in which the character appears (the novel *Peter and Wendy* and the play *Peter Pan or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*), because even though the differences between the two texts are not excessive, Dietz makes use of both works for his adaptation.
- <sup>3</sup> *Peter Pan*, dir. by Herbert Brenon (Paramount, 1924); *Peter Pan*, dir. by Clyde Geronimi and Wilfred Jackson (Walt Disney, 1953); *El río de oro*, dir. by Jaime Chavarri (Tesauro, 1986); *Hook*, dir. by Steven Spielberg (TriStar, 1991); *Peter Pan: Return to Neverland*, dir. by Robin Budd and Donovan Cook (Walt Disney, 2002); *Peter Pan*, dir. by P. J. Hogan (Universal, 2003); *Neverland*, dir. by Damion Dietz (New Media Entertainment, 2003); *Finding Neverland*, dir. by Marc Forster (Miramax, 2004); and *Pan*, dir. by Joe Wright (Warner Bros., 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> An exploration of the main themes of the original work can be found in Muñoz-Corcuera 2012a. An analysis of Disney's *Peter Pan* and Chavarri's *El río de oro* from this perspective can be found in Muñoz-Corcuera 2010; 2011.
- <sup>5</sup> We can note that Barrie himself endorsed this approach. In this sense, when he wrote his film script for *Peter Pan*, he introduced several changes to take advantage of the features of the new medium. Thus, he felt disappointed when Paramount Pictures decided to ignore his proposed manuscript and to make a film much more faithful to the original drama (Jack 2001).
- <sup>6</sup> The changes that take place with regard to the original text are irrelevant, since in general they consist of substitutions of a word by a synonym, cf. the original passage from the novel: 'If you shut your eyes and are a lucky one, you may see at times a shapeless pool of lovely pale colours suspended in the darkness; then if you squeeze your eyes tighter, the pool begins to take shape, and the colours become so vivid that with another squeeze they must go on fire. But just before they go on fire you see the lagoon' (Barrie 1991: 140).
- <sup>7</sup> The address that Peter Pan says to Wendy is simply 'second to the right and then straight on till morning' in all of the Barrie's works. The Disney film was the first that included the reference to the stars that today happens to be the character's best known address.
- <sup>8</sup> In the original work the scene of the visit to the Indians does not exist, while the scene of Tiger Lily's kidnapping does not occur until several days after the arrival of Wendy and her brothers to Neverland.
- <sup>9</sup> In any case, the scene is confusing, as the directors of the Disney film did not know how to adapt the scene of the play in which Peter Pan asked the audience to save Tinker Bell's life by clapping (see Barrie 1995: 136-7).
- <sup>10</sup> As might be expected given the context in which it was released, one of the most remarkable features of *Neverland* is that Damion Dietz explores the sexual ambiguity of the two main male characters as never had been done before. This could be related to the topic at hand through a Freudian interpretation of this sexual ambiguity as a sign of an immature polymorphous perverse disposition (see Freud 2000: 57). However, Freudian readings of *Peter Pan* have been harshly criticised in recent years: this line of thought is not pursued here (see Jack 2010: 31-78; Rudd 2012: 55-6).
- <sup>11</sup> Eton College, often referred to simply as Eton, is a British independent school for boys aged 13 to 18. Some of the most prominent members of English society attend Eton, and we can find among its past pupils – known as Old Etonians – besides numerous prime ministers, writers and diplomats, the children of the present Prince of Wales.
- <sup>12</sup> The association between the schools and the end of childhood was not new in Barrie's work. In *The Little White Bird* the boy David already announces to Captain W. that he will stop playing with him when he is eight years old and starts attending Pilkington, another school. In the same way, in the sixth act of *Anon: A play*, the first manuscript of *Peter Pan*, Captain Hook reappeared in Kensington Gardens turned into a headmaster.
- <sup>13</sup> 'Let Eton Flourish', Eton College motto.
- <sup>14</sup> Obviously the reasons for which the features of immaturity are increasing between the young people today cannot be reduced to this (see e.g. Cataluccio 2004).