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# Exploring Narrative Time, Circular Temporalities, and Growth in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*

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Exploring Narrative Time, Circular Temporalities, and Growth in  
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In his famous work, 'Signs of the Times,' Thomas Carlyle states:

The poorest Day that passes over us is the conflux of two Eternities; it is made up of currents that issue from the remotest Past, towards the remotest Future.

As temporal beings, we are constituted as far-reaching projections of the past and future, losing the present moment in simultaneous anticipation of the future and retrospection of the past. This mentality allows us to situate ourselves temporally, finding ourselves in between a beginning and an end. Contemporary narrative theorist Mark Currie in his book *About Time* introduces the idea that narrative time "lives its experience as if it were recorded in the preterit tense" conceiving of "future actions as things that will make good stories and good memories" (12). In other words, narrative constantly puts present moments (for the reader) into the past by anticipating their significance in the larger narrative temporal structure. In this way, the past, present, and future are inextricably connected in the same mental structure.

Victorians were obsessed with this notion; philosophers like Carlyle constantly attempted to record their age in the preterit tense, trying to conceive of how their future actions will determine where they stand in history. This was particularly difficult since the Victorians stood at such a transitional point: they watched the ideals of the Romantics fade into the past, and the industrialization of the modern world become clearer on the horizon. In his book, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, contemporary historian Walter Houghton shrewdly says, "although all ages are ages of transition" never before had a society "thought of their own time as an era of change

from the past to the future” (1). This statement exposes the basis of Victorian ideological focus: time, and their place in it.

Written at the beginning and the end of the Victorian age, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* explore what happens when the past, present, and future structuring of time breaks down, converting it into the familiar narrative structure of beginning, middle, and end. Growing into adulthood, Alice and Wendy are representative of the transitional Victorians, looking for a way to place themselves temporally in the disconnected and unstructured worlds of Wonderland and Neverland. Representative of the Victorian obsession with time, the Wonderland and Neverland characters move in circular patterns, emulating the motion of a clock. However, though the characters are in perpetual motion, they do not connect their movement with progression. The characters themselves are not temporal beings since they do not anticipate an ending to their repetitious motion. Instead, the characters could be more accurately described as mechanisms that never progress outside of their strict, rhythmic movements. The beginning, middle, and end structure quickly disintegrates in the clockwork movement of Neverland and Wonderland. In its place is only a series of duplicate beginnings, since the characters rotate in the same physical space.

Alice and Wendy, coming from the Victorian age of transition, find the characters’ inability to structure time into a beginning and end frustrating; their time spent in the imaginary worlds becomes an incessant journey to find progression in a world where it does not exist. The characters do not look for meaning in their movements, have no desire to find an ending, and therefore cannot move progressively. Alice and Wendy, however, naturally anticipate that an ending will follow the beginning of a story. Alice continuously notices that characters cannot finish riddles, stories, or rhymes, and consequently begins to feel lost in a world that does not have a complete temporal structure. Wendy comes to Neverland as the designated storyteller

since Peter Pan and the Lost Boys cannot tell stories themselves. They have become lost circling the island because they cannot grow to move forward in time. Unlike the other characters in the stories, Wendy and Alice move through the worlds without becoming caught up in the repetitious movement between beginnings, connecting the character's circular movements into a coherent story through their own overarching movement. Because Alice and Wendy understand the inextricable connection between a beginning and end, they escape from the repetitious movements of the mechanized characters around them. Like the Victorians, Alice and Wendy need to discover a teleological progression to their movement, looking for an end to their transition into the mechanized worlds of Neverland and Wonderland, and an end to the story.

The Victorians were on a similar journey to find a distinctive path into their future wanting to situate themselves in the new industrial world that had suddenly changed their landscape and way of living. In his book, *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode deems this state of living between the beginning and end as “in the midst,” or in constant transition. In tune with the feeling of the Victorians, he says, “there is a period which does not properly belong...to the *saeculum* preceding it” (12). Indeed, the anxiety that the Victorians felt with their industrial society was that they did not “properly belong.” Kermode theorizes that this is why cultures predict apocalypses: in order to resituate themselves in an unfamiliar time period, the culture needs to be able to restructure both a beginning and an end. Indeed, just as Kermode theorizes, the Victorians found relief from disorientation in their prediction of an approaching apocalypse. In his “Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century,” John Ruskin anticipates the apocalyptic ending to his industrial society:

The most terrific and horrible thunderstorm, this morning, I ever remember. It waked me at six, or a little before--then rolling incessantly, like railway luggage trains, quite ghastly in its mockery of them--the air one loathsome mass of sultry and foul fog, like smoke...(20)

In this passage, Ruskin aligns the apocalyptic bad weather with industrialization, believing the sound of the thunder to be like “railway luggage trains.” The thunder is the faraway echoes of the apocalypse that the railway trains are progressing toward. Like Alice and Wendy journeying through a disconnected, mechanical world, Ruskin and other contemporary critics needed to describe an ending, or a direct purpose, to their industrial movement in order to make sense of their placement in it.

One of the most representative images of Victorians moving into the modern world is the steam-engine train since it most visually moved society into a new era of speed. Railroads increased the speed of land travel from twelve to fifty miles an hour in only a few years (Houghton 7). This meant that people no longer had to remain within their hometown to find work: commuting from one city to the next in a day became easier and more accessible than ever before. Victorian historicist W.R. Greg observes that a person who “passed their whole of life in the narrow circuit of their native hamlet” (*Essays* 305) now lived in a larger, more connected space (*Essays* 305). The country was no longer divided into separate cities because the length of travel was too inconvenient, or the distance too far. As a result, Victorians began to question previous “assumptions about such fundamentals as space and time” (Childers 77). The steam engine therefore is more than a physical indicator of Victorian modernization; it represents the beginning of a new frame of mind. Alongside industrial speed, the pace of the average Victorian lifestyle increased drastically, and the Victorian body began to feel the effects. The new lifestyle required every individual to travel greater distances in a shorter amount of time; effectually, more time was spent in transit than at home, traveling miles away from their central space. As Greg states in his essay published in 1875, “Life at High Pressure,” “the most salient characteristic of life in this latter portion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is its SPEED” (qtd. in Houghton 7). Pointedly, Greg comments upon the speed of *life*, not the speed of physical locomotion.

Both Carroll and Barrie explicitly describe Wonderland and Neverland as movement into a new frame of mind, both spatially and temporally. As Stuart Sherman explains in his book, *Telling Time*, narratives like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* “[possess] a temporal elasticity, a freedom from concurrency with ‘real’ time” (x). For example, Alice adjusts her physical stasis when she is first drawn to Wonderland. She gets up from her “sleepy and stupid” state, “starting to her feet” (9-10) to follow the White Rabbit, who looks at his pocket watch exclaiming, “Oh dear! I shall be too late!” and “[hurries] on” (10). Alice begins to move at a physically faster pace according to the movement of the Rabbit, who moves at a hurried rhythm to keep up with his watch. Similarly, the Darling children move from their still state in bed to flying “round and round” (35) their nursery. Like Alice following the White Rabbit with a watch, the Darling children follow Peter in clock-like circles around their nursery. The Darlings take up the new rhythm of Peter just as Alice begins to run after the White Rabbit. As soon as they begin to fly, they trust Peter “implicitly,” and “so great were the delights of flying that they wasted time circling round church spires or any other tall objects on the way that took their fancy” (38). Already, the children begin to lose the sense of “wasted time,” following him around the church spires without caring whether or not they are progressing on their journey to Neverland. Both of the narratives indicate a split between the stasis of real world time, and the constant circular movement of Neverland and Wonderland.

To emphasize the physical distance between the real world and the imaginary, both Carroll and Barrie slow the narrative time. Carroll does this with the repetition of the words, “Down, down, down,” as Alice falls down the rabbit hole into Wonderland. Alice asks herself, “Would the fall *never* come to an end?” (10). As the Darling children journey to Neverland trailing after Peter, they begin to wonder how long ago they left, saying, “Not so long ago. But

how long ago?" (38). Like Alice, the Darling children begin to lose a sense of time, being unable to track the length of their journey. By lengthening the narrative time, and describing the new rhythm that Wonderland and Neverland adhere to, Barrie and Carroll definitively place the two worlds outside of regular structures of time. Again, as a result of their faster-paced lifestyles, Victorian society had to adapt to a new structure of time. They began to lose a sense of where they were, since they had to frame their progression in a different spatial and temporal scale.

This transition of the children between the real world and the imaginary is similar to the transition between the past world and the modern world of the Victorians. Like the Victorians suddenly having a new mode of travel, the Darling children can suddenly travel outside of the small scope of their nursery to experience the larger world outside. Not only that, but they begin traveling at a faster pace: Alice begins to run after the rabbit, while the Darling children begin to move more quickly flying across the room instead of walking. The children in both narratives find themselves traveling at a different pace of life than what they were used to in the familiar space of their home. As the Darling children travel through the sky on their way to Neverland, they begin to lose a sense of the temporal structure of the real world. Similarly, Alice does not know how long it takes her to fall down the rabbit hole. Like the Victorians, the children have to adjust their lifestyles in order to compensate for the new way of living in the unfamiliar landscapes of Wonderland and Neverland. Though the children are not traveling by train, the journey to Wonderland and Neverland is representative of Victorian modernization: both narratives indicate an expansion in the children's understanding of time and space, just as the steam-engine as a faster mode of travel changed the spatial and temporal understanding of the Victorians.

Because of modernized travel, less time was spent moving from one place to the next; however, the newfound empty space of time quickly filled up. Houghton observes that the "faster

locomotion of goods and letters and people simply increased the number of things one crowded into a day, and the rush from one to another” (Houghton 7). Victorians found themselves in perpetual motion, running from one moment to the next. “People” became like “goods and letters,” a “number” in a crowd of undifferentiated, unfeeling objects, hurtled along by mechanical locomotion in their oscillating path between work and home. *The New York Times* published a column titled “High Pressure” in response to Greg’s essay questioning the “use of time gained” from speedy transportation, believing the “needless hurry” to produce “a chronic disturbance in the nervous system” and “the anxiety to be in time” to cause “a daily wear and tear as well as accelerated action of the heart, which kills or injures thousands” (High Pressure). Though the article today sounds almost comically exaggerated, it still reflects the contemporary fear of losing something essential about the old lifestyle while working against the natural rhythm of the body. As the *New York Times* article asks, “No doubt we ‘do’ more, but is ‘doing’ everything, and ‘being’ nothing?” (High Pressure). The modern purpose of the physical body became entangled with industrial progression and production, having no ability to slow down.

Lewis Carroll was painfully aware of the mechanization that had become apparent in his English society as a result of faster lifestyles. As Calvin R. Petersen says in his essay “Time and Stress: Alice in Wonderland,” Carroll conceived of time as a rushing stream, representing “the stress of modern existence – life ever rushing from its own perplexity, progress as a thin veneer against a darker truth” (432). *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* conveys the “darker truth” about modern existence. The characters in Wonderland are always late, and consequentially in constant rushed motion. However, though time itself continues, proved through Alice’s linear movement through Wonderland and her growth at the end of the novel, the characters in Wonderland cannot progress. As Alice rushes after the White Rabbit, she encounters broken clocks, circular questions, and circular movements of character bodies. Like a broken record, the characters

repeat their questions and actions without understanding that they have already asked or performed them. Ironically, they become the physical embodiment of a clock without actually progressing themselves. For example, the Mad Hatter's Tea Party will never end, and the Caterpillar will never turn into a butterfly. The characters manifest the darker truth hidden behind the "progress" and "speed" of Victorian time; "progress" in Wonderland is not even what Petersen describes as a "thin veneer:" it simply does not exist.

*Peter Pan* displays a world of characters stuck in perpetual movement without an end. Though *Peter Pan* debuted onstage thirty-nine years after *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published, the two works identify similar concerns with society. Ticking clocks, circular movements, and undeveloped characters dominate the imaginary world of Neverland. The Lost Boys, Red Skins, and Pirates pursue each other around the island in emulation of a ticking clock. The ticking crocodile follows the entire band completing the mechanistic image. As a result, the Lost Boys are, in fact, lost. Representing the disoriented Victorians, caught "in the midst," the Lost Boys have forgotten who they are. Consequentially, they continue to circle the island, in constant transition between one adventure and the next. While Wonderland represents the mechanization of the Victorian age, Neverland represents the Victorian loss of temporal orientation. Like the Wonderland mechanistic characters, the Neverland characters become caught up in movement, without having a way to differentiate between a beginning and end. Unlike the Wonderland characters, who display their misunderstanding of narrative structure with unfinished riddles and puns, the Lost Boys know that they have forgotten their past life, but cannot orient themselves to remember what it is. Therefore, while the Wonderland characters move mindlessly to stay in rhythm with their ticking clock mechanism, the Neverland characters stay in constant movement to define themselves in terms of the present adventure, to replace the absence of memory.

Thus, instead of a story about *timeliness*, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* is a story about *timelessness*. While Alice and the other characters find themselves perpetually running after the elusive, fast-paced time, Peter Pan and the Lost Boys must remain in motion in order to regain the present moment. Without a past to dictate their own personal progression, the Lost Boys must remain in motion to find the next adventure. Peter displays the reason behind this constant movement most clearly, since he forgets an adventure as soon as it ends. As an immortal being, Peter embodies timelessness since he exists outside of the teleological structure of growth that affects characters like Wendy or Alice. Peter lives perpetually in the present: he does not have to worry about future mortality. He has no memory of the events in the past, and no understanding of future consequences. Therefore, rather than understanding the cohesive structure of time, Peter only understands moment by present moment. This ability creates something of a paradox, since he becomes both “timeless,” and “momentary,” in that he lives moment by moment. Though he lives forever, Peter only understands the instant that he temporarily physically inhabits, erasing any need for a past, present, future structure, since the future can never dictate a mortal end. Because Peter has no memory or concept of the past, he lives entirely in each singular momentous (literally, *of moment*) interval in his singular adventures.

Two small figures stand boldly against the ticking, non-progressive clockwork of Wonderland and Neverland: Alice and Wendy. Unlike the other characters, Alice and Wendy move through the narratives participating in the Wonderland and Neverland mechanism, yet never becoming fixed in their rotations. This is because Alice and Wendy are not content with repetitious beginnings: they need an ending. Therefore, Alice and Wendy are forced to structure the narratives themselves. Alice coheres the disjointed movements of the Wonderland characters

by moving fluidly through them, while Wendy coheres the disconnected adventures linking them into one fluid narrative.

In order to place the reader in a position to see the mad agitation of the Wonderland world through Alice's eyes, Carroll lets Alice control the narrative. Thus, the narrative time speeds up and slows down according to Alice's interests in the imaginative world around her. Equally, through Peter controls the narrative time in Neverland, Wendy controls the narrative structure. She enters the Neverland world as a storyteller, and coheres the disconnected adventures together into a fluid beginning, middle, and end. Carroll's fear of the stream of "life ever rushing from its own perplexity" (Petersen 432) does not happen with Alice; she takes interest in detail and difference, in its "perplexities," changing the temporal rhythm to accommodate her own, individual enjoyment. Alice coheres time at her own childish speed, moving forward through the narrative, and accepting her place in the world at the time. As Alice becomes more and more frustrated with the ridiculous non-progressive patterns around her, she returns to the tick of real world time in acceptance of its degenerative quality, leaving behind the mechanistic characters of Wonderland. Therefore, Alice does not fight the metaphorical "stream" of life, and instead goes along with its rhythm. She disrupts Wonderland, the representation of the Victorian fear of mechanization, with her natural ability to grow and move through the narrative.

Like Alice, Wendy enters the scene with inextricable ties to teleological time, transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and carrying with her an understanding of the inevitability of growth. Though Wendy participates in the clock-like revolutions of Neverland, she remains both aware of the moment at hand, and aware of when her adventures in Neverland will end. She first goes to Neverland because of her ability as a storyteller; Peter enjoys listening to her mother's stories through the nursery window, and decides to bring Wendy along to tell the

Lost Boys stories too. However, unlike Peter, she refuses to forget her origins. She understands the relationship between past, present, and future, fittingly represented in her role as a storyteller, shaping narrative time into a beginning, middle, and end.

Within both *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*, the writers use the figure of the child, represented through Alice and Wendy, to instigate movement toward an end through growth and regeneration. Unrestrained by adult anxieties about a mortal end, Alice and Wendy have the power to see beyond the “dark resistless stream” of time. They are the only characters free to participate in Wonderland and Neverland, yet still progress towards a definite end - adulthood and the end of the novel. Alice and Wendy shape and cohere the narrative, connecting the adventures that happen throughout the stories with their transitional memories and understanding of the future.

However, unlike Ruskin, who designs a finite apocalyptic ending for his Victorian society, Alice and Wendy discover an infinitude of regenerative endings; though Alice and Wendy grow old at the end of the narrative, the narrative does not end with their mortality, but with the regeneration of the narrative in their progeny. Alice and Wendy live on through the narrative’s retelling. This point is heavily underlined in the end of both novels: Alice becomes an old woman telling her children and grandchildren of her adventures in Wonderland, and Wendy grows up to give birth to more children who come and go to Neverland. Both of these endings signify that the characters’ lives continue beyond the limits of the page, since their place in the narratives will continue to be retold. For both the contemporary and Victorian reader, Alice and Wendy open up new possibilities to what an ending entails; instead of situating society temporally between a fading past, and an apocalyptic future, Alice and Wendy shape time into a teleological infinitude, cohering the separated sequences of beginnings and ends into a long cycle of regeneration and growth.

## Criticism of Barrie's and Carroll's Usage of the Child Within the Narrative

For many modern child theory critics, Alice and Wendy do not so easily represent the journey of the Victorian to find an ending to their industrial society. Instead, these theorists view the child figure as exploited by Barrie and Carroll's texts. In this sense, Barrie and Carroll wield power over the voiceless child within the narrative by using the child for their own hidden agenda –be it political, societal, or sexual. Ultimately, the relation between the authors and their fictional child figure is representative of the unfair victimization of a powerless subject. Through the child, Barrie and Carroll delude the reader into believing the innocence of their narrative, while simultaneously criticizing the social and cultural structures of their society. In her book, *The Case of Peter Pan*, Jacqueline Rose views children's literature as a way for adults to exploit the powerless child using *Peter Pan* as a representative example. As she says, "children's fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and then aims unashamedly to take the child *in*" (2). In Barrie's case, Peter Pan is "a little boy who does not grow up, not because he doesn't want to, but because someone else prefers that he shouldn't" (2). The child as a regenerative and progressive figure becomes subverted; instead, children become powerless tools for adults to exploit.

Because society now recognizes the child in terms of psychological growth and biological maturation, the author's original intent behind using a child figure to guide the reader through the narrative has been lost. To explain why Barrie in particular would create a timeless child character, Rose assumes that Barrie sexually desired little boys. According to Rose, because Barrie knew that eventually little boys grow up, and become the adult that he no longer sexually desired, Barrie had to formulate a place where his fantasy could be fulfilled. This assumption stems from our contemporary understanding of the child. Because we better understand the inability of the child to think as an adult, the child has become the *victim*, no

longer the *emblem*, of society. As Rose describes, the narrator belongs on “the edge of what he offers us as the trauma of growth” (68). *Growth* now defines the child, while the *trauma of growth* defines the adult.

Of course, many of these modern themes of growth trauma and power stem from Freud’s revolutionary views of the sexualized child. His *Interpretation of Dreams*, published in German in 1899 introduced his readers to the psychoanalytic process, and the belief that individual adult problems could be traced back to a specific traumatic moment in their childhood. In effect, childhood became something that had to be preserved and carefully monitored not only because of its idealization, but also for fear of molesting the innocence of the child.

Freud’s ideas obviously stemmed from the nineteenth century’s views of the nostalgia for childhood, since childhood remained a condition for the patient to return to in order to better understand their present condition. Peter’s character represents the atemporal and conditional child figure common in Victorian literature. The Victorians continued to hold a romantic view of the child as eternally innocent and immortal, representative of the desire to escape their time-obsessed society. Like Peter, the child stood outside of the regular workings of society, able to exist beyond the temporal burden of the adult world. Linda Austin says in her essay ‘Children of Childhood: Nostalgia and the Romantic Legacy’ that “nostalgia for childhood referred to a condition rather than duration” (1). Because Victorians viewed childhood as “conditional” instead of “durational,” the child could act as a beacon of societal incorruptibility; the child never had to grow up and face the adult world driven by time and mortality. Peter is not so much a character as he is a symbol of the Victorian desire to stop the corruptibility of time.

However, instead of acting as a beacon for the future, childhood for Freud became a symbol for the failure or perversion of the past. Like childhood, dreams became symbols for “wish-fulfillment” in the person’s real life, and were often sexually based. The fact that each

story does not clearly distinguish between the dream world and the real world - combined the suspicion that the authors were attracted to children - it is no wonder that *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* soon began to be psychoanalytically interpreted. Today, Alice's fall into the rabbit hole and frustrated attempt to exit through a small door are interpreted as a Freudian example of birth trauma. Peter Pan's ignorance of Wendy's, Tiger Lily's, and Tinkerbell's childish advances was no longer understood as the naïve innocence of a child, but the sexual frustration of the female characters in the novel, and a representation of Barrie's sexual impotence. Though Freud's methods of psychoanalysis revolutionized and expanded the psychological field, Freudian readings of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* lose the historical context behind Barrie and Carroll's original representation of the child as a figure leading Victorians out of their obsession with time and apocalyptic predictions, and into a continuous pattern of regrowth.

Alison Lurie, in her book *Don't Tell The Grown-Ups*, explores the function of subversiveness in children's literature, calling the definition of children's literature into question. After defining children's literature in terms of its pastoral conventions, and the absence of adult themes, such as sex, money, and death, she concludes that children's literature typically portrays "an ideal world of perfectible beings, free of the necessity for survival and reproduction" (xiii). She explains that children's literature often distinguishes between adult and child functions; while "children can be reformed and forgiven" because "children are essentially good or capable of becoming good" adults are stuck in character, incapable of growth, and "only the rational goodness of a child" (xiii) can rescue them from their flaws. Lurie brings up a valid point seen from both a modern and Victorian perspective. While the child indeed can change with time, growing and becoming, the adult cannot. The adult, like the adult characters in *Peter Pan* and *Alice* are stuck performing the same habits, never changing or becoming better. The subversive quality in children's literature exists to "mock current assumptions and express

imaginative...views of the world in the simplest and purest form” (xi). Thus, though the Victorians and modern day society have different views of society, each agrees upon the same general concept: the child can interpret and change society in ways that an adult cannot, since he or she has not yet been fit into social structures. Lurie takes into account modern theories exploring why adults and children have different roles within literature, and concludes that the child plays an important role within literature, not as a victim, but as a flexible being that acts to serve both the author’s societal criticisms, and to provide a model for how adults should act.

Lurie’s belief in the child’s capability to transform the adult with his/her innate “goodness” tells us why modern society continues to read *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* to generations of children, in spite of the arguments against the sexuality of the authors, and the inherent adult-child power structures that exist. The reader admires Alice and Wendy because of their ability to change and to fit the various mechanisms of their respective child lands. Pointedly, the adult characters in both stories are immature and predictable. In *Peter Pan*, Mr. and Mrs. Darling become trapped in a monotonous routine without Wendy, John, and Michael. In *Alice in Wonderland*, the Queen of Hearts, the ultimate representation of adult power, is childlike in her irrational temper. The reader begins to look to the child for guidance and rationality through a text full of unreliable and irrational characters. Reading the narrative, the reader becomes frustrated with the non-progressive time that reappears throughout the narrative, but Wendy and Alice fearlessly continue to move toward the narrative end. In effect, Wendy and Alice become models for how society should be: willing to accept the teleological temporality of the real world. The true victims of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* are not Alice and Wendy, but the rest of the characters, representative of both the authors themselves and society at large, who are trapped in a non-progressive state.

### **Victorian Fear of the Non-Progressive Future**

The Victorians feared that they would become trapped in non-progressive movements like Mr. and Mrs. Darling because of the heightened mechanical nature and faster pace of their society. As a result, Victorians began predicting that the future would be apocalyptic, since mechanization would continue to take over their landscape and way of living. Frank Kermode, in his book *The Sense of an Ending*, looks at the significance of repeated predictions of apocalyptic endings throughout history. He observes that predictions of apocalypses tend to occur during a period of transition. Living in what Victorian critics themselves termed an Age of Transition, many Victorians believed they were fast approaching an apocalyptic end, especially given the industrial mechanization and pollution taking over the people and their cities. Earlier in “Signs of the Times,” Carlyle discusses the ridiculousness of apocalyptic theories, saying, “How often have we heard, for the last fifty years, that the country was wrecked, and fast sinking; whereas, up to this date, the country is entire and afloat” (1). Carlyle mocks his own society for being so obsessed with the idea that “a time of unmixed evil” (1) is upon them. Greg similarly counters critics who assume that “England is going to the dogs” (*Essays*).

However, for many of Carlyle’s contemporaries, the idea that their rapidly changing world was speeding towards an apocalyptic end was very much a reality. In “The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century,” Ruskin compares the different descriptions of clouds in prose and diary entries, and compares their shape and appearances with those he observes above the modern English landscape. He first describes the beauty of clouds. His beautiful and romantic description of the movement and shape of clouds in the sky sharply contrasts with Ruskin’s diary entry in July of 1871 when he says, “But mere smoke would not blow to and fro in that wild way. It looks more to me as if it were made of dead men’s souls” (23). The words “to and fro” clearly mark the main point of Ruskin’s concern. Ruskin’s clouds never move away, but agitatedly back and forth. Ruskin not only fears the darkening landscape, but the agitated

stagnation and non-progression that comes with it. Like Greg, Ruskin is uneasy about non-progression, be it moving back and forth on the train between home and work, or watching anxiously as the familiar landscape becomes something alien.

Ruskin's main fear is not the smoke itself, but the state that it is in: the fact that it has no direction to move in, and no orientation upon the landscape below it. Alice similarly demonstrates her desire for a direction when listening to the Mouse's story in the chapter 'The Caucus Race and a Long Tale.' The Mouse begins telling a nonsensical story to Alice, but runs away in fear after Alice mentions her cat, and never finishes the story. Alice says, "Please come back, and finish your story!" (29). However, the Mouse only continues to walk in the opposite direction. The other characters soon leave her after realizing that she is talking about a hungry cat, and she is "soon left alone" (29). Without anyone to relate her home to, Alice finds herself lost in an unfamiliar landscape. She begins to cry, saying, "I wonder if I shall ever see you [Dinah] any more!" (30). Having no sense of an ending, Alice feels lost and alone in Wonderland. However, when she hears footsteps, she looks "eagerly, half hoping that the Mouse had changed his mind, and was coming back to finish his story" (30). Alice is comforted by the fact that she will be given an ending, even if it is not directly her own.

Later in the novel, Alice cannot describe who she is, since her body has not adjusted to the Wonderland temporality. Throughout the novel, Alice frequently changes shape, disrupting her normal progression from childhood to adulthood. When the Caterpillar asks who she is, Alice confusedly replies, "I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then" (41 original emphasis). Alice has no way of describing herself because her natural place in the progression of growth has been disrupted. She knows who she *was*, but has no prediction of who she *will be*. She is missing an ending, and therefore cannot tell the Caterpillar who she is since she has lost the ability to

anticipate the future. Alice's frustration with Wonderland's inability to formulate a temporal conclusion indicates her need to shape a narrative structure. Like Kermode theorizes, humans need to believe in an ending in order to place themselves temporally.

The journey to Neverland exemplifies Wendy's need for an end, and for a need to structure the passing of time. While flying to the island, Wendy wonders how long ago they left, saying "Not so long ago. But how long ago? They were flying over the sea before this thought began to disturb Wendy seriously" (38). Because she cannot track the progression of time and distance, Wendy begins to worry. She soon realizes that Peter has no sense of a linear progression:

[Peter] could go so much faster than they that he would suddenly shoot out of sight, to have some adventure in which they had no share. He would come down laughing over something fearfully funny he had been saying to a star, but he had already forgotten what it was, or he would come up with mermaid scales still sticking to him, and yet not be able to say for certain what had been happening (40).

Peter jumps out of the present adventure to begin another, without finishing the first. He leaves the flight without a conclusion, and disconnects one moment from the next by forgetting the past. Not only does Peter forget his adventures, but he also forgets the Darling children. Wendy observes, "Indeed, sometimes when he returned he did not remember them, at least not well. Wendy was sure of it" (40). This too disturbs Wendy, since begins to understand that because Peter himself does not have a definite end, he lives without anticipating a conclusion to his adventures.

For the Victorians, Peter's character is representative of the danger that the new, fast-paced lifestyle holds. Greg worried about children growing up society's "atmosphere of excitement," which could potentially sap their "solidity and strength of mind," leading children and adults alike on a path towards an "unsound" mental and moral condition ("High Pressure"). To some extent, Peter encompasses the degenerative future of childhood that Greg envisions;

Peter has grown up in an “atmosphere of excitement,” or the new faster-paced lifestyle that Neverland represents. Therefore, if “solidity and strength of mind” is indicative of a person’s ability to see beyond the present moment, and responsibly plan for the future, Peter has developed into exactly what Greg fears. Though perhaps Peter’s way of living is appealing, since he does not have to worry about the future, or remember what he has lost in the past, he has no direction or orientation. Like the Wonderland characters, which represent the mechanization of the Victorian body, Peter represents the degeneration of childhood in the loss of a societal past and future.

Like Alice finding herself lost and alone in an unfamiliar environment, Wendy arrives on the island and begins to fear that she has lost her ability to place herself temporally and spatially, finding herself in an unfamiliar environment. Flying over the island, the pirates shoot at them with a cannon and “the echoes seemed to cry savagely, ‘Where are they, where are they, where are they?’” After the cannon shoots into the air, “John was treading the air mechanically, and Michael without knowing how to float was floating” (47). Entering the island, neither John nor Michael is affected by the question of where they are, and when their journey will end. Instead, they take up the clock-like movement of the island. Wendy becomes lost in the darkness, intensifying her fear that the flight will have no conclusive end. Because Wendy, unlike her brothers, who accept the mechanical rotations of the island, needs an end, she continues to fly, “staggering in her flight” following Tinkerbell “to her doom” (48). Wendy’s “doom” is the end she is searching for. Tinkerbell leads her to the Lost Boys, where she tricks Tootles into shooting Wendy with an arrow, and Wendy falls to the ground. Her fall both marks the end to her journey and pinpoints her location, so that she no longer feels lost temporally or spatially. Unlike her brothers who immediately fall into the circular movement of the island, Wendy continues to be lost on the island until she finds a definite conclusion. Like the Victorians predicting an

apocalyptic ending, Wendy can only stop circling the island, becoming a part of its mechanism, if she finds a mortal end.

### **Mechanization of Wonderland and Neverland**

Wonderland and Neverland become mechanical, revolving clock-like entities, representing the Victorian fear of the new fast-paced lifestyle regulating a perpetual, mindless movement. Within Wonderland, the tea-table at the Mad Tea Party and the spontaneous movement of the tea party's characters emulate a clock mechanism, replacing the broken watch of the Hatter, while the characters in Neverland move circularly around the island at the same rate, simulating the motion of a ticking clock. Significantly, although the table is "laid for a great many more than three" (60), it has only three occupants symbolizing the hour hand, minute hand, and second hand. When Alice approaches the table, the characters cry out, "No room! No room!" before Alice sits down, because she would throw off their revolution around the "dial." The Hatter, Dormouse, and March Hare must "keep moving round" (64) in order to literally "keep the time." In Neverland, the circular movement of the characters around the island must keep going as well, since they are perpetually searching for that which is directly ahead of them. However, because they are caught in a clock mechanism, they cannot adjust their pace to end their search for the other. Therefore, though the reader, Alice, and Wendy progress to the tick of the Wonderland and Neverland clock simulacra, the physical bodies that make up the clock do not. The characters become mechanisms of the clock, functioning to perpetuate the narrative's passing of time, but not progressing outside of their rotations themselves.

As soon as Wendy and her brothers arrive at Neverland, the island begins to emulate the never-ending, rhythmic movement of a ticking clock, representing the mechanization of their age that the Victorians feared was fast approaching. The beginning of the chapter, 'The Island Came True' begins saying, "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 redskins. They were going round and round the island, but they did not meet because all were going at the same rate.” As a physical embodiment of a clock, the individual bodies of the island emulate its circular revolutions, moving in the same direction at the same pace. However, the revolving characters do not function to keep track of the progression of time like a clock in the real world. Though the characters are hunting one another, they will never meet since they are moving at the same pace. Therefore, their movement is non-progressive since the same search will never end.

The ticking sound of the crocodile circling Neverland functions to both disrupt the non-progressive nature of the Neverland mechanism and to complete it. Though Neverland represents the separation of the Victorians from their past, familiar world, time continues to progress at the same, even pace. In *Peter Pan*, the crocodile’s ingested clock haunts Hook, following him around the island as a reminder of his return to the real world conducted by the steady ticking of Time toward death. As an adult, Hook understands the fatal workings of real time; the crocodile for him does not function to prevent growth, but to determine fate, and determine an end. When discussing Hook’s fear of the crocodile, Hook says, “Smee...that crocodile would have had me before this, but by a lucky chance it swallowed a clock which goes tick tick inside it, and so before it can reach me I hear the tick and bolt” (56). Thus, the crocodile’s clock both completes the non-progressive clock mechanism of Neverland, since it prevents Hook’s teleological death, and disrupts it, acting as a reminder of the existence of finite ends. Smee says casually, “Some day...the clock will run down, and then he’ll get you.” Hook responds, wetting his dry lips, “Ay...that’s the fear that haunts me” The ticking sound functions to remind both Hook and the reader of an end: as long as a clock is ticking, the reader knows that time continues to pass in

both of the imaginary worlds. As soon as the clock mechanism of Neverland stops ticking, the characters return to real time, and the narrative concludes.

Although the ticking is not always blatantly apparent in *Alice*, it reappears in the narrative form and poetic rhythm to remind the reader of the approaching end, and to formulate a single, coherent narrative behind the jumpy, spontaneous narrative time and character movement. Ironically, the multiple clocks throughout the story do not tick; the Mad Hatter's broken watch has lost its original function and is used instead as a biscuit to dip into tea (the Hatter exclaims, "I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!"). The White Rabbit's pocket watch functions to keep the White Rabbit in perpetual movement, but fails to instigate punctuality since the Rabbit is perpetually running late. Unlike Neverland, the clocks do not warn the reader of a conclusion, and instead add to the nonsensical movement of the characters. Carroll's tight, rhythmic poetry takes the place of the absent ticking clock. Poems and rhymes break up the text of the narrative, and many of the poems are sung, utilizing rhythm and a repeated chorus. At the Mad Tea Party, the Mad Hatter sings, "Twinkle Twinkle little bat/ how I wonder where you're at" and the Dormouse repeats, "Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle" as though imitating the absent ticking sound of the Hatter's broken watch. The rhythmic dance of the Lobster Quadrille similarly ends with a poem repeating the words "Soo-ooop of the e-e-evening, Beautiful, beautiful Soup!" as though tapping out a rhythm. The characters, including Alice, all run into the next chapter "without waiting for the end of the song" (94). Thus, though the "ends" of the chapters emulate the characters' inability to understand the concept of an end, since the chapters never in fact finish, the "unendedness" and frequent rhythm works to enact a coherent progression through the narrative, pulling both Alice and the reader along until the real end to the story.

The characters in Wonderland represent the mechanization of the Victorian individual, adding to the rhythmic tick of the narrative by emulating the circular motion of a clock. While

the tick of the narrative leads both Alice and the reader toward the end of the novel, the clock-like characters do not progress outside of their circular rotation. Representing the fear of the Victorians, the characters in Wonderland have become mechanisms, and have lost their human quality. Seated around a tea table, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, and the Dormouse move in a circle, existing perpetually at six o'clock teatime. Time, a personified, emotional being, has stopped to progress because it accuses the Hatter to have "murdered the time." Carroll adds to the layers of temporal meaning with word play and puns:

"I don't know what you mean," said Alice.

"Of course you don't!" the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. "I dare say you never even spoke to Time!"

"Perhaps not," Alice cautiously replied; "but I know I have to beat time when I learn music."

"Ah! That accounts for it," said the Hatter. "He wo'n't stand beating. Now if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock." (63)

Each of the characters attaches a different meaning to "beating time." Alice, as a part of the linear, temporal world, takes beating time to mean steady sonic sound of a person's hand or foot, tapping out a progression of "beats" in music. In her view, "beating time" is a way to measure the passing of time. This is why the Hatter does not understand Alice's meaning. "Beating time" for the Hatter could be read with two significations, both of which perform actions against time. The first would be moving at a faster pace than time, as though "beating" it in a race. This definition would be more in line with the movement of the Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse around the table, since move in a quick and spontaneous motion. The second meaning of "beating time" would be an act of violence committed against another feeling being, indicating that Time is human and capable of feeling pain. Time thus becomes unreliable in its ability to slow down, speed up, or tick steadily accordingly to its agitated, emotive body. The misunderstanding

between Alice and the Hatter demonstrates the Hatter's inability to comprehend the linear and progressive nature of time, instead believing it to change moment to moment. Again, because of his mechanization, the Hatter has lost his human ability to participate in the progressive nature of time. He embodies Ruskin's fear of movement "to and fro," unable to exist outside of the agitated movement of the tea party.

The circular movements of the Mad Tea Party characters in Wonderland prevent them from understanding the difference between a beginning and an end, since they neither begin nor end their movement. In Wonderland, the tea party, a traditional British gathering within the intimate space of home, has turned into yet another mechanized structure. The tea party and its emulation of a clock is representative of the pervasion of the mechanization of the workplace and the countryside into the home. Conversation is disrupted by movement, since retaining the clockwork rhythm is more important than retaining a coherent dialogue. Paralleling the jumpy movement of the character bodies, the dialogue at the Mad Tea Party is slow, divergent, and moves in circular directions. Conversations end with more questions, leading to Alice becoming "dreadfully puzzled" (62). Adding to the frustrating stagnancy of the never-ending tea party, the Hatter asks unsolvable riddles:

"Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"

"Come, we shall have some fun now!" thought Alice. "I'm glad they've begun asking riddles – I believe I can guess that," she added aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

After asking, "How is a raven like a writing-desk?" the narrative time slows down, as both the reader and Alice excitedly await the progression of the riddle towards the answer. However, Alice cannot move towards the answer, since the answer does not exist. Similarly, the Dormouse begins to tell a story, telling it jerkily in fast and slow pieces in between naps, and never comes

to the ending. He begins “in a great hurry,” saying, “Once upon a time there were three little sisters...and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie” (65). However, the Dormouse is frequently interrupted with dialogue between Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare. Before he can finish the story, he begins “going off into a doze” (66-67). For Alice, the words “once upon a time” signal the beginning of the story, and she expects the middle and the end to follow. For the Dormouse, however, “once upon a time” is not connected to a narrative structure. Therefore, he lets “once upon a time” stand on its own, going off into a doze.

Like the riddles, the Dormouse misses the point of the story, its ending. Kermode theorizes that the “tock” of a clock is the sonic sense of an ending. He says, “We ask what [a clock] says: and we agree that it says *tick-tock*. By this fiction we humanize it, make it talk our language...*tick* is our word for a physical beginning, *tock* our word for an end” (qtd. in Sherman, 7). In other words, the Mad Hatter’s riddle misses the “tock,” or the “grounding of a central narratological claim” (Sherman 7). Instead, the tea party only moves in “ticks,” as a “succession of small, identical impulses that define (by inference) a succession of small, identical intervals” (Sherman 2). The clock mechanism of the tea party is literally “humanized,” becoming a living breathing rotation; however, the characters of the tea party are not “humanized” since neither they nor the tea party end, emphasized in their absence of a story’s conclusion. Alice finally leaves exasperated at their inability to understand her question: “But what happens when you come to the beginning again?” indicating that time will show traces of the past in the form of dirty dishes and cups. The Hatter acknowledges that they must move as “the things get used up,” but both he and the March Hare are unable to understand Alice’s concept of non-repetitive revolutions. Alice leaves exclaiming, “it’s the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!” (67). Pointedly, the tea party does not end where it should in the narrative: at the end of the chapter.

Alice, Wendy, and Ruskin fear that they will get caught up in the “to and fro” movement of the surrounding landscape. Within both Neverland and Wonderland, characters physically embody the “to and fro” movement that so horrifies Ruskin. Like Ruskin’s description of the “plague-cloud,” characters like the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and the Dormouse in Wonderland and the Lost Boys, Peter Pan, and Hook move agitatedly in non-progressive circles. Reflecting the Victorian frustration with keeping up with a faster tempo and being physically stuck in the past, the mechanized bodies of the characters in Wonderland and Neverland become physical clock revolutions. Because the characters are in constant revolution, they do not have the human ability to shape time, instead existing solely in repetition and circular habits – as seen in Wonderland – or in singular, disconnected moments – as seen in Neverland – becoming human-like mechanisms.

### **The Victorian Development of an Ending to Escape Non-Progression**

Neither the Darlings nor the other characters of Wonderland and Neverland are aware their own mechanization. This is because, as Kermode states, “time cannot be felt as successive” since the end of the story has not been formed. Therefore, “without the sense of passing time one is virtually ceasing to live, one loses ‘contact with reality’” (160). This is the essential problem with the temporalities of Neverland and Wonderland. Characters like the Mad Hatter lose contact with reality because time is not *successive* but *repetitive*, having no end to stop their movement. Similarly, the characters in Neverland have no “sense of passing time” since they have no sense of mortality.

In order to escape the mechanization of their world, Alice, Wendy, and Ruskin structure a sense of passing time. The prediction of an apocalypse is more than just fear of mechanization; it is a way to structure the passing of time by developing a distinctive progression into the future. Kermode goes on to argue that the idea of apocalypse comes from man’s basic need to “imagine

a significance for themselves” (4) in the events of their lives. As Kermode says of philosopher Henri Focillon, “arbitrary chronological divisions – we might simply call them *seacula* – are made to bear the weight of our anxieties and hopes; they are... ‘intemporal,’ but we project them onto history, making it a ‘perpetual calendar of human anxiety’” (11). Humans do this because when men die, “they cannot join the beginning and the end” (4). Death is not an ending, since the dying person cannot actually participate in the moment of death. Because death cannot fulfill the human need for an ending, since humans cannot actually experience the moment of death or predict when it will actually occur, apocalyptic speculations were created to pinpoint exactly *when* we will end and *why*. Theories of the apocalypse thus shape time into a narrative structure that all humans recognize: a beginning, middle, and an end.

Therefore, the human creation of an apocalypse, or an End, exists in order to gain a better sense of where humankind belongs in the greater scheme of things. Mark Currie, in his book *About Time*, discusses the same basic principle in terms of narrative time theory. He introduces the idea that narrative time “lives its experience as if it were recorded in the preterite tense” conceiving of “future actions as things that will make good stories and good memories” (12). In other words, narrative constantly puts present moments (for the reader) into the past by anticipating their significance in the larger narrative temporal structure. For Currie, prolepsis, a term used to describe anticipation or the representation of future events in literature, exemplifies the narrative’s ability to roam temporally. Rather than perceiving narrative only as a kind of writing – which presents the problem of a “determined and accessible future” which cannot exist in real life – he thinks of narrative as a mode of consciousness. Prolepsis is one of the main ways that narrative plays with a temporal structure and further relates itself to mental consciousness. As Currie says, the mind has the ability to “roam” across time, while the body is “stuck” in the present moment. Similarly, narrative (and its characters) can roam across time without sticking

to the past-present-future structure. This gives narrative the power to explore the overlap of temporalities while the body is stuck in the present moment. The ability to roam temporally is the main difference between Peter, and Alice and Wendy. Peter lives a moment-by-moment existence, and therefore has no ability to “roam” across time. Both his body and his mind are “stuck” in the present moment. Unlike Peter, who only has a sense of the present, Alice and Wendy frequently reflect upon their journey, and anticipate its end. As a result, Alice and Wendy are the designated storytellers, since they have a sense of where they belong in the larger narrative structure.

Though Wendy participates in the Neverland mechanism, Wendy never gets stuck mentally or physically circling the island. This is because she is a storyteller, rendering a cohesive structuring of time by understanding the importance of the beginning, middle, and end. When Peter first arrives in the children’s nursery, he asks Wendy to tell him the ending to *Cinderella*. He knows what it is about, asking for her to tell the story “about the prince who couldn’t find the lady who wore the glass slipper” (31). He understands that *Cinderella* is a tale about a “prince” searching for a “lady who wore the glass slipper,” but he has no idea how it begins, or how it ends. Wendy excitedly fills in the story saying, “Peter...that was Cinderella, and he found her, and they lived happy ever after” (31). Unlike Peter, Wendy knows the end of the story. Not only that, but she knows more stories, and how they fit into her understanding of a beginning, middle, and end. Peter decides to take Wendy with him because, as she says, “I know such lots of stories” (31). This fascinates Peter, since he has no natural understanding of how a story is shaped temporally. Wendy understands the importance of the end, living “happy ever after,” while Peter only has a vague idea of what the story is about. As a storyteller, Wendy importantly structures a progression, without getting stuck in the mechanization of Neverland.

The fact that Mr. and Mrs. Darling can no longer progress forward as soon as Wendy leaves emphasizes the importance of Wendy as a storyteller shaping and cohering time. As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Darling discover that the children have flown away to Neverland, Mrs. Darling “never leaves the house,” since she spends all her time making sure that “all the beds are aired” and that the “window is open” (141). Because Wendy is the storyteller, controlling the structure of the narrative, Mrs. Darling cannot progress without her. She remains stuck in the same time and space without Wendy to move her story forward to the end. Mr. Darling exaggerates the adult inability to progress without the child storytelling figure. Having “thought the matter out with anxious care” after the children flew away, Mr. Darling “went down on all fours and crawled into the [dog] kennel” (142). He becomes representative of the Victorian in perpetual transit, since “every morning the kennel was carried with Mr. Darling in it to a cab, which conveyed him to his office, and he returned home in the same way at six” (412). Without a child storyteller, Mrs. Darling’s life becomes a never-ending repetition, airing the children’s beds, and opening the window, while Mr. Darling goes back and forth between work and home trapped in the same constricted space.

Ruskin is one of the many designated storytellers of his society, preventing his society from becoming like the Darlings. Though Ruskin does not have a “happy ever after” ending in mind, he similarly structures a conclusion to his age to prevent mechanization and an inability to progress, Ruskin must develop an end for his society to move toward. At the end of his lecture, Ruskin warns his listeners,

Remember, for the last twenty years, England...[has] blasphemed the name of God ... Of states in such moral gloom every seer of old predicted the physical gloom, saying, ‘The light shall be darkened in the heavens thereof, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.’ ...The Empire of England, on which formerly the sun never set, has become one on which he never rises”(30)

Though this prediction is frightening, it is better than being left moving “to and fro” without a direction. As Kermode describes, the Victorian period of transition is defined by the projection of a future apocalypse, explaining why Ruskin feels the need to emphasize a certain end. The only future he sees is apocalyptic. Ruskin upholds Kermode’s theory standing physically beneath a darkening sky in the middle of a changing, industrial world.

Ruskin structures a narrative progression of the gradual degeneration of society in order to situate it in time, effectually separating his society from the mechanized movement surrounding them. Though Wendy does not predict an apocalyptic future for her and her brothers, she similarly structures a narrative end in order to prevent mechanization. First, she recounts her and brothers’ origins to the Lost Boys, saying, “Now these three children had a faithful nurse called Nana; but Mr. Darling was angry with her and chained her up in the yard, and so all the children flew away” (75). Similarly, Ruskin recounts how things used to be to his Victorian audience, reminding them of how beautiful the clouds used to appear to the Romantics. He says, “In those old days, when weather was fine, it was luxuriously fine; when it was bad--it was often abominably bad, but it had its fit of temper and was done with it” (4). He places his listeners between the past and the future, allowing them to more clearly see where they stand in a temporal progression. Wendy continues with her story, saying, “Let us now...take a peep into the future” (75). Here, Wendy splits from Ruskin’s prediction that the sun will set on England, instead presenting her listeners with a more hopeful prediction. She says, “See, dear brothers ... there is the window still standing open. Ah, now we are rewarded for our sublime faith in a mother's love.” She ends, saying, “So up they flew to their mummy and daddy, and pen cannot describe the happy scene, over which we draw a veil” (100). Like Ruskin, Wendy has to finish the narrative structure with a prediction of an end, since otherwise her brothers will join the Lost Boys in their mechanical rotation around the island. Similarly, Ruskin uses his prediction of the

apocalypse to give the “to and fro” movement of his mechanical society a direction. However, unlike Ruskin, Wendy returns to a familiar landscape waiting for her in the future. She says the window is “still” standing open, waiting for her and her brothers to return. While Ruskin predicts that the world will continue to become more unfamiliar and alien before it finally collapses, Wendy predicts that a new cycle will begin again, and that the future holds familiarity and a reunion with the things that she once knew.

Because she cannot find an end in the stories of the Dormouse, in the riddles of the Hatter, or in her own growth, Alice stabilizes herself in Wonderland by creating a temporal structure of her own. Describing his theory of narrative time, Currie says that “time is not something which exists in the world and is then reflected in the human mind, but something which arises from human being...and is then projected onto the world” (51). Alice projects the narrative time of Wonderland as soon as she begins to fall down the rabbit hole. The rabbit hole is filled with peculiarities that interest Alice. As she observes, “either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next” (10). When Alice begins to tire of the fall, she starts “dozing off” and begins to “dream that she [is] walking hand in hand with Dinah” (11) before she falls “thump! thump!...upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over” (11). Just as Alice begins to mentally switch into another dream-like temporality, the narrative has to speed up to accommodate her interests, and keep her centered in the temporal world she is about to enter.

The narrative continues to quickly describe cupboards and shelves, slowing down when Alice passes an orange marmalade jar in detail since it catches her interest. Equally, when the Dormouse begins telling his story, Alice attempts to control his narrative time too. When the Dormouse says that the three little girls lived at the bottom of a well, Alice asks, “What did they

live on?” (65) because she takes “a great interest in questions of eating and drinking” (65).

The slow, laborious progression of the narrative soon becomes too frustrating for her since the Dormouse can never adequately answer her questions. As soon as she begins becoming “confused” (66), the story begins to trail off, and Alice leaves. However, because she knows that all stories have an end, she “looked back once or twice, half hoping they would call after her” (67) in expectation of the final “tock” of the Dormouse’s story. The overarching narrative time continues according to Alice’s childish curiosities, progressing at her own time in order for Alice to familiarize herself with the unstructured temporality of Wonderland, and to allow her to find an “end” to the story.

### **Growth and Regeneration Replace an Apocalyptic Ending**

When Alice and Wendy finally do reach the end of the narrative, they find themselves back in the same place as they started. Alice wakes up in her sister’s lap, who was in the middle of giving Alice a lesson at the beginning, while Wendy returns to her nursery bed. It is as though Alice and Wendy have completed their own mechanical revolutions by returning to the beginning of the narrative again. But taking a closer look at the concluding scenes reveals that time has passed between the beginning and end moments. At the beginning of the story, Alice falls asleep thinking about making daisy chains. When Alice wakes up from her dream, her sister is “brushing away some dead leaves that had fluttered down from the trees upon her face.” The season has progressed from spring to fall, indicating that though Alice has returned to the same spot that she left in the beginning, it is not the same time. Upon Wendy’s return, the narrator describes a change in Mrs. Darling saying, “Now that we look at her closely and remember the gaiety of her in the old days, all gone now just because she has lost her babes.” Therefore, Alice and Wendy’s return to the beginning is not the same as the revolutions of Wonderland and Neverland, since time has clearly passed in their absence.

More importantly, the narrative ends with both Alice and Wendy replacing Lewis Carroll and J.M. Barrie as the storytellers. Alice's sister pictures Alice as a grown woman. The narrator says,

Lastly, [Alice's sister] pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children, and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale (110).

The "after-time" is the time beyond the end of the narrative. Instead of losing her childhood as she grows into the future, Alice retains it. She remains Carlyle's temporal being, cohering her past and future selves. As a storyteller, Alice not only coheres the structure of her "strange tale," but coheres the conditions of "childhood" and "adulthood." Therefore, though both novels end where they began, they importantly indicate growth and regeneration as a result of the narratives' cycles. The Wonderland narrative becomes regenerative instead of non-progressive, working to connect the generations of Alice's progeny with the same story, retold beyond Alice's lifetime.

Similarly, at the end of the last chapter, Wendy becomes the storyteller, cohering generations of children with the Neverland narrative. Wendy grows up and has a daughter named Jane. She recounts stories about Peter Pan to her, until Peter himself comes to take Jane away to Neverland. The cycle continues with Jane's daughter, and her daughter's daughter. The story ends saying:

As you look at Wendy you may see her hair becoming white, and her figure little again, for all this happened long ago. Jane is now a common grown-up, with a daughter called Margaret...Peter comes for Margaret and takes her to the Neverland, where she tells him stories about himself, to which he listens eagerly. When Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and so it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless.

The regeneration of children as storytellers continues beyond the narrative of both Wendy and the reader. Though Wendy and Alice eventually must come to a mortal end, the role of the child to cohere time and continue its progression remains in the natural regeneration of humankind.

### **Conclusion**

Therefore, the narratives do not really end at the end, since their retelling continues beyond the limits of the pages. The clock-like motion of Wonderland and Neverland continues, in the cyclical retelling of their story; however, the motion is no longer non-progressive, since it is inextricably tied to the growth and regeneration of children. Alice and Wendy disrupt the mechanical motion of Wonderland and Neverland by structuring it into a story, and using its rotation to cohere generations of individual beginnings and ends into the future. For the reader, Alice and Wendy open up new possibilities to what an ending entails; instead situating life between a fading Romantic past and an apocalyptic future, Alice and Wendy shape time into a teleological infinitude. They cohere not only the beginning and end of the single narrative of which they were a part, but the separated sequences of beginnings and ends through the retelling of the story. The End loses its finite quality, becoming instead a long cycle of regeneration and growth.

Thus, Alice and Wendy as the leading child figures are what Carlyle deems as “the conflux of two eternities,” cohering time in their anticipation of the future and retrospection of the past. As such, Carroll and Barrie recognize the importance of the figure of the child, since the child alone can act as a model for the Victorian reader in their ability to cohere time, grow, and regenerate. Representative of their society’s contemporary “era of transition,” they themselves enter the narrative transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Their journeys to Neverland and Wonderland represent the Victorian’s expansive sense of time and space as they move further away from home on the train. When they arrive in Wonderland and Neverland, Alice and Wendy

continue to participate in the same social frustrations as the Victorian adult reader. As shown through Ruskin's terror of the "to and fro" movement of the "plague-wind," the Victorians felt disoriented with the sudden onset of a faster lifestyle and larger connectivity of space, doubting their place in this new, unfamiliar society. Similarly, upon their arrival at Wonderland and Neverland, both Alice and Wendy feel disoriented and lost, having no way to structure the new temporality. Even more disturbing is the realization that they are surrounded by a mechanistic society that moves for the sake of movement, only upholding a non-progressive rhythm.

Paralleling the Victorian transition into a modern, industrial era, Alice and Wendy must find a new way to structure time.

However, as Lurie states, Alice and Wendy have a natural ability that the adult Victorian reader does not have: as children, they have the ability to grow out of their frustrations, using the non-progressive narrative to regenerate a fluid history of storytelling in the future. Effectually, Alice and Wendy replace Carroll and Barrie as storytellers. In the authors' place is a more easily believable figure to look to for hope: the fluid and growing child. As growing children, Alice and Wendy have an advantage over the adult Victorian reader. While adults rely on past habits to move into the future, Alice and Wendy rely on their natural understanding of a story, knowing that the end must inevitably follow the beginning. Neither Alice nor Wendy is afraid of the future, or the fast approaching transition into adulthood, since both know that they will retain the "simple and loving heart" of their childhood, and that the future can only bring more life. In this, Alice and Wendy offer the Victorians a different end. Instead of perpetuating the historic cycle of apocalyptic predictions, Alice and Wendy opt for a regenerative conclusion. The narrative ends leaving the Victorian readers with a choice: either they can continue to live mechanistically, trapped "in the midst" between a nostalgic past and dark apocalyptic predictions, or they can continue to grow progressively and regeneratively into the future.