

The Shadow of the Object in *Peter Pan*

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J.M. BARRIE, particularly in his fantasy novel *Peter Pan*, which is the focus here, arrives late on the late-Victorian scene of eroticized childhood.¹ Barrie's work joins a much-discussed line in British literature, which includes such works as Swinburne's "The Flogging-Bock" and Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, that portrays child beating as erotic (Kincaid, *Annoying* 235–37) and that, more importantly, sutures mainstream culture to what James Kincaid calls the "long pornographic tradition" of erotic child abuse (236; and see Marcus 60–61). That is not to say that there is anything pornographic about *Peter Pan* (the play or the book), which always hints ironically instead, if at length. *Peter Pan*, and Barrie's earlier works on which

¹ Peter Pan the character is an infant in Barrie's 1902 novel, *The Little White Bird*; Barrie staged *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* in December, 1904, where Peter is a young child; the play formed the basis of the novel, which appeared in 1911 as *Peter and Wendy*, was subsequently retitled *Peter Pan and Wendy*, and finally retitled as *Peter Pan*. These are not versions of one story but different works with their own features; nonetheless they show that the idea of Peter engages Barrie persistently in particular ways. My analysis is based largely on the 1911 novel, *Peter Pan*, but given the object relations analysis to follow, it is worth noting that Barrie implicitly connects the child Peter of the novel with the infant Peter of *The Little White Bird*.

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it is based (notably *The Little White Bird*), share the more knowing and suggestive fascination with perverse sexuality, including the sexualization of children, found in Charles Dodgson's photography, Oscar Wilde's fairy tales, and John Everett Millais's painting "The Woodsman's Daughter," to name some usual suspects.² Barrie is at once knowing about his interest in the sexualization of children—unable to resist puns and allusions to a painful and complex psychological landscape—and elusive about it or is willing to hide from his self-knowledge through dismissal and humour. Barrie's defensiveness is built in to the subject matter of perverse sexuality. Steven Marcus concludes that the Victorian literature of flagellation in particular "represents a kind of last-ditch compromise with and defense against homosexuality" (260): it expresses a wish, conscious or not, for identification with a boy who is being beaten, "that is, loved—by another man" (260). This wish is strong in Barrie, but behind it lies an even earlier infantile moment, whose construction (and concealment) is one of the objects of Barrie's work. For one thing that differentiates Barrie's episteme from that of earlier British writers preoccupied with child sexuality is the rise in late Victorian-modernism's culture of understanding early childhood psychology and its relation to linguistics.

This new understanding of the child mind both allows a new reading of Barrie and opens directions for reconsidering perverse sexuality in late Victorian-modern literature. I argue here that Barrie is concerned with infantile sounds that reflect psychological crises and that he uses material features of written language, such as its shapes, sounds, and stresses, to construct a psychological portrait of the infantile mind. Barrie's interest in symptomatic language differs from the general modernist preoccupation with psychology and with linguistics. While early modernist literature uses Oedipal paradigms explicitly, as Joseph Conrad does in *Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* for example, or as Virginia Woolf does in the opening scene of *To the Lighthouse*, *Peter Pan* is governed by paradigms that define Barrie psychologically and that reflect preverbal conflicts of early infancy. When Wendy gives Peter a thimble instead of a kiss because he does not know the word "kiss" (*Peter Pan* 25), their exchange suggests a libidinal reading of the arbitrariness of language, so that when the acorn button Peter gives Wendy in return, and which she wears around her neck on a string, saves her from the Lost Boys' arrow, we see (the arrow of) eros attracted

² For a general discussion of the perverse sexuality of Dodgson's photographs, see Carol Mavor, *Pleasures Taken*, chapter 1. Mavor rightly says that, confronted with the taboo subject of child sexualization, many critics refuse to "see" the work they discuss (*Pleasures* 9).

to and fended off by the physical object that represents the arbitrariness of language: for Barrie the physical features that make language arbitrary also make it sexual. Modernist literature is also often interested in material qualities of language (as in Guillaume Apollinaire's calligrammes, Marcel Duchamp's readymade puns,³ and F.T. Marinetti's tin books, to name three different kinds), but Barrie's text develops an idea about the place of sound and shape in infantile consciousness. For many writers of the period, material features of language seem to offer a sanctuary from psychological motivation because they are understood to be mechanical and non-semantic and so are indifferent to psychodynamic logics. But as a line of thought in Freudian and post-Freudian analysis has argued, the indifferent physical properties of language often carry psychological meanings. The visibility of such features in a text is often motivated by thematic concerns in the text or in its contexts: something makes a letter or a sound appear meaningful as an object to begin with. Barrie's work is symptomatic of his ambivalence about crises of early childhood, particularly the crisis of division from infantile narcissism as it is expressed by the body. Because for Barrie the body's relation to objects that enter and exit the body, such as food and urine, is tied with the infant's early struggle for autonomy, for him the self is always already soiled, contaminated by its contact with the physical world. Reading Barrie this way, we can argue that he deserves a more prominent place in modernist history as a psychologist and linguist and see his work as a theatre for the performance of psychological linguistic anxiety. This essay suggests a new reading of *Peter Pan* along these lines and also reaffirms the place of symptomatic reading in modernism, particularly in the context of the materiality or physicality of language, a symptomatics that the current interest in physical aspects of text and in objects—or "thing theory"—has challenged.⁴ We can readily agree that modernism is interested in the object or thing, so long as we also note

3 See Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp* (1998).

4 For a concentrated attack on symptomatics, see Steven Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading" (2009). Their target is in part the cultural materialism of Fredric Jameson, who made famously symptomatic arguments in his postmodernism essay (for example, that flattened architecture is symptomatic of the waning of affect in late capitalism). The critique of materialist symptomatics such as Jameson's implicitly defends "things" from personal and political psychology so they can just be things again. The interest in "thing theory" has flourished in nineteenth century studies, but it is also important in scholarship of modernism in the work of several scholars; see John Frow, "A pebble, a Camera, a Man who Turns into a Telegraph Pole" (2001), and John Plotz, "Can the Sofa Speak? A Look at Thing Theory" (2005).

the way in which such materiality is read in this period symptomatically through infantile psychology and linguistics.

Barrie at the turn of the century is in good company when he rethinks psychology in (partly) material terms. Freud is famously interested in materiality in his project of the 1890s to develop “a scientific psychology” based on the assumption that the mind and language have material aspects. Language has visible and sonorous bodies that can be thought to belong to it and without which there cannot be language. So Freud imagines linguistic and emotional “residues” in the brain that help construct psychic objects and bring them to consciousness:

Verbal residues are derived primarily from auditory perceptions, so that the system Pcs. [preconscious] has, as it were, a special sensory source. The visual components of word-presentations are secondary, acquired through reading.... In essence a word is after all the mnemonic residue of a word that has been heard.... Thinking in pictures is, therefore, only a very incomplete form of becoming conscious.... [I]t stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words, and it is unquestionably older than the latter both ontogenetically and phylogenetically. (*The Ego and the Id* 20–21)

Freud already posits this relation between “verbal residues” and sound in his 1891 study of aphasia. His *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) aims to produce a material model of the mind, and his and Josef Breuer’s interesting early work on hysteria (*Studies on Hysteria* [1895]) focuses on lesions on the surface of the brain to explain psychic conditions. The German judge Daniel Paul Schreber’s independent, paranoid fantasy from the turn of the century, *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (1903), imagines a cosmic brain that connects him and God in a network of sunrays or neurons and that communicates to him by means of a material “basic language” which he could feel pounding on his body. This vision of mind, among other of Schreber’s thoughts, anticipates and in some ways upstages Freud, as Freud recognized in his study of Schreber, and demonstrates how available a material vision of language is at the time. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, following Freud’s interest in psychic materiality, construct a model of thought based on the sound associations of words, and this model leads them to find psychic “crypts,” hidden spaces created by and within language, spaces in which then repressed or censored thought may be hidden. Their “magic word,” the word that unlocks the connections between chains of associations in their reading of the Wolf Man, is a physical feature of language that, in a somewhat confusing circularity in

which Barrie's thinking also participates, subtends and so makes thought possible. To restate this confusing circularity: the words that make up thought are needed to form physical associations that make them possible. This chiasmic relation between material states and what are traditionally perceived to be epiphenomenal states also beguiles philosophers of language in the period who are working on the problem as if it were from the other side, from models of material language that may reflect on the mind. Ferdinand de Saussure, notably, focuses on material sounds in his notebooks—which date to 1906 and are discussed in Jean Starobinski's *Les mots sous les mots* (1971)—finding anagrams based on sounds of words that form a psychic network. His secret anagrams and Abraham and Torok's magic word mine the same vein for the same construction of language. Charles Sanders Peirce's late nineteenth-century idea that the world is a psychophysical continuum—that matter is “congealed” mind and that forms are a property of matter—shows the connection between modern linguistic and psychological obsessions with mental materiality and the historically dominant tradition of Western metaphysics, from Plato to Hegel. Barrie is not a philosopher of language, nor a psychologist, but his preoccupations with material thought and with the embodiment of language make his work, and *Peter Pan* in particular, a part of this large and now familiar modernist project, from Peirce and Freud to Abraham and Torok, to understand psychology and linguistics materially.

A case in point is the centrality of the shadow as a trope for thought in Barrie's writing. The shadow is both a physical object and a kind of negative reflection, a second self that is yet not part of the self. It becomes famous after it makes an appearance in *Peter Pan*, where it is cut off by a window. I read the shadow in the novel below, but I ask for now why the shadow should persist in Barrie's consciousness years later and why it should be Peter's shadow in particular that persists. Consider then, by way of an introduction to Barrie's complicated way of thinking, an episode from his personal life in which he expresses this interest in the shadow. In a 1934 letter to Kathleen Bruce, Lady Hilton Young, Barrie writes that “My shadow of course is not really mine but represents the intrusion of Miss Bergner” (28 January 1934, *Letters* 55). He is referring to a portrait of himself painted that year by Peter Scott, Kathleen Bruce's son; Bergner is the person who bought the painting. In the painting, Barrie sits next to a burning fireplace in the large sunken vestibule of his apartment at Adelphi Terrace House in London and casts a dark, delineated shadow on the wall.⁵

⁵ The painting is now at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (Bibliographic Record Number 2042461; Image ID Number 1167280).

It is clearly his own shadow—the painted shadow of his painted self—so it is not Bergner’s shadow except in the sense that she purchased it. Bergner’s purchase threatens figuratively to separate Barrie from the painting, a kind of death beyond the actual picture that rhymes well with the deep shadow. It is Barrie’s shadow, but the theatrical threat of death is from beyond the picture, from Miss Bergner, who would take Peter’s painting away. The scene also evokes death because Barrie was Peter Scott’s godfather and was connected with him by a letter that came to Barrie as it were from beyond the frame, from the shadow world. Peter’s father was Kathleen Bruce’s former husband, Captain Robert Falcon Scott, the Scott who died on his way back from the South Pole. Robert Scott’s body was discovered in his tent six months after his death, and among the letters he left there, knowing he would not make it alive, was one for Barrie, asking him to help his son Peter. In an earlier letter to Peter’s mother, Barrie had written that he envies Peter’s skill at painting because he himself had wanted to become an artist, “but I always lost my paint box” (14 October 1926, *Letters* 54). Between that first letter, suggesting a desire to have been Peter, and the second letter about the shadow, which invokes Barrie’s role as Peter’s dead father—the protective godfather invested with this responsibility to take his place by the dead father—Kathleen Bruce had moved into Barrie’s former house at Leinster Corner, so that Barrie’s letter of 1934 reflects also that interchanging of places. His letter would have been addressed to her at his former address. The parallel with Peter Scott is strengthened further because Barrie too was a Scott, being famously Scottish, and was already to be known to posterity by his own brainchild, also named Peter.

The complicated set of substitutions both explained and assumed in the letter are characteristic of Barrie: he sees himself connected through death to people and to a world that can write from the grave. Given these substitutions he is, in a sense that pervades his work, reading his own letters from the beyond or writing himself from the grave. The dead world, or the world we may imagine to exist in a never-never-land beyond life, easily intrudes into his own and is entwined with his identity; to know himself, Barrie must learn to read backwards from the shadows of the real. “I often sit and look at Fowey in Bradshaw’s map, which means that I have a hankering that way,” he writes his friend, Arthur Quiller-Couch who is in Fowey, Cornwall (14 August 1892, *Letters* 4): he is reading his own intentions backwards. To know his mind he must read his own unintended

A photograph of it is available from Beinecke online at <http://130.132.81.65/PATREQIMGX09/size4/D1440/1167280.jpg>.

reflections. Like the shadow of his brother David, who died when both David and J. M. Barrie were children, and whom readers have always seen to be the inspiration for Peter Pan (Mavor, *Reading* 200), Scott's (père et fils's) shadow is actually Barrie's shadow, a part of himself as well as outside himself. The shadow plays for Barrie the part of a dead double that is and is not separate from oneself. So when, in *Peter Pan*, Peter's shadow is cut off by the window through which Peter tries to escape the Darling children's home, the shadow represents, as we shall see, not so much another self to which Peter is connected or with which he identifies but as a part of the self from which one both wants and does not want to be apart.⁶ The drama of that ambivalence, and the returns and departures, the cutting and repair that perform it, like the drama of Barrie's shadow in Scott's painting, express a psychological condition fundamental to that book and one that implicitly constructs for Barrie a psycho-textual theory. According to Barrie's implicit theory, the shadow in *Peter Pan* is a mental object that helps perform a drama of attachment and separation and as such makes legible one's own psychological investments. By expressing his psychological struggles through relations to immaterial mental objects, the shadow for Barrie helps dramatize a form of modern object relations psychology. This theory would not have been possible in the mid-Victorian era, but it emerges in the modernist-Victorian era along with new psychological and linguistic constructions of mind.

The story of *Peter Pan* is plainly Oedipal, although my take on it is more textual than in the general reading; at the same time, the story also dramatizes the particular paranoid fantasy of the internalization of persecutory objects theorized by Freud, Melanie Klein, and Wilfred Bion. These two psychological paradigms compete in the work, which produces in the process a proto-object relations theory of language. For Barrie this theory is important because his main topic, as I argue here, is the infantile mind and the conflicts that terrify it. I assume here the Kleinian argument that the child reacts to separation from the mother's breast with aggression directed at the mother and projected on objects from which the child then fears retribution; I also assume with Donald Winnicott's theory in mind that the point of Neverland is to dramatize a transitional phenomenon where the child's ideas of the world can be negotiated ("Transitional Objects" 24); but mainly I rely on Klein's and Bion's arguments that aggression that is projected on to objects, or "projective identification," gives

6 Peter "is both an image and an object in a collagist sense, inhabiting an indeterminate space" (Yue 120–21).

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these objects a life of their own: the child imagines these persecuting objects to return into the body of the mother/child (Bion, “Development” 36–37). For Barrie, these objects return as ideas that give thought physical properties; the physicality of language in thought is then symptomatic of psychic struggle, producing a prototheory of language as in part the residue of such struggle. What’s at stake in this argument, then, is an enlarged and redirected reading of this seminal text, a demonstration of symptomatic ideas of language important in the period, and also a reconsideration of the nature and reach of psychoanalytic insight in the period as it relates to textual construction. Barrie’s writing helps make the case for an explicitly textual object relations psychology in literary modernism and with it for popular modernism’s explicit interest in the place of textual mechanisms in the mind.

The plot of the 1911 prose version of *Peter Pan* combines a sexual obsession with children with the family romance. One day Peter arrives at the window of the Darling family home in London and teaches the children, Wendy, John, and Michael, to fly. He takes them away from their ineffectual and fearful father across an ocean to Neverland, a vaguely Caribbean island that is said to materialize their fantasies. There wild beasts, redskins, and pirates stalk each other in a violent circle. The Darling children join the “lost boys” abandoned by their parents (28) and live in a house under the ground headed by their new play-father Peter, with Wendy as their mother. But the pirates, led by Captain Hook, who mirrors Mr Darling and wants Wendy to mother the pirates, attack and capture the children and take them to their ship. Peter liberates the children and causes Hook’s death by alligator. The children return home to London to grow up, and the timeless Peter—whose life under the sign of never in itself constitutes a queer refusal of heteronormative society⁷—comes to visit Wendy’s daughters and their daughters and to bring them for spring-cleaning visits to Neverland.

The critical literature remarks on the rudiments of the Oedipal structure of the work—Peter’s struggle to take the place of the father/Hook and to reclaim Wendy—and connects it with Barrie’s life.⁸ When Barrie was

7 In *Time Binds*, Elizabeth Freeman argues that queerness is distinguished by “failures or refusals to inhabit middle- and upper-middle-class habitus [which] appear as, precisely, asynchrony, or time out of joint” (19). While Peter is supposed to be interested in Wendy and in future Wendys, his rejection of such habitus signifies his lack of fit with, and rejection of, expectations not only that he would grow up but also that he would be sexually interested in women. His more meaningful sexualized interactions are with the other boys and with Hook.

8 The traditional case for reading *Peter Pan* psychoanalytically was made by Jacqueline Rose, who argues against the romantic reading of children in general.

six, his twelve-year-old brother David died in an accident. Barrie's mother withdrew into a long depression and, Barrie recalls in a biography of his mother, did not see Barrie vividly no matter how much he tried to fill David's place. After Barrie's wife, the stage actress Mary Ansell, divorced him (in part, the biography suggests, because he was not able to have sexual relations with her), Barrie attached himself to and later adopted the five Llewelyn Davies boys he met in Kensington Gardens and based the story of Peter Pan on his play adventures with them (Ormond 107). In those adventures he played a pirate, "Captain Swarthy," an alternative father figure who displaced the boys' father. After the parents died, Barrie apparently altered Sylvia Llewelyn Davies's will to obtain custody of the children. Peter Pan is a lost boy—like David (so commentators say) or like Barrie himself, who could neither take his brother's place nor have children himself—unable to resume life in London and living in the dead world of Neverland. In the work Barrie is said to attempt an Oedipal coup to recover the lost relation to his mother.

This familiar struggle with the father is worked out in the plot (which the criticism has addressed) and also textually, and its textual performance begins to unravel the primacy of the Oedipal narrative. The textual detail that figures the Oedipal in the work leads to an earlier and more rudimentary struggle over unity and division in the text. Peter's identity is predicated on an imagined and conflicted sexuality. He is everywhere described as "cocky" and "crowing" ("bird-turned-little-boy-phallus," as Mavor rightly says [*Reading* 194]). This playground pun points to the linguistic nature of the object at hand. When we meet Peter, he "crows" about his cleverness, and the narrator admits that "there never was a cockier boy" (24). We're told repeatedly that Peter "crows" to announce his arrival or his identity (60, 86) or that his crowing could betray his location (82). As the narrator explains, this cockiness is related to Peter's size and defines his relation with the other father of Neverland:

Peter was such a small boy that one tends to wonder at the man's hatred of him.... The truth is that there was something about Peter which goaded the pirate captain to frenzy. It was not his courage, it was not his engaging appearance, it was not—. There is no beating around the bush, for we know quite well what it was, and have got to tell. It was Peter's cockiness. (115–16)

Even a simple summary of the plot is psychological (Meisel 545). For a summary of some psychoanalytic readings of children's literature that has bearing on the psychological reception of Barrie, see Kidd 111–15.

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Peter's struggle with Hook revolves on his cockiness and takes Hook on in the same place. The location of this cockiness is in question: syntactically the point is that there's no trouble finding this "something," but the sentence structure shows a good deal of beating around the bush in finding it. While a prime function of this cockiness is to locate Peter, in fact the peter is hard to locate in this text and becomes a feature of the text's fantastic life. When Peter describes Hook to John, we learn that Hook is the most fearsome of all pirates:

"What is he like? Is he big?"

"He is not so big as he was."

"How do you mean?"

"I cut off a bit of him."

"You!"

"Yes, me," said Peter sharply.

"I wasn't meaning to be disrespectful."

"Oh, all right."

"But, I say, what bit?"

"His right hand." (42)

It was on account of Peter ("sharply") that Hook got his name: "'Twas he cut off my arm,'" as Hook says later. "He brandished the hook threateningly. 'I've waited long to shake his hand with this. Oh, I'll tear him'" (54). Peter cut Hook in their power struggle, and Hook threatens to tear him in return. For this reason, when facing his own shortcomings, Hook acts the emasculated man: "Hook was as impotent as he was damp, and he fell forward like a cut flower" (131).

And yet it is hard not to see that this passage is also about Peter himself ("You!" ... "Yes, me"), who is in position to reveal to the other children whether he is "big." The nature of the exchange, in a childhood setting, is not so much about the father as about the desire to measure up to him. As the children's symbolic father, a role he plays especially at meals and when dealing with the redskins (95–96), Peter corrects the lost boys in unusual ways. The topic comes up in an episode that again concerns the question of size, and again the power of the father is the power to emasculate, a power Peter appropriates in his fantasy of being himself the father (it was he who cut off the bit of him).

The lost boys use hollow trees to enter their underground house. When Peter brings Wendy, John, and Michael to the island, he measures them for their own trees. "Unless your tree fitted you it was difficult to go up

and down,” explains the narrator; to go up and down you had to draw your breath in and out (69). You have to fit your tree properly, “but if you are bumpy in awkward places or the only available tree is an odd shape, Peter does some things to you, and after that you fit” (70). It’s clear enough what it means to be bumpy in an awkward place and, in consequence, what “things” Peter does to make you fit. It is John, as it turns out, who needs to be “altered a little.”

This familiar version of the Oedipal model is complicated when Wendy and Peter discuss the name “Peter Pan.” This exchange is a psychologically significant event in the book that signals a register different from the symbolic one that characterizes the accounts of Oedipal struggles (about the big gun, bumps in awkward places, and the like). Wendy’s mother, Mrs Darling, had early on come across Peter’s name scrawled all over the children’s thoughts: “The name stood out in bolder letters than any of the other words, and as Mrs Darling gazed she felt that it had an oddly cocky appearance” (7). The name is like the other words, except that it is written in bolder letters and so stands out. Like the awkward bumpiness, this bold standing out is phallic but not mimetic. Then, when Peter appears, he asks Wendy her name.

“Wendy Moira Angela Darling,” she replied with some satisfaction. “What’s your name?”

“Peter Pan.”

She was already sure that he must be Peter, but it did seem a comparatively short name.

“Is that all?”

“Yes,” he said rather sharply. He felt for the first time that it was a shortish name.

“I’m so sorry,” said Wendy Moira Angela.

“It doesn’t matter,” Peter gulped. (23)

Peter’s name is both cocky and short, disappointingly so.⁹ For Wendy too it is connected with letters, as the rest of the passage shows. She asks Peter where he lives, and he replies (in a famous line) that it’s “Second to the right ... and then straight on till morning.” She thinks it a funny address: “Is that what they put on the letters?” Peter wishes she had not mentioned

⁹ Peter’s name is “comparatively short,” which leads us to ask with whom Wendy compares it. The immediate answer is her own long name, but unless she had a longer peter than Peter’s, the sexual comparison asks us to find someone else she knows about whose peter is the object of comparison. Barrie’s implication is that she knows Mr Darling’s/Hook’s big gun already. Barrie’s choice of the word “comparatively” reflects his sexual humour.

any letters. “Don’t get any letters,” he says contemptuously (23). While these letters are not the same kind as the other, bold letters, they allow the discussion of letters, which is unaccountably embarrassing, to go on so we are sure to get the point. Here the anxiety of damage and loss to the body/arm expressed in Peter’s treatment of the boys and of Hook is connected with the name (both Peter’s and Hook’s) and with letters. Emasculation is a kind of naming: Peter is his peter, he is the cock that symbolically punished. The name is the peter.¹⁰ The argument that seems to concern an Oedipal relation, then, can now be seen to include object relations: the name is a physical object found in the mind, an imaginary internalized object constructed of standing and bold letters that are like objects found in a drawer.

The connection between the shortness of Peter’s name and its cockiness is simple as an Oedipal problem; it can be understood as a *textual* problem—how its short cockiness is expressed in the letters of the name—when we see that the letters of Peter’s name are related to the new name Peter receives in the fight scene with the pirates later in the story. After Hook kidnaps the children, Peter flies to the pirate ship. He gets on board and then, “every inch of him on tiptoe,” he vanishes into the ship’s cabin (137–38). When a pirate goes to the cabin to fetch a whip for the prisoners, a great crowing sound is heard from inside and the pirate does not return. Another pirate goes to check and reports that the first one is dead, and he finds a terrifying “thing” in the cabin. “There’s something terrible in there,” he says, “the thing you heard crowing” (139). Hook sends another pirate to “fetch me out that doodle-doo,” but he too disappears. Eventually Hook vows to bring “the doodle-doo” out himself. So Peter is called by a new name, the “doodle-doo.”¹¹ The short cocky version of Peter Pan’s name, made of initials that “stand out” in his name, is “PP”; this name is a scribble or doodle that is connected to his new name, the doodle-doo crowing of a rooster. “PP” and the (cock-a-) “doodle-doo” can be understood as homologous when the PP is heard as “pee-pee”: the meaning of the nursery word “pee-pee” as urine is modern, said to date to the early 1920s, but “pee” is the verb meaning “to wet by urinating” in writing as early as 1788.¹² Doodle-doo also suggests the repetition of words in Peter 10 The *OED* dates the meaning of “peter” as “penis” to 1902.

11 While Peter is probably not a “doodle” in the sense of an aimless ink drawing or writing—the *OED* dates this usage to 1937—doodle also means to blow in a bagpipe, for which the *OED* gives none other than Walter Scott’s *Old Mortality* as reference.

12 According to the *OED*, the first recorded use of “peepee” (as opposed to “pee”) is an 1890 U.S. and Jamaican reference to “a very small chicken.” The meaning of

Pan's name and "doo-doo," or nursery-language feces. Feces and the PP are connected in the book in a series of closely related terms: the crowing heard by the pirates is made by a bird they call the "doodle-doo"; the crowing is related to a cock; the cock is related to the penis; the penis is related to urination, or "pee-pee"; the "pee-pee" is related to PP, or Peter Pan's truncated name.¹³ In this way Peter is connected to a bird, not as a poetic trope but as a figure for the soiled body. Hence Peter's flying, which he explains one can do by thinking pretty thoughts, is indeed a thought experiment, an expression of his identity as the diminished penis, a function of the desire to possess the mother and of banishment from her. The impotence and frustration represented by symbolic castration are the psychological condition that requires fantasy, or magical thinking, in the first place, the desire for an unmediated world in which the child is omnipotent, in which wishing or thinking is doing.

Barrie's metonymic series explains the title of his novel *The Little White Bird*, a precursor to *Peter Pan*. Reading *The Little White Bird* in this context helps explain what kind of object PP is in *Peter Pan*. *The Little White Bird* is the story of an unnamed writer who has a special relationship with a boy named David whose mother he befriends. The writer says that Mary, David's mother, had originally thought to write the story herself, and it was to be about a bird, or a child-bird, but instead she had a real child. "In fine, madam, you chose the lower road," the writer says—"and contented yourself with obtaining the Bird" (335). By avoiding the symbolic in favour of the real object, Mary in fact gets the sexual object, or "Bird" (to give someone the bird, or the finger, amounts to the same displacement). The sexually charged object is not the child but the material ("lower") bird which stands in for the child; hence the bird as the object takes on the mother's presumed and projected sexual meanings, the meanings she was to put into words in the book but which led to her giving birth instead. "The saucy words showed

"peep" as "pipe" is very old. The double-P is familiar enough to feature as a joke in *Finnegans Wake* about the double function of the penis (Borg 79). Jacques Derrida takes it as a joke on the father in Freud's 1920 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in "Coming into One's Own" and then in *The Post Card*, where Freud plays the part of the speculating grandfather or *pépé* of psychoanalysis, whose legacy is established through his allegiance with the pleasure principle.

13 I borrow the term "series" from Freud's discussion of the feces-child-penis series in "On Transformations of Instincts as Exemplified in Anal Eroticism"; there is also some relation between Klein's analysis of sadism and incorporation and Deleuze's and Artaud's analysis of the same topic discussed in Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*.

their design plainly through the varnish,” the writer confesses (336), and occasioned the need for sexual correction. “I went to the window because, undoubtedly, it would be easier to address her severely from behind, and I wanted to say something that would sting her,” he says (339). In other words, he wants to spank her. “Though she was agitated and in some fear of me, she was also enjoying herself considerably,” he adds (339).¹⁴ This exchange projects the writer’s wish as fact. It highlights one aspect of the sexual economy of Barrie’s thinking, that the word is more dangerous than the child because of the projection and displacement it entails and that producing this dangerous word, which is a more real object than the child it displaces, then requires punishment.¹⁵ It is the writer, in effect, who expresses the need for punishment for expressing his desire, but, rather than being punished himself for it, the writer imagines himself punishing the mother, as though it were her desire. Elsewhere Barrie similarly imagines, for example, a child who craves physical punishment (“Peterkin”; see Birkin 19–20). Peter the flying boy and cocky bird is, like the little white bird, a metonymic object in a series of substitutions that require correction because the series brings out by association the perverse meanings of the

14 Barrie imagines a similar rivalry with the mother in a passage published in the *Nottingham Journal* in 1884:

Pretty boys are pretty in all circumstances, and this one would look as exquisitely delightful on the floor as when genteelly standing, in his [14] nice little velvet suit with his sweet back to the fireplace, but think of the horror and indignation of his proud and loving mother.... When you leave the house, the pretty boy trips politely to the door and ... holds up his pretty mouth for a pretty kiss. If you wish to continue on visiting terms with his mother you do everything he wishes; if you are determined to remain a man whatever be the consequences, you slap his pretty cheeks very hard while the mother gazes aghast and the father looks another way, admiring your pluck and wishing he had the courage to go and do likewise. It would, on the whole, be a mistake to kill the child outright. (28 January 1884; Birkin 14–15.)

Barrie pretends it is the mother he is after—he would shock her but not kill the child—but clearly the pretty, exquisite, delightful, genteel, and nice person in the passage is the boy. See also Kincaid’s mention of Barrie’s late play *The Boy David* in this context (*Child-Loving* 281).

15 The more dangerous object is not the “real” one but the symbolic, or the real object seen as a symbol. As Barrie writes in *The Little White Bird*, the boy Peter, a prototype of the later Peter Pan who lives in Kensington Gardens, rides a goat around the Gardens at night, “playing sublimely on his pipe” (249)—but “it isn’t a real goat” (257). Nor, we may add, a real pipe (the typical Barrie joke is that he’d rather qualify the goat). The substitution recalls Wendy’s and Peter’s exchanged thimble and acorn, which substitute for the dangerous kisses they represent.

original object choices. A boy is not urine, but the series bird-penis-pee makes this association. Peter then carries out this correction in *Peter Pan*, for example when he removes the bumps “in awkward places,” but this correction actually applies to the writer whose thoughts, after all, are the substance of the book. Peter is an instrument of persecution not of the parent but of the writer who confesses the need to be corrected.

The analysis of Peter’s name moves Barrie’s struggle with identity toward object relations premises and pushes the date of crisis (re)produced in the text back toward infancy.¹⁶ Peter’s theme is that he does not want to grow up—and he does not want sexual relations with women, either with Wendy or with the salacious and violent Tinker Bell. (Unlike the figure in Walt Disney’s 1952 movie, Tinker Bell tries to murder Wendy and uses foul fairy language that Peter refuses to translate, protecting the children from the sexual underside of the mother.) His rejection of desire figures a reversal precisely of the Oedipal wish to grow up and take the place of the father expressed in the text, conditioned by the failure of the Oedipal takeover: the boy’s fear of punishment requires him to deny his desire. But the preoccupations of the text suggest a tension with earlier energies masked by its flexibility and explicitness about the Oedipal paradigm. A significant marker of this earlier crisis, and one of the governing ideas of the book, is the conflict between singularity and plurality, between “one” and “two.” This contest is related directly to the anxiety about growing up/getting up, as in the first line of the book: “All children, except one, grow up” (1). “One” does not change, but two or more do. This is the fantasy of singularity, connected with primary narcissism. They are one. To be two is to enter time and division. Wendy knew she must grow up when she was two: “You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end” (1).¹⁷ So “If you shut your eyes and are a lucky one,” you can see in your mind the mermaids’ lagoon, but “if there could be two moments” the fantasy would become real, and so impossible (77). Likewise the children return home “by two bells that morning” (147), just as they had left by taking “Second to the right, and straight on till morning” (36). Two is a mark of reality, realization, and self-consciousness, and one is a mark of narcissistic power. What angers Peter is fighting “two against one” (81), and that, rather than his pity for Tiger Lily, determines him to liberate her from the pirates. In “A Dedication” to *Peter Pan*, the play, Barrie writes of

16 We can say that in *The Little White Bird*, the bird emerges as a transitional object, one that represents the unity of the baby and the mother (Winnicott, “Use” 96), and that this bird is literalized in the flying children of *Peter Pan*.

17 “Barrie is settled on age two as ‘the beginning of the end,’” as Mavor notes (187).

A significant marker of this earlier crisis, and one of the governing ideas of the book, is the conflict between singularity and plurality.

the Davies boys: “They had a long summer day, and I turned round twice and now they are off to school” (quoted in Kincaid, *Child-Loving* 278). To give just another example, when the pirates tell Wendy that “There’s none to save you now,” Peter replies “There’s one,” and then Hook’s two efforts to speak fail twice and his heart breaks: “twice Hook essayed to speak and twice he failed” (142). Hook’s grownup division fails to break Peter’s narcissism, and it is he who breaks.

With this logic, Peter’s narcissism and the fear of time and of maturation in the work both express a fear of division. Division is separation. Peter’s consistent and irrepressible triumphalism, what Klein calls “manic omnipotence” (“Mourning” 350), supports this challenge to the more traditional paradigm. Manic “triumph” compensates for the child’s inability to restore the lost object or for the child’s fear of that failure. Klein writes:

The desire to control the object, the sadistic gratification of overcoming and humiliating it, of getting the better of it, the *triumph* over it, may enter so strongly into the act of reparation ... that the “benign” circle started by this act becomes broken. The objects which were to be restored change again into persecutors, and in turn paranoid fears are revived. These fears reinforce the paranoid defence mechanisms (of destroying the object) as well as the manic mechanisms. (“Mourning” 351)

The object of fear is division, or separation anxiety, a crisis of infancy. The move from being one to being two is also thematized in the entry into time: two is sequence, where one cannot be. One is an impossible fantasy of wholeness, two a dissolution of the self.¹⁸ To be two is to be in time, to grow up or move in time; once you are two, it’s all over.¹⁹

18 “To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God; but to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial. One is too few, but two are too many” (Haraway 177).

19 Lewis Carroll provides the commentary on growing. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, a source text for *Peter Pan*, Humpty Dumpty suggests Alice should have stopped growing:

“I never ask advice about growing,” Alice said indignantly.

“Too proud?” the other enquired.

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. “I mean,” she said, “that one ca’n’t help growing older.”

“One ca’n’t, perhaps,” said Humpty Dumpty; “but *two* can.” (91)

Late in *Peter Pan*, the grown Wendy protests about growing up that she “couldn’t help it” (167).

We can also date the trauma worked out in the text with the help of another marker of the fear of separation—the interest in sewing, which is otherwise unexplained in the story. Wendy usually sews (24, 72, 79, 98), as does her mother (9). Smee in particular—the lovable pirate who is a mother figure among the pirates—operates the ship’s sewing machine (128), and it is his sewing (important on sailing vessels for the repair of sails) that brings to Hook’s mind that he had “No little children to love me” (130). Sewing or binding with string connects objects together and can be a symbolic way of denying the threat of separation from the mother (Winnicott, “Transitional Objects” 16–17). Both sewing and the tying of the kidnapped children and their chaining on board the ship can be read in that light (119, 131, and see Mavor’s discussion of tying in *Reading Boyishly*). Smee is like a mother because he wants to be connected with children, a connection expressed in sewing. Wendy sews back Peter’s shadow, which was “snapped” off when the nurse Nana the dog slammed the window after him (11). Peter asks what the word “sewn” means, and then dances cockily (“there never was a cockier boy”) once he is reunited with his shadow (24). The anxiety of separation from the narcissistic self, of self-division, that object relations identifies in infancy is expressed here as a separation from one’s shadow, and it can be remedied by sewing the object or tying oneself to it.

These passages, then, suggest that the anxiety addressed in the text is not only Oedipal but goes back to the psychic territory of infantile object relations. The larger question for this reading is how to relate the two psychological discourses of the text, its separation anxiety and the Oedipal struggle with which it is also strongly marked. The answer, to anticipate, is that we see in the sexual threat of the father’s relation to the mother and in his attendant threat of punishment a return to and reinforcement of the earlier separation that ends primary narcissism. As I argue below, when these two separations join together in Barrie’s work, they form a practical theory of text as mental object. Returning to the series of connections constructed through Peter’s name: the raised letters (PP) establish the relation between the penis, children, and feces, which are all imagined to be internal objects. As Klein suggests, this is a normal connection in ego development. For her, Oedipal conflict begins in early infancy, when a sadistic relation to the mother predominates. The child imagines that the father’s penis, excrement, and children are all to be found inside the mother. The child equates these three with food—with what goes into the body (Klein, “Importance” 219). This formulation follows Freud’s argument that in the unconscious, conceptions of feces (and of money, the gift),

“baby,” and “penis” are not well distinguished one from the other and are “easily interchangeable” (“On Transformations” 128). Barrie may not set out to make this connection in these terms, but the relation between several of these elements is strongly marked in *Peter Pan*.

Bion says that the fracturing of the word can be a way of dismembering the penis: a schizophrenic patient who did not understand the word “penis,” Bion says, split it into syllables, and the syllables split into letters. While the letters can have, in themselves, a meaning for the larger interpretative culture, or even for Bion’s patient, the act of splitting a word into pieces, for Bion, may constitute a defense against comprehension (“Notes” 28). Like modern writers who want to believe in non-signifying materiality, Bion’s patient hides from a knowledge he already has. But the symbolic penis is at least in part the father’s penis, and here the prevalence of the sound of P, which often appears in repetitive forms in *Peter Pan*, helps make a phonetic and linguistic connection to the father.²⁰ In this particular sound and letter, so crucial in *Peter Pan*, sound and symbol coincide; I return to this point below. Mrs Darling is “perplex[ed]” to find Peter’s name in the children’s minds, although “She knew of no Peter” (7). She consults Mr Darling, “but he smiled pooh-pooh”: “‘Mark my words,’ he said, ‘it is some nonsense’” (7). They are *his* words that are “marked,” that “stand out” in the mind. The suggestion is that the father’s PP “stands up” and so is marked in the mind. Although Mrs Darling protests she “knew of no Peter” (with the Biblical joke thrown in), it is the making visible of her husband’s peter that is the issue, suggesting exposure to—or at least consciousness on part of the child of—the father’s ability to “stand up” (hence, too, the limpness of Hook as cut flower).

The child-letter connection is made by letters inside the self: according to Klein, the infant imagines the penis to enter its body, and the result is that inside the body there are children. The child identifies the mother’s body invaded by dangerous objects, including the father’s penis, with the child’s own body, which is also seen to be threatened and/or invaded by the father (Klein, “Contribution” 241). In one of Klein’s case studies, for example, a boy empties a drawer in the playroom and identifies a pen found in it with his penis (242). Bion also finds that patients imagine bad objects to be inside them (“Notes” 30). In *Peter Pan* this object relations

20 The “p” sound jokes abound—I mention only two in the text. Roman Jakobson established a connection between “p” sounds and the name of the father—papa, père, pater—in many languages in his classic essay on p and m sounds (“Why ‘Mama’ and ‘Papa?’”). The “m” sound appears in words for mama/mother/mater/mère. He says these sounds appear in historically unrelated languages (538–39).

idea is expressed as concern with the question of the physical location of children and of their sexual production. We have noted the bureau in which Mrs Darling finds traces of Peter in the children's minds: it is also her body that contains the PP of the father/the children, as the two overlap. The nursery, with the famous window through which the children escape, also stands in for the mother from whom they are born. When in Neverland the children are fitted to the trees by which they enter the house underground, we return to this topic.²¹ Symbolic sexual penetration gets the children into the house, but the detailed mechanics of the operation stages a high level of childish confusion on this score. Sex is clearly an energetic exercise that requires heavy breathing, and going up and down, and taking turns. This fantasy of the production of children explains a complementary idea in the book, which is that when you breathe you destroy adults; it is put into action at the tree using "short breaths." Peter is so angry at the children's returning to London that

as soon as he got inside his tree he breathed intentionally quick short breaths at the rate of about five to a second. He did this because there is a saying in Neverland that, every time you breathe, a grown-up dies; and Peter was killing them off vindictively as fast as possible. (107)

If adults breathe hard they give life to children, so if children breathe hard they take life from adults. Compare this uncertainty about sexuality with the way it is handled in Mrs Darling's mind: in a passage that follows closely the discussion of the letters of Peter's name, Mrs Darling dreams that Peter's penetration would produce her children. "In her dream he had rent the film that obscures the Neverland, and she saw Wendy and Michael and John peeping through the gap" (9). Just then the window opens and Peter "drops" on the floor (10). (To drop is to be born.) It is clear that the children's enactments of sexual intercourse in the book antedate an understanding of sexuality exemplified for us, for contrast, by Mrs Darling's. They reflect instead exposure to or fantasies about the primal scene and reinforce the idea that this fantasy is as a threat of separation.

21 The passage reads more like a sex manual, as though to protest knowledge or imagine oneself explaining copulation: "unless your tree fitted you it was difficult to go up and down," but once you fit a tree, "you drew in your breath at the top, and down you went at exactly the right speed, while to ascend you drew in and let out alternately" (69). What's remarkable is the expectation that things would not fit—because of the fear of the pirate ("Is he big?") or the reverse, of being "comparatively short."

The series children-feces works by the logic of the letter-child series. Feces are one of the “bad objects” that persecute the child. Klein considers this idea in her discussion of paranoia:

Analysis of many children and adults ... has led me to the view that a person's fear of his faeces as a persecutor is ultimately derived from his sadistic phantasies, in which he employs his urine and faeces as poisonous and destructive weapons in his attacks upon his mother's body. In these phantasies he turns his own faeces into things that persecute his objects; and by a kind of magic ... he pushes them secretly and by stealth into the anus and other orifices of the objects and lodges them inside their bodies. (“Contribution” 238)

There is a dialectical relation in Klein between the fear of persecution and sadistic fantasies, both of which rely on the power of poisonous fluids found in the body to do harm. In consequence the child becomes afraid of his own excrement as damaging to herself or himself and fears that others will do to her or him what she or he imagines doing to them. The child

expects [his objects] to make similar secret attacks on him by means of their dangerous faeces. These fears give rise to a terror of having a number of persecutors inside his body and of being poisoned, as well as to hypochondriacal fears. The point of fixation for paranoia is situated, I believe, in that period of the phase when sadism is at its height, when the child carries out his attacks upon his mother's inside, and his father's penis which he supposes to be there, by means of his faeces, transformed into poisonous and dangerous animals or substances. (238)

Just as PP/“doodle-doo,” the name of Peter Pan in the book, is a fecal product, in nursery language, so in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, another precursor text by Barrie, the child's name is dirt. We are told in that book how lost boy Slightly got his name: “My mother had wrote my name on the pinafore I was lost in. “Slightly Soiled,” that's my name” (*PPKG* 39; Jack 162). The letter is written on one's underwear, making the child or the child's name dirty (“that's my name”). This shows why Mrs Darling tidies the childrens minds at night and folds their “naughtiness and evil passions” away in drawers (*Peter Pan* 5; dresser drawers are implied, but the word “drawers” is not in the text). To this context belong the poisonous fluids that play key roles in the story. The child sees urine, as Klein notes,

as a dangerous poison (“Contribution” 239). At home, Mr Darling fears taking his medicine and puts it in the dog Nana’s bowl, and in the parallel Neverland world Hook attempts to poison Peter by reaching through lost-boy Slightly’s tree and adding five drops of a yellow liquid—“probably the most virulent poison in existence,” in Barrie’s play language—to Peter’s medicine cup (123). The child/name (PP) is objectified through Hook’s poison and directed against the self.

We can now try to reconstruct the object relations imagined by Barrie’s text. Threatened by a separation and division of the self that would end infantile narcissism, and threatened also by impressions of the primal scene that reinforce his separation from his mother, the child, whose mental landscape is the subject of *Peter Pan*, projects his defensive aggression on objects that inhabit an in-between space, both imagined and real. These fantasy objects are extensions and projections of the self, notably dark pirates (they’re all described as black in some way), redskins, and dangerous wild animals (mentioned but unrealized), but also poisons, feces, an arrow, a hook, and other dangerous objects that tear and penetrate—that torment the child—leading to a vision of circular and perpetual violence (Neverland). The Lost Boys themselves number among the transitional objects that populate this intermediate world, as dolls with which a child plays. Neverland, after all, is the fantasy version of England in the novel, a parallel island where objects serve psychological anxieties in the real world. These objects come together symbolically in the “PP,” the child’s fractured and dangerous name: through this form of embodiment, they are introjected as aspects of the self and figured as physical mental objects. The child’s identity then is dangerous to itself: the child becomes itself only by losing its narcissistic being, becoming oneself by being double. The object relations attack that the child imagines against itself threatens primary narcissism with division, even as it makes the child’s reality principle possible. The child fights the threat of division by resisting the father’s possession of the mother in the form of Oedipal usurpation. Again this fight pits the child against itself, because the father (Captain Hook/Mr Darling) is also one of the child’s projected doubles. Here the Oedipal structure of the text and its object relations logic coincide. In both forms of projection/introjection, when the damaging object enters the child’s psyche, it produces division in the self that allows the self to become itself, to live in a real world rather than in a projected narcissistic fantasy.

By seeing the name as an introjected object, such as the p-p, Barrie constructs in outline a theory of the bodily text. For him the name, and by extension phonetic language, is the defensive production of profound

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childish disappointment that results from the disruption of primary narcissism. This disappointment is inevitable, making the corresponding theory of language general. Elements of a material theory of text already exist in classic psychology, of course, a modern body of work that is Barrie's contemporary. Freud argues that the libido freed up from an abandoned or lost love object accretes in the self as a presence that is both physical and symbolic, represented by the figure of the shadow. The ego "contains" a history of object choices, he writes in 1923 (*The Ego and the Id*; and see Kumin 655–56). The libido, as he explains in 1915,

was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (*Mourning and Melancholia* 249)

The shadow is the remainder of the material that is lost, in the unconscious, "the region of the memory-traces of *things* (as contrasted with *word*-cathexes) (256–57). Here the trace of the thing is a physical residue, a kind of writing, as Jacques Derrida argues in "Freud and the Scene of Writing," that depends on material difference. The shadow of the object is a physical residue and is also symbolic and internalizable and hence a textual property of the object. It transforms and constitutes the ego as, now, the lost object.

Object relations theory assumes this internalization of the shadow of the object, which only then transforms the ego, but for Barrie the physical and material features of the text, like the PP construct and the shadow that can be sewn on in *Peter Pan*, both precede and follow organized language: these material features are a condition of writing, to which language then also responds by producing them. They are discovered by Mrs Darling, for example, in the children's minds but represent an infantile physicality, or soiled underclothes, that precedes their expression. They are physical, non-lexical marks and sounds that join to form the name, which then allows us to name them. As Winnicott explains, there is a paradox in the concept of transitional objects: "the baby creates the object, but the object was there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object" ("Use"

89). While the cathected object is a symbol of union with the mother (96), the mother needs to be an object in order to be separate and hence perceivable as a symbol. The baby's *use* of the object precedes the symbolic structure that creates it:

A complication exists right from the very beginning of any consideration of this idea, in that it is necessary to postulate that if the use of the object by the baby builds up into anything ... then there must be the beginning of the setting up in the infant's mind or personal psychic reality of an image of the object. But the mental representation in the inner world is kept significant ... by the reinforcement given through the availability of the external separated-off and actual mother. (Winnicott, "Use" 97)

The child needs an object for object relations to work, but the object needs the symbol to be an object: language must precede the object that helps produce it.²² Winnicott's solution is to say that the object and language are established through the repeated loss of the mother and her return to "mend" the child, a kind of *Fort Da*: "this mending of the ego structure re-establishes the baby's capacity to use a symbol of union" (97).

But the problem cannot be brushed away. In effect the object relations paradigm requires two kinds of thinking, which cannot be separated easily: symbolic language follows and responds to, but also inevitably includes within it, a thinking through sight and sound, through non-lexical objects. We can read the search for "marked" words and sounds in *Peter Pan* as an imagined return to an early semiotic child-state, and we can also read it as the rejection of that state in disciplined school language, the Latin world of Eton-educated Hook/the Father in the book (Hook, who is obsessed with "good form," was in "pop," a club in Eton—and a nod to the father). Peter's symbolic name relies on p-p sounds, and p-p sounds rely on the symbolic meaning of the words. Bion reports that his clinical work implies a theory of language in which there is a "primitive matrix of ideographs" that precede language (50), predicated on sight (images) rather than on hearing (words) (49). Bion's complicated argument aside, his main point holds for Barrie, either ontologically or hermeneutically (as truth or as

22 As Bion puts it in "A Theory of Thinking," in schizophrenic object relations "thinking is called into existence to cope with thought" (111). Winnicott's formulation is poststructuralist *avant la lettre*; it also helps explain Derrida's (overdetermined) interest (in *The Post Card* and elsewhere) in Freud's system of psychic writing.

fantasy). The patient moves in a world of objects that would normally populate dreams (51) and feels these objects connected by numerous minute “links” (Bion 50). Mental language is a world of objects that are both thought and unthought, nonsense and interpretation, and both precede and follow each other. “The attempt to think,” Bion writes, “involves the use of primitive pre-verbal modes which have suffered mutilation and projective-identification” (“Differentiation” 61). While Bion largely privileges the ontological position, the use of “primitive pre-verbal modes” he finds in patients works equally as an imaginative return through the symbolic. This is Barrie’s textual theory, not a theory of discursive text but of the letter as a mental sound-figure, to borrow the term from Gilles Deleuze, that performs a linguistic function in the mind. Hence Barrie’s fascination with the name, cut short or duplicated, both a mark and a sound that dramatizes the internalization of the object and the Oedipal loss it indexes. On the one hand, the fractured and dangerous object generates the fantasy narrative of the whole (a whole that never was in the first place); on the other, that narrative produces the dangerous object, the PP as we have it in *Peter Pan*. Because of that narrative production of the materiality of the sign, Barrie—and the readers invited to journey with Peter—cannot return to an endless infancy, a world before division. What is lost in *Peter Pan* is any being before coming into temporal division, any object that is not already a subject (and vice versa), any primary narcissism, any material or primitive reality that is not already thinking. Only their shadows remain in Barrie’s prototheory of infantile thought.

If Peter’s shadow is this threat of separation already presented as a double, which is also to say the threat of loss of autonomy that enforces division in the figure of the Father, then Peter’s shadow is what Freud calls in his Victorian-modernist analysis of mourning the shadow of the object that falls upon the ego. The two can be the same when, as here, the lost object is oneself (no longer one). As Freud famously argues in “Mourning and Melancholia,” the melancholic self identifies with the lost object and takes revenge on it for leaving by persecuting itself.²³ The casement that falls, like Tristram’s in Sterne’s novel, directly on Peter, separating him from his shadow, figures that symbolic emasculation as separation-from-oneself.²⁴ Hence the obsession with division and being-two in the

23 To anticipate somewhat, this novel is obsessed with loss because its author, Barrie, is the lost child, dramatizing loss through his avatar.

24 This argument agrees with the general trend in the critical literature to read the shadow as a representation of Barrie’s brother David only in as much as the dead brother is a stand-in for the killed or castrated boy (“the lost object—

work connects the loss of primary narcissism and the struggle with the Father in the text.²⁵ The separation of the shadow then creates—and names—the subject as the subject-of-division. This subject in Barrie is the more perverse and conflicted self that performs both manic joy and a depressive self-abjection simultaneously, as Peter does. In a manic affect, this Victorian-modernist subject performs abjection as the soiled PP. The perverse and sexualized child that emerges in Barrie’s text is queered not by its fight with the Father (which, once lost, would turn the child into a little darling), but by the relation of body and language that emerges in the period. The boy for Barrie is thus a performance of this relation, and his name is Peter.

Having focused on symptomatic marks and sounds that help make this point in *Peter Pan*, a conclusion can be made to the last argument, about the production of the idea of the self in the relation of casement and shadow, by remarking on another important word and sound in the text, the word “barred.” Barrie uses the word repeatedly to refer to the window that bars Peter from returning from Neverland to England. By barring him, the window produces the symbolic name of Peter Pan. Phonetically it produces that other Barrie for which the name of Peter stands, because the word “barred” and the word “Barrie” are close enough homonyms for the one to refer to the other. If Barrie means “barred,” then when Peter is barred in the text, Peter is Barrie. Like Peter, Barrie cannot escape Neverland, the land of marked shadow. Critics who note the recurrence of the word “barred” in the text do not note this sound pun: the word is a kind of purloined letter, invisible in plain sight, and yet the critics’ repeated returns to the word show its uncanny appeal in the text. F.L. Meisel, for example, says that Peter “finds the window barred” (554), but although in this very passage Meisel says that Barrie’s themes are “spelled out,” the word itself gets no attention; Meisel returns to Barrie’s phrase “forever barred,” again without commenting on the word (559). Jacqueline Rose does the same (“barred” 28; “bars” the window 74), but ups the ante by also using the word “barrier” or “barriers” often (32, 74, 116, 139). The sound of Barrie’s name

me”)—Barrie himself. Abraham and Torok explain the concept of the lost object as oneself in their discussion of endocryptic identification in *The Shell and the Kernel*, chapter 6.

25 When Freud revises his argument from “Mourning and Melancholia” in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), he preserves the mechanism of the internalization of persecution, which is so central to his thought generally, to say that such internalization is normal to the formation of character and is not a depressive anomaly. For a summary, see Baker 57. For a discussion of this separation from narcissism as an aspect of castration anxiety, see Ahumada 183–84.

functions in the way the marked letters in Peter's name ("PP") refer to the objects that persecute and estrange the self in the book. As the traditional double of the self, the shadow shares the self's identity.²⁶ The name of Peter Pan is a crypt for the dead self, like the letters found in the drawer, a crypt that buries Barrie as the lost child, traumatized by division, overwritten by the loss of his brother David in his family's libidinal economy, forever writing himself shadow letters from the grave.

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²⁶ Oberndorf, writing in the *Psychoanalytic Review* in 1918, compares the personal name to a shadow (47).

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