

## Chapter 2

### Literary Review

This chapter reviews literary studies gained from positivistic and psychological approaches in attempt to explain the narrative complexity. This chapter will also introduce Simpson's narrative point of view, a stylistic device to analyze the narrative.

#### Positivism

Positivists study the biographical data of the author to understand the text. Positivism is developed by Auguste Comte in the middle of the 19th century, and its main concept is that authentic knowledge is only that which is based on the actual experience. In fiction, the literary interpretation will be verified with data such as the author's biography, personal letters and diaries (Nodelman, 2003, p.150). Barrie's biographical data is considered the key to the understanding of *Peter Pan*. Positivist studies compare similarities between the novel and the author's biography.

James Matthew Barrie was born on 9 May 1860 in Scotland. He was the son of David Barrie and Margaret Olgivy. He had three brothers and six sisters. However, his brother David died at fourteen years of age, and his mother was saddened by his death. In 1884, Barrie married the actress Mary Ansell and got a St. Bernard puppy. However, the couple got divorced, and they had no children of their own, but a few years later Barrie met and became good friends with the Llewelyn Davies family. He later became guardian to their five children when they were orphaned.

This brief biography reveals many similarities between the author and the story's content. The St. Bernard puppy was "later inspired to become 'Nana' and Llewelyn Davies' sons, whom Barrie befriended in Kensington Garden, are also inspired to be Mr. Darling's children in the story" (Birkin, 1979, p.35). Moreover, the autobiography that Barrie writes after his mother's death can reveal that Wendy in

*Peter Pan* is his mother's imaginary girl. Barrie inscribes this passage in the book named *Margaret Ogilvy*:

The reason my books deal with the past instead of the tale I myself have known is simply this, that I soon grow tired of writing tales unless I can see a little girl, of whom my mother has told me, wandering confidently through the pages. Such a grip has her memory of her girlhood had upon me since I was a boy of six.

(Barrie, 1896, p.25)

Hearn adds that the story might be a result from Barrie's terrible experience when he was a child. Hearn quotes Barrie's speech about his own story that

The horror of my boyhood was that I knew a time would come when I also must give up the games....(this agony still returns to me in dreams, when I catch my-self playing marbles, and look on with cold displeasure); I felt that I must continue playing in secret.

(1988, p.5)

According to Frey, the story is based upon Barrie's "childhood tensions" (1987, p.182), and Barrie's conflicts arise after the death of his brother David in 1866. After this incident, Barrie felt that he did not receive enough love from his mother, for he had to "set himself the impossible task of replacing his dead brother in her affections" (Ibid., p.182). Hearn also sees Barrie's lifelong tension, i.e. Barrie has a conflict between an adult Barrie, who usually felt that he "must give up the games" (quoted in Dunbar, 1970, p.138) and Barrie the eternal boy, who escaped into the fantasy world of Neverland to "continue playing in secret" (Hearn, 1988, p.5). Townsend also mentions that *Peter Pan* was written with Barrie's hope to discover and understand the intensity of his own creation, and it was this tension which could be seen in his "troubled authorial narrative" (1980, p.106).

Frey mentions that the content in *Margaret Ogilvy* can reveal Barrie's childhood tension.

...but the room was dark, and when I heard the door shut and no sound come from the bed I was afraid, and I stood still. I suppose I was breathing hard, or perhaps I was crying for after a time I heard a listless voice that had never been listless before say, 'Is that you?' I think the tone hurt me, for I made no answer, and then the voice said more anxiously 'Is that you?' again. I thought it was the dead boy she was speaking to, and I said in a little lonely voice, 'No, it's no him, it's just me.' Then I heard a cry, and my mother turned in bed, and though it was dark I knew that she was holding out her arms.

(Frey, 1987, p.182)

If ones believe in positivistic theory, the studies of Barrie's biographical data maybe useful to explain the story's content because they can give practical evidence to explain the story's meaning. As the narrator is related to the author, positivism may explain the narrative complexity by regarding Barrie's domestic conflict during his writing, and the conflict may be influential to the author's train of thoughts.

### **Psychological studies**

Generally, psychological critics study literature to comprehend the author's mental state. In other words, the narrator in fictions is identified as the author. In *Peter Pan*, the psychological critics agree with the positivists that the narrative reflects Barrie's inner conflicts. The psychological studies focus on psychopathography, a special kind of biography focusing on psychological and psychopathological aspects of the personality and their significance for creative activity. The pattern of the author's language in *Peter Pan*'s narrative is scrutinized by these critics to understand Barrie's subconscious mind while composing the story.

Psychological critics apply Jung's and Freud's theories to the reading of the story's multiple narrations and complicated voices. According to Hunt, Freudian critics interpret the author's work as an expression of his/her mental abnormality (2005, p.104); the work provides therapeutic release for the author and relates to the author's Oedipus complex. Freud's Oedipus complex refers to the wish of both boys and girls to possess their mothers; however, as they grow older, they begin to sense that "their claim to exclusive attention is thwarted by the mother's attention to the father" (Richter, 2006, p. 1016). As a result, children will have "a murderous rage against the father...and a desire to possess the mother" (Ibid., p.1016).

Jungian criticism attempts to explore the connection between literature and the "collective unconscious" of the human race. Jung assumes that all stories and symbols are based on mythic models or archetypes of mankind past (Ibid., p.504) and these archetypes are the basis for the author's narrative whose content will somehow "relate to the issue of the ego's integration with the self" (Hunt, p.105). *Peter Pan*, can be seen as the author's defective product or his failure to write and *Peter Pan's* narrative may be deficient, for it is derived from Barrie's mental abnormality.

Criticizing *Peter Pan*, Yeoman (1998) and Rose (1984) apply psychological approaches to the text to explain the author's mental condition. Rose argues that it is possible to give an Oedipal reading of *Peter Pan* because the father, Mr. Darling, is humiliated; for instance, when he plays a bad joke on Nana claiming to be the master of the house. In addition, when the children fly off, he crawls into the kennel out of shame. On the island, the children meet their father, in another form, Captain Hook and "murder" him through Peter Pan and return home. After Mr. Darling crawls out of the kennel, the children can finally grow up (Rose, 1984, p.35). Rose proposes that *Peter Pan's* narrative represents the author's "trauma of growth" (1984, p.68) and Barrie displays his masculine inadequacy throughout the story. This "trauma of growth" can be seen in *Peter Pan's* opening paragraph where Rose notices that the narrator gives three times the phrases "grow up" over the first paragraph, i.e. "grow up", "will grow up", "must grow up" in crescendo repetitions. Applying Jung's theory, Yeoman notices that the opening passage reveals the author's inconsistencies in his own ego. That is, Yeoman suggests that the paragraph unveils examples of the author's undesired movement, or "slippage" (1998, p.77), shifting from "all" to "they" to "you", and this can be seen as the narrator's "uncertain relationship" (Ibid.,

p.82), showing that Barrie is not always in full control of his material. Moreover, the “slippage” also discloses that Barrie is in fact the only boy who does not grow up. Psychological interpretations attempt to understand of the author’s mental condition through the narrator’s position.

Psychological critics observe the narrative complexity, ambiguity and inconsistency in a narrative, as textual evidence of the author’s subconscious product. According to Rose, *Peter Pan* “undermines the certainty which should properly distinguish the narrating adult from the child” (1984, p.88). That is, it is not possible to make a distinction whether it is an adult or child who narrates the story. Birkin asserts that it is also unclear as to from where the narrator speaking “on the island or off it” (1979, p.35) and it is difficult to tell whether the story is told by a participating character or from a position outside. Moreover, Hildick also agrees that the ambiguous presence of the narrator is “more forcefully than anything that has gone before” and that the “narrator’s uncertainty to tell the story is traceable” (1970, p. 58).

In conclusion, studies from psychological critics also assert that the narrator in the story is inevitably related with Barrie as the narrative complexity suggests the author’s mental instability during his writing. Being inconfident, the narrator in *Peter Pan* does not have control over the narrative.

In *Peter Pan*, the author-narrator has inner conflicts or incomplete mental state during his writing. However, psychological studies mainly focus on the author’s psychology, not the literature, and biographical studies have only selective evidence. These approaches cannot sufficiently explain literature. More importantly, it is not entirely accurate to refer the narrator’s stance to the author’s personal matters, for they may not explain the story’s contents of which the author does not have personal experiences. For instance, the Neverland does not exist in the real world, and it is difficult to believe that the scenes happening in Neverland actually occurs to Barrie, i.e. Barrie may never have seen a crocodile or known a man with a hook for hand.

This research will study the narrator’s stance by considering the story’s textual features, in order to expand the scope of the studies of the narrator and to respond to the two approaches previously discussed. The analytical device to approach the text is Simpson’s narrative framework.

## **Narrative Point of View**

Narratology deals with narrator as a function, not a person to be identified with the flesh and blood author (Abbott, 2002, p.62). Narrative point of view makes the distinction of “who sees”, a focalizer, and “who speaks”, a narrator (Martin, 1986, p.147; Toolan, 1999, p. 60). The focalizer is the position from which the events are perceived while the narrator is the agent that recounts the story (Bal, 1985, p. 142). The two functions do not necessarily share the same origin and may not be assigned to any particular character. Simpson’s narrative framework focuses on “who sees” the events; however, he insists on using the term “narrator” instead of “focalizer” in his framework, as the term “narrator” has a broader meaning and covers both functions.

Simpson’s narrative point of view is constructed upon Genette’s (1980) focalization and Fowler’s (1986) narrative framework. Based on Fowler’s narrative framework, Simpson’s narrative point of view is categorized based on both the participatory function of the narrator and “modality” in language. The term modality has been used to refer to “attitudinal” feature in language because it can indicate degrees of commitment of situations uttered. Modality in language can be expressed through modal auxiliaries, modal adverbs, evaluative adjectives and adverbs, generic sentences and verbs or knowledge, prediction and evaluation (Simpson, 1993, p. 47). Fowler also agrees that modality is a major exponent of the “interpersonal” function of language (1986, p. 103).

Besides modality in language, Simpson categorizes narrative point of view into two types, (A) participating, and (B) non-participating narrator. Type A represents a first-person narration or that told by a participating narrator while Type B represents a third-person narration. Type A corresponds to Genette’s homodiegetic (1980) narration in that the narrator takes part in the story he/she narrates. Type B is a narration told by a disembodied and non-participating narrator, corresponding to Genette’s heterodiegetic (1980) narration. These two types are then categorized into two modes of narration: the Reflector mode (R) and the Narratorial mode (N). The Reflector mode (R) is when the narration is mediated through participating character’s consciousness. The Narratorial mode (N) is when the story is not narrated from any

participating character's consciousness. Furthermore, these A, B(N) and B(R) categories are also separated into positive, negative and neutral shading according to modality used in the narration. In the positive shading, which suggests the narrator's commitment, obligation and evaluations towards the situations uttered (Simpson, 1993, p.47), the narrative is eminent with deontic<sup>1</sup> and boulomaic<sup>2</sup> modalities. Therefore, the narration in this shading will express the narrator's duty, desire or commitment to situations recounted. In addition, the positive shading can be seen not only from the modality used in the narrative but also from the phrases indicating to the narrator's evaluations<sup>3</sup> in recounting situations. By contrast, the negative shading<sup>4</sup> can be seen from the narrative where epistemic<sup>5</sup> and perceptive modalities are distinguished. Comparative structures which have some basis in human perception, such as "it looked as if...; it seemed...; it appeared to be..." are also deemed as close as to perceptive modality. Therefore, the narrator expresses his/her degrees of knowledge, confidence, cognition as well as perception in the negative shading. In the

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<sup>1</sup>Deontic modality expresses degrees of obligation, possibility and permission. It may be expressed through modal auxiliaries such as 'may', 'should', or 'must' and adjective and participial phrases such as 'it is necessary that...', and 'you are obliged/forbidden to...' (Ibid., p.48).

<sup>2</sup>Boulomaic modality expresses degrees of the narrator's desire as "hope", "wish", "want", "hopefully", "regrettably", "it is good that..." and "it is hoped that..." (Ibid., p.48).

<sup>3</sup>The use of evaluative adjectives ("It is vain that" or "It is thoughtless that...") or evaluative adverbs ("certainly") can indicate to the narrator's evaluations (Ibid., p.57).

<sup>4</sup>Negative shading suggests the narrator's confidence, or lack of, in situations recounted. (Ibid., p.49).

<sup>5</sup>Epistemic modality relates with the speaker's confidence. It can be expressed through perceptive verbs, such as "think", "see", "feel", "believe", "realize" or through modal auxiliaries such as "may", "must", or "should". Participial phrases such as "it is certain/ apparent/ doubtful that..." "maybe", "perhaps", "possibly", "arguably" "obviously" articulate the narrator's perception, commitment and confidence in situations uttered. (Ibid., p. 49).

neutral shading, there is no apparent pattern of modalities expressed throughout the narrative. As modality expresses a narrator's attitude, Simpson's categorization<sup>6</sup> can be seen as a crucial device to examine the stance of *Peter Pan*'s narrator. This categorization of narrative point of view will be applied to the text to investigate whether and how the narrator's stance reflects literary interpretations gained from positivistic and psychological critics.

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<sup>6</sup>See appendix A and B for details and examples of Simpson's stylistic narrative point of view.