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National College of Art and Design

Faculty of Fine Art

Department of Printmaking

Peter Pan and Paula Rego

by

Jean Rooney

*Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and
Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of
Art in Fine Art*



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my tutor Niamh O'Sullivan for her help and support in writing this thesis.



Table of Contents

	Page
List of Plates	i
Prologue	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. J.M. Barrie and the Creation of the Eternal Child.....	3
Chapter 2. Paula Rego and Peter Pan.....	14
Chapter 3. The Adult/Child Relationship.....	27
Chapter 4. Maturation	46
Conclusion	61
Bibliography	62



List of Plates

		Page
Figure 1.	<i>The Family</i> (1988) by Paula Rego Acrylic on paper/canvas, 213.4cm X 213.4cm.....	19
Figure 2.	<i>The Maids</i> (1987) by Paula Rego Acrylic on paper/canvas, 213.4cm X 243.9cm.....	20
Figure 3.	<i>Wendy and Hook</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, paper size 64cm X 51cm.....	29
Figure 4.	<i>La Leçon de Guitare</i> (1934) by Balthus Oil on canvas, 161cm X 138.5cm.....	31
Figure 5.	<i>Joan Mirò et sa fille</i> (1937-38) by Balthus Oil on canvas, 130.2cm X 88.9cm.....	32
Figure 6.	<i>Roger et son fils</i> (1937-38) by Balthus Oil on wood, 125cm X 89cm.....	33
Figure 7.	<i>Captain Hook and Lost Boy</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, paper size 64cm X 51cm.....	34
Figure 8.	<i>They Warned Her</i> (1912) by Arthur Rackham Coloured etching.....	35
Figure 9.	<i>Tiger Lily on Marooner's Rock</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 41cm X 35cm.....	38
Figure 10.	<i>Wendy and the Lost Boys</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 14cm X 14cm, paper size 41cm X 35cm.....	40
Figure 11.	<i>The House Under the Ground</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 27.5cm, paper size 64cm X 55cm.....	41
Figure 12.	<i>Hook and Peter</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm.....	42
Figure 13.	<i>The Return</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 27.5cm, paper size 64cm X 55cm.....	43
Figure 14.	<i>The Never Land</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 29.5cm X 44.5cm, paper size 64cm X 55cm.....	44



Figure 15.	<i>Tootles Shoots Wendy</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm	48
Figure 16.	<i>Wendy Sewing on Peter's Shadow</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Black and white etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm	49
Figure 17.	<i>Peter Pan is the Fairies Orchestra</i> (1912) by Arthur Rackham Coloured etching	50
Figure 18.	<i>She Prays for Him</i> (1868) by Goya Black and white etching, burnished aquatint, drypoint and burin, 219mm X 152mm	52
Figure 19.	<i>Correction</i> (1868) by Goya Black and white etching, burnished aquatint, 217mm X 150mm ..	53
Figure 20.	<i>Mermaid Drowning Wendy</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm	54
Figure 21.	<i>Pirates Taking away the Lost Boys</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm	55
Figure 22.	<i>Boys and Pirates Fighting</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm	56
Figure 23.	<i>Flying Children</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 27.5cm X 20cm, paper size 64cm X 51cm	57
Figure 24.	<i>Away he Flew, Right Over the Houses to the Gardens</i> (1912) by Arthur Rackham, Coloured etching	58
Figure 25.	<i>Fools Fantasy</i> (1916) by Goya Etching and aquatint, 245mm X 350mm	59
Figure 26.	<i>Wendy's Song</i> (1992) by Paula Rego Coloured etching and aquatint, plate size 14cm X 14cm, paper size 41cm X 35cm	60



The Story of Peter Pan

Prologue

Peter Pan is the boy who never grew up. He lives in Never-Never land, an island of uncertain location. Access to Never-Never land is obtained by one of three means. It is sometimes seen by children as they hover on the edge of sleep. It can be reached by baby boys who fall out of their perambulators while their nurses are not looking (if no one collects them they are sent to Never-Never land, where they become lost boys). Girls, however, are said to be too intelligent to fall out in the first place. Finally, visitors can be taken there by a never-aging boy, Peter Pan, who refuses to grow up and claims he ran away the day he was born.

Peter Pan has all his first teeth and retains his first childish laugh. He can fly with the aid of magic dust which he sprinkles on the Darling children; Wendy, John and Michael. Peter takes them to the island because he wants Wendy to be the mother of the lost boys.

Peter Pan is the leader of the lost boys and very little occurs in Never-Never land while he is away. When Peter arrives with his new companions the island comes to life. The lost boys' home is an underground house entered through the trunks of seven hollow trees. The whole house consists of one large room in the middle of which stands a never tree which is sawn down level with the floor each day; by tea time it has grown high enough to use as a table. Around the tree grow mushrooms used for stools. The lost boys dress in animal furs, and some of the meals they eat are make-believe. They are not allowed to know anything Peter does not know and in his presence they may not speak of mothers.

The island is also the haunt of pirates, with their big gun "Long Tom", and their leader notably the infamous Captain Hook. Once in combat Peter Pan cut off Hook's left hand and gave it to a gigantic crocodile, who enjoyed it so much that it decided to pursue Captain Hook in order to get the rest of him. The crocodile once swallowed an alarm clock, and its ticking warns Hook of the crocodile's approach. Hook and Peter are sworn enemies, Hook pursues Peter, eager for revenge.



After their arrival on the Neverland Wendy is shot down by one of the lost boys. Tinkerbell, the jealous fairy had told them she was a bird. Wendy is shot through the heart, but is only injured. When she comes around she is all forgiving and agrees to be their mother. She spends whole weeks underground in their house. As time passes, she notices she is forgetting her parents.

They spend many days at the lagoon, which is the home of the mermaids, beautiful creatures who spend their days basking in the sun and combing their hair. Although they are beautiful, the mermaids are known to be unfriendly and malicious, particularly to Wendy. But they adore Peter, he cheekily sits on their tails and chats to them. This day Peter gives Wendy a mermaid's comb. Night falls and all except Wendy are asleep on Marooner's Rock. The pirates arrive, but Wendy, not being a real mother, did not know what to do.

Peter awakens and orders them to swim for it. He also rescues Tiger-Lily a captive of the pirates. She is the daughter of the chief of the red Indians, who also inhabit the island. Tigerlily is cold and amorous by turns; there is not a brave who would not have the wayward thing to wife, but she staves off the attar with a hatchet. Since Peter saved her the Indians have been the allies of the lost boys.

During this ordeal at the lagoon, Wendy is nearly drowned by the mermaids. She eventually escapes by tying herself to a passing kite. Peter escapes in a bird's nest, using it as a boat.

Wendy proceeds to play domestic bliss with Peter and the lost boys, but when she learns his true feelings towards her are only that of a devoted son, she is hurt. She asks Peter to make arrangements to take them home.

But before this happens they are captured by Hook who takes them to his ship, the Jolly Roger. Peter is at home asleep. Hook returns to find him and poisons his medicine, thinking he will drink it and die. However, little Tinkerbell saw everything. So she tells Peter of the children's capture and drinks the medicine herself in an attempt to protect Peter. She almost died, had it not been for all the children who believed in fairies.



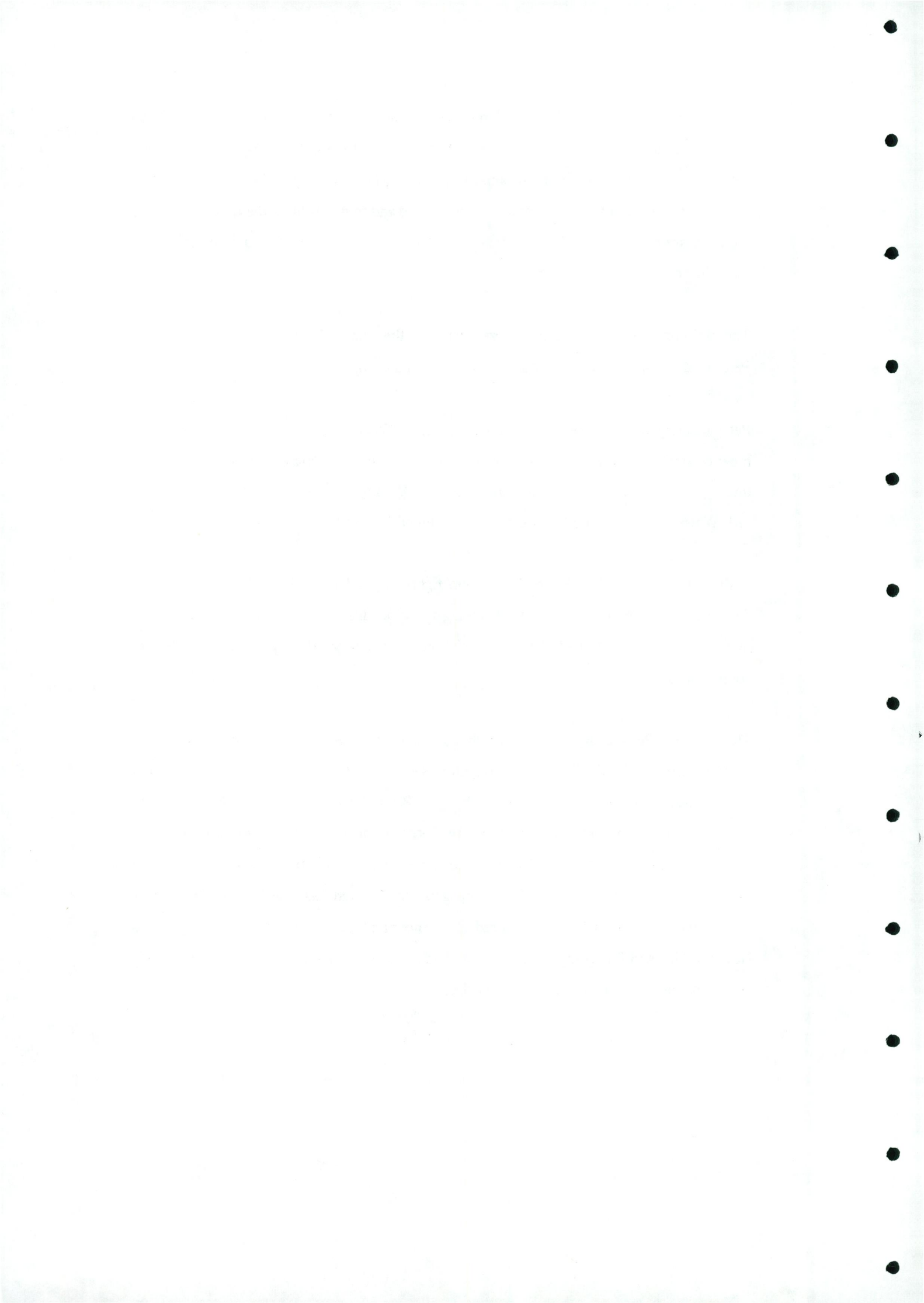
Peter rushes off to rescue Wendy with his dagger. She is tied to the mast of the Jolly Roger about to see the children 'walk the plank'. Smee, one of the pirates whispers to her, "See here, honey, I'll save you, if you promise to be my mother." Wendy replies, "I would rather have no children at all." Peter makes a ticking noise and pretends to be the crocodile. While the crew are hiding Hook, Peter boards the Jolly Roger. Hook never thought of staying to fight the crocodile, for it was fate.

The real crocodile had actually followed Peter to the ship, it recognised the ticking noise Peter made. It stays in the water as it cannot board the ship.

Peter cunningly kills some of the pirates and takes Wendy's place at the mast. The other crew do not know how their mates have been killed, they are frightened and contemplate mutiny. They finally come to the conclusion that Wendy has a curse on the ship, being a girl. When they go to fling her overboard, it is Peter they find instead.

A fight pursues. Hook is left to Peter, who fights in good form. Hook knows he will be defeated, so he jumps the ship, not knowing the crocodile is waiting below. The fight is over. The children go to bed. Peter cries for hours in his sleep. Wendy holds him tightly to comfort him.

The next day Peter brings the children home on the Jolly Roger to their ever-remorseful waiting parents. The Darlings are overjoyed to see their children. They also agree to adopt the lost boys who still want a mother, but not Peter, he refuses to stay. He returns to Never-Never land. Wendy wants him to stay. Peter promises to visit her and take her back to the Neverland every Spring-cleaning time to be a mother to him. He always forgets and never goes back for her. Wendy grows up gets married and has a girl called Jane. Peter returns once and finds Wendy matured, he is horrified by this sight. He takes Jane to Neverland instead for spring-cleaning time. And so the story and adventures go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless.



Introduction

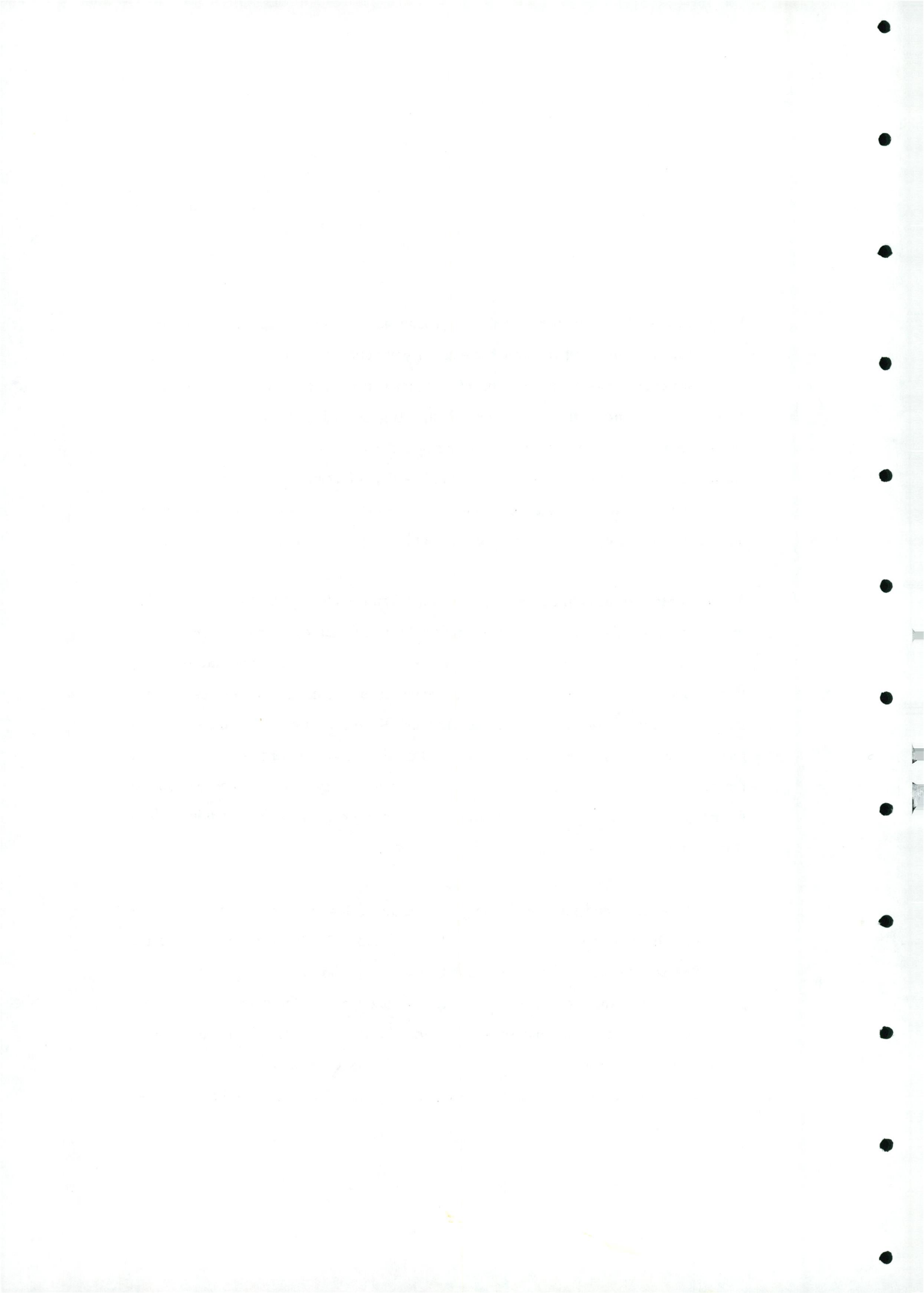
There are indeed many wonders, and with regard to the stories people tell one another, it may be that such tales go beyond the true and, embellish with iridescent lies, beguile them.

Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, I.

Fairytales provide motifs in common, a sign language and an image store which can be interpreted and re-interpreted. Many contemporary writers are now doing this, from Robert Coover's fictional re-working of *Pinocchio*, Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (his own predicament seen through the Arabian nights) to Jeanette Winterson's experimental novels. Re-writing a story with a different perspective is indeed authentic. However, there is nothing new in the process - that of using words. Paula Rego has exposed an unearthed dramas concealed in the English tale of Peter Pan. She has done this not with words but with the power of her dark and disquieting images.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the *Peter Pan Series* of etchings by Paula Rego and to investigate their relationship to J.M. Barrie's tale. Rego's starting point for these prints was the story of *Peter Pan* itself. Since the prints illustrate this text, both are distinctly linked. Before a discussion of the prints can commence it is necessary to investigate the story, its author (Barrie) and his impetus. Although Rego's inspiration was the story itself these etchings are not merely decorative or didactic accompaniments to the text, they represent a highly individual approach to a familiar story that has become almost meaningless because of constant repetition. Each etching contains a story within itself; a story of human misunderstanding.

Rego's knowledge and passion for fairy stories made her well suited to the task of illustrating this tale. She read Barrie's book, but found difficulty in comprehending the story. She is interested in the verbal tradition of storytelling and is familiar with this process since she was a child. So the process of understanding the story contained in a book appeared confined and uninspiring. In order for it to come to life, she returned to verbalising the story. She chose a friend who knew the book well and had him recount the story to her, like a child being told a bedtime tale. The interactive themes of the prints have their origin in the text:-



- (1) Ambivalent Sexuality;
- (2) The Adult/Child relationship and
- (3) Maturation.

Just as a detective would gather evidence to solve a crime, the relationship of the text to the images will be used to investigate the meaning contained in the etchings. This is the function of Chapter 1. Chapter 2 will move from the text to the images. The focus will be on Paula Rego and the technique of printing these 15 etchings.

The theme of Ambivalent Sexuality runs through the series. It is always depicted in relation to the Adult/Child relationship and is also present in issues relating to Maturation. Since Ambivalent Sexuality is inextricably linked in the images to both of the other themes, this will be the driving force of the discussion. Chapter 3 will develop this theme focusing specifically on the prints and their visual content in terms of the Adult/Child relationship. The notion of motherhood is dealt with to a lesser extent in Rego's series. Since motherhood is an integral feature of the Adult/Child relationship, it will be discussed under this theme. Chapter 4 will extend the analysis of the prints and their visual content in relation to Maturation. The discussion through chapters 3 and 4 will draw on comparisons and techniques of other artists which have influenced Rego and contributed something to this series, with particular reference to Arthur Rackham, the very first illustrator of the story.



Chapter One

J.M. Barrie and the Creation of the Eternal Child

As for Peter, he saw Wendy once again before he flew away. He did not exactly come to the window, but he brushed against it in passing, so that she could open it if she liked and call to him. That was what she did.

“Hello, Wendy, good-bye,” he said.

“Oh dear, are you going away?”

“Yes.”

“You don’t feel, Peter” she said flatteringly, “that you would like to say anything to my parents about a very sweet subject?”

“No.”

“About me, Peter?”

“No.”

Mrs. Darling came to the window, for at present she was keeping a sharp eye on Wendy. She told Peter that she had adopted all the other boys, and would like to adopt him also.

“Would you send me to school?” he inquired craftily.

“Yes.”

“And then to an office?”

“I suppose so.”

“Soon I should be a man?”

“Very soon.”

“I don’t want to go to school and learn solemn things,” he told her passionately. “I don’t want to be a man. Oh Wendy’s mother, if I was to wake up and feel there was a beard!”

“Peter”, said Wendy the comforter, “I should love you in a beard”; and Mrs. Darling stretched out her arms to him, but he repulsed her.

“Keep back, lady, no one is going to catch me and make me a man.” [Barrie, 1911, pg. 206-207]



Peter Pan is the boy who never grew up. He lives in a tale which turns its back on reality and draws its substance from raids into the unreal and the impossible. It could be called a “nonsense” tale for there are no rules in no-man’s land, between the fairytale world and the real one. The eternal child, who occupies this border territory was created by J.M. Barrie.

Sir James Barrie (1860-1937), the Scottish novelist and playwright, was born in Kirriemuir and educated at Dumfries Academy and Edinburgh University. He worked during a period that saw the end of the long reign of Queen Victoria (1901) and of the attendant stability which had been so long enjoyed. It was a period of sweeping social reform and progress¹, which included the spread of education, a massive output of books and a revival of drama. After some experience as a journalist in Nottingham, Barrie came to London and wrote for the St. James’s Gazette and other periodicals. From the late nineteenth century he began to write novels², but from 1900 onwards his attention was turned towards the theatre.

“In many plays he turns his back on the realities of life and seeks refuge in a world of make-believe and charming fantasy, created by his own peculiar mixture of whimsicality, quaintness, sentimentality, pathos and humour.” [Albert, 1979, pg. 478]

¹ The shock administered by the Boer War (1899-1902) to the violent imperialism of the later years of the reign of Victoria helped to divert attention from the cruder conceptions of imperial expansion to social problems at home. This led to an age of progress. It was the birth of modern literature and the age of the novel.

² Among his novels are *Better Dead* (1887), *When a man’s single* (1888) and *My Lady Nicotine* (1890). According to Edward Albert, the literary critic, Barrie’s novels “all suffer from that excess of sentimentality which is his chief weakness”. [History of English Literature, 1923, pg. 477]. It has been said that in your weakness you find your strength. This is true of Barrie whose sentimentality eventually won him critical acclaim. He wrote many sketches, which describe with humour and pathos the domestic and religious life in his native town. These include *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1889). This style of work came to be called “The Kailyward School of Scottish Writing” which can be dated from Barrie’s Kirriemuir sketches.



It was with this very style that he wrote *The Little White Bird* (1902). It was a novel of fantasy stories for adults containing six chapters about a boy called Peter Pan. In order for it to become a work suitable for children these chapters were reworked and published separately as a play in 1904 and again later as a novel in 1906 entitled *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Unsurprisingly, this was illustrated by Arthur Rackham³. Bettina Hürliman described it as “The purest and most poetic example of fantasy for children” [Hürliman, 1967, pg. 77].

Barrie made more attempts at reworking the narrative right up to the publication of *Peter Pan* in 1928⁴. F.J. Darton believed Barrie’s story was “A document of the new freedom . . . the freedom of non-educational amusement.” [Darton, 1958, pg. 308]. The saga of the convention *Peter Pan*, along with Wendy Darling, Tinkerbell and their companions is a complex one. Other writers such as Mary Byron and Daniel O’Connor have published their own adapted versions, which have added to the status of *Peter Pan* as the ultimate fetish of childhood⁵.

Although his peer consensus at the time was positive in proclaiming this novel of *Peter Pan* as unique, they did criticise its rank sentiment. Samuel C. Chew commented that “the merging of reality and dream is accomplished with the most delicate art, but whatever may be the case with juvenile readers and spectators to most adult minds there is something a little disturbing in the combination of humour and adventure and sentimentality.” [Baugh, 1967, pg. 1529].

Later critics like Martin Seymour Smith, for example, came closer to the truer meaning of *Peter Pan* when he pronounced that “The achievement here is artistically though not

³ It is ironic that this book emerged from a deliberate act of censorship of *The Little White Bird*, to increase its suitability for children, yet when it was published, it was released directly onto the Fine Art Collector’s Market. Rackham’s illustrations were almost collectors’ items, the book was quite elaborate and expensive. This was a time when a whole new market for children’s books was developing, a market which it by-passed and to which it never belonged.

⁴ There was a span of 24 years between Barrie’s first and last publication of *Peter Pan*. When *Peter Pan* was written, educational policy on language was directed towards a rigorous separation of the forms of language to be taught in different sectors of the State schools. *Peter Pan* was no exception it had to be re-written along the lines of this new State educational policy on language.

⁵ Barrie had great difficulty in re-writing and completing *Peter Pan*, so he authorised the story to other writers and allowed them to publish their own versions. Barrie may well be the source of this story, but its status as a classic for children depends at least as much on other writers like Daniel O’Connor who published a version of *Peter Pan* in 1914 and Mary Byron who published a version of her own in 1929 and later in 1938.



commercially ephemeral. *Peter Pan* is typical, it conceals relentless infantilism and sadism beneath a skilfully sentimental veneer." [Seymour-Smith, 1976, pg. 30].

Notwithstanding these reservations this classic novel for children has acquired affection as if it were a child itself. Many critics believed in its essential innocence. The Times literary Supplement's Review suggested that "In fine here is an exquisite piece of work. To analyse its merits and defects - its fun, its pathos, its character drawing, or its sentimentality, its improbability, its lack of cohesion - would be to vivisect a fairy." [14th November, 1902, pg. 339].

Is this a sentimental story of childhood written by a kind bachelor clubman to amuse children? The times may have compared the nature of this work to the innocence of a fairy, but is it that simple? After 24 years of dispersed attempts at reworking *Peter Pan* through many publications, it is no wonder that Barrie wrote years later that he had no recollection of having written it. He claimed he could haul back to mind the writing of every other piece of work he made, except *Peter Pan*. Why did Barrie not remember writing this play? Was he using hidden elements of his most intimate history which would not have been obvious to his conscious mind from which to create this haunting story. Then once written he could forget. Significantly, at the moment when Barrie was writing *Peter Pan* Freud was making his most crucial (and at that time least known) discovery that sexuality works above all at the level of the unconscious. He also believed that attempts to suppress sexuality within language never worked.

"The distortion of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces." [Freud, SE, XXIV (1934-38) 1939, pg. 43].

The unconscious according to Freud is not an object, or something to be laid hold of and retrieved. It is the term which our very idea of ourselves as children is produced. Childhood is not an object, any more than the unconscious, although this is often how they are both understood. The idea that childhood is something separate which can be scrutinised and assessed is the other side of the illusion which makes of childhood something which we have simply ceased to be. In most discussions of children's fiction - (stories given to children like *Peter Pan* for example) which make their appeal to Freud, childhood is part of a strict developmental sequence at the end of which stands that cohered and rational



consciousness of the adult mind. Children may on occasions be disturbed, but they do not disturb us as long as that sequence (and that development) can be ensured. Children are no threat to our identity because they are so to speak “on their way”. Their difference stands purely as the sign of just how far we have progressed.

In 1897 two French psychologists, V. and C. Henri published a monograph of adult recollections of childhood and were baffled by a number of apparently meaningless memories. Freud found their very innocence . . . mysterious (Freud, SE, 111, 1899, pg. 309). Setting himself aside to analyse one of his earliest recollections, he found that the event he remembered had never taken place. The importance of the memory was not, however, any less for that. He distinguished not so much what it might mean as the processes of transformation which lay between the original event and what he chose to recall - he was demonstrating the divisions and distortions which are characteristic of our psychic life. Later he would formulate these processes in relation to dreams, jokes and slips of the tongue. What Freud discovered in that first recollection was that there are aspects of our psychic life which escape our conscious control. Partial recollection of events has nothing to do with an inability to remember. It shows one part of our mind, a part over which we precisely do not have control, would rather forget.

In this light we can see Barrie’s mind attempted to forget writing this play. The notions of sexuality which Barrie unconsciously suppressed within the story are given away in text, for as Freud has pointed out language does not give us control of our psychic. Language does not give Barrie mastery over his desires, rather it could be said to expose the very ideas which he hides, or controls. So this could lead us to say that there could also be a truth in the review of Barrie’s book as *The Times Literary Supplement* tantalised “If a book exists which contains more knowledge and more love of children, we do not know it.” [14th November, 1902, pg. 339].

The question is what do the words “love” and “knowledge” mean in this context?

“Wise poets that wrapt truth in tales, know her themselves through all her veils.”

[Carew, Thomas, Inscription on the Tomb of the Duke of Buckingham.]



The truth behind Barrie's Tale

J.M. Barrie's story has been told as the story of a man and five small boys whom he picked up, stole and possessed (Dunbar 1970, Birkin 1979).

This story is based upon the five Llewlyn Davies boys who were sons of Arthur and Sylvia Llewlyn Davies who were close friends of Barrie. These five boys exerted on him a magical force that alarmed their parents, especially their father. Barrie just like Lewis Carroll, took photographs of children. In Barrie's case they were little boys, in Carroll's they were for the most part, but not exclusively, little girls (Gemsheim, 1949, as exemplified by Greville MacDonald, plate 31 and Cyril Bickersleth plate 55). Barrie's collection of photographs of the Llewellyn Davies boys was compiled as a book called *The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island*. Only two copies of it were ever produced, one for Barrie himself and the other he gave to Arthur the boys' father who promptly mislaid it on a train almost as soon as he received it. Why did he find these images so unsettling and disquieting? How could he have discarded them almost immediately? According to Jacqueline Rose, "The rarity, the exclusive and precious nature of this work has contributed to its status as one of the ultimate records of Barrie's personal history. It is as if it has been moved sideways into the fetishism of the document so we do not need to think about the fetishism in the gaze" [Rose, 1984, pg. 29-30].

Strangely, the text accompanying the photographs was purportedly written by Peter, the eldest of the boys. At the time of this event Peter was only four. The voice of this passage is not that of Peter, rather it is that of Barrie himself, recreating the boys adventure story and echoing the didacticism of its tone. It is clearly the voice of an adult who offers the document as instruction for the boys, as well as a record of their childhood.

Lewis Carroll wrote his classic *Alice in Wonderland* on condition that the child remain a little girl which he could fix or manipulate in the realm of his tale. A sexual act which can be easily recognised now despite (or because of) the innocence and youth of its object. Barrie's story of Peter Pan can be traced to its author's fantasised seduction of a little boy or boys.

Behind *Peter Pan*, therefore, lies the desire of a man for a little boy, a fantasy or drama the indecency of which has only recently caught the public attention. Even if we accept the presence of sexuality in children's fiction, we are asked to recognise it here in a form which

[Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

violates not only the innocence of childhood, but also that of children's fiction and what we constitute as normal sexuality itself. There may perhaps be nothing too unusual about a man desiring little girls - it is, after all the desire in which little girls are in the end expected to recognise themselves. But men and little boys provokes something else, something which challenges fundamentally our very idea of what we like to think of as normal sexuality.

Barrie eventually adopted the five boys after their parents died, staking a claim to them which he had already done symbolically by drawing them into his tale. His biographers such as W. Beinecke (Jnr.), B.D. Cutler, and M.S. Mott have said it was clear that he cared for them. It is also true that their companionship was the great erotic experience of his life. It is difficult to evaluate especially from this distance in time, the exact evidence of whether these boys were abused.

There was however psychological abuse, in that the pressure of his passionate fascination must have been almost unbearable. Michael for example, whom he loved the most, even more than Peter, committed suicide by drowning himself when at Oxford. For him the only escape from Barrie's obsession was death. If Barrie was obsessed with little boys and believed childhood was a state of pre-pubescent angelic innocence, then what was the implication for the adult? Did Michael see adulthood as a fate worse than dying, a form of death in life. One particular section of Barrie's text hints at this attitude. "Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, oh why can't you remain like this forever". This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end. [Barrie, 1911, pg. 13].

It could be argued that the remarks about Barrie are contaminated by retrospective Freudian interpretation on his possible sexual orientation, because of recent knowledge concerning child abuse, it has become fashionable to talk about him as if he were a molesting clergyman. Perhaps he was no more than a strange, imaginative rather forlorn genius who romanticised little boys and needed children's love. But for us to view *Peter Pan* in this light means we would also be buying into the "tale". A tale being a reference used for a lie or a fib told by a child. In this case it is told by an adult.

There are many sexual implications in this novel. Jacqueline Rose goes much further in questioning the sexual disavowal which lies at the heart of the language in this story.



Because *Peter Pan* is a boy who flies away and lives on an island where babies are dispatched by birds, there is a disavowal of sexual origins; in the fact that there is no need for parents. There is also a disavowal of sexual difference illustrated by the fact that there are no girls. (Wendy is the only girl allowed to the Neverland to be part of Peter's boys on the condition that she will be their mother).

We can not view Barrie's story as innocent, not because we ourselves have been corrupted but simply because we are adults. Those of us who have crossed the threshold from puberty to adulthood, must question why someone would want to hold a child in place there, fix it and desire that it never changes. This is an act of selfishness, power and even fear. *Peter Pan* does not grow up, not because he does not want to but because someone else prefers that he should not. What is at stake in *Peter Pan* therefore is the adult's desire for the child.

“The sexuality of Peter Pan is not, therefore, just that of a man and a little boy, although the possessiveness, the ‘adoration’ (the word is that of the Times Literary Supplement in 1902), or even ‘teasing’ of the child (Observer, 1979 (Lewis, 1979)), all suggest that too in their way. The sexuality which matters is both more or less explicit than this. It is sexuality in the form of its repeated disavowal, a relentless return to the question of origins and sexual difference which is focused time and again on the child. The child is there, purely and simply, to bear the weight of that impossible question.” [Rose, 1984, pg. 27].

This text is so dense with psychic involutions that it never loses its power to fascinate. But in making it a monument to childhood we have been naive. There are many more points to Barrie's strange tale and although this is the function of Jacqueline Rose's book it is not the point of this thesis. Conceding that Barrie was not the innocent of all innocents, what are the connections between his text and the prints created by Paula Rego? While it is not the objective of this thesis to engage in the discourse of meaning and the theories of linguistics⁶ *per se* it is appropriate to address the connections of this text to the images created from it - the 15 etchings of the *Peter Pan* series.

⁶ Linguistics is the study of human language. A linguist who becomes interested in a particular language attempts to take it apart to see how it works.



The connection of the image and text

The meaning of this text is different for many people who approach it. Can we even be sure, therefore that Barrie meant exactly what any one of us thinks he meant. Kant insisted that not even Plato himself knew what he meant in his writing, and that he, Kant, could understand Plato's writings better than Plato did himself.⁷ To complicate matters further it is now widely accepted that the meaning of a text changes, according to the radical historical view (as expounded by Stephen Greenblatt with the application of Foucaultian themes to Renaissance cultural history) from era to era, indeed according to the psychological model it even changes from reading to reading. It argued that semantic autonomy would conversely suggest that with or without the author, the text or the words hold their own self-governing meaning. This could well be proven true here. Rego has taken the very same text of Barrie's as say Arthur Rackham, in order to create her images. The result is two completely different interpretations from the same words, regardless of what Barrie intended to say.

The American founder of semiotics, C.S. Peirce, distinguishes between three basic kinds of sign: (1) the *iconic* where the sign somehow resembles what it stood for (a photograph, for a person); (2) the *indexical* in which the sign is somehow associated with what it is a sign of (smoke with fire); and (3) the *symbolic* where, as with Saussure, the sign is somehow arbitrarily associated with what it is a sign of. All three forms of signification are used in both Barrie's written text and Rego's visual text and are further amplified by semiotic analysis which explore the denoture and connoture of the respective works. Hirsch, however, argues that, "Meaning is an affair of consciousness and not of physical signs or things. Consciousness is in turn an affair of persons and in textual interpretation the person's involved are an author and a reader. The meanings that are actualised by the reader are either shared with the author or belong to the reader alone." [Hirsch, Jr. E., ed., 1967, pg. 342].

This theory does not concede the power of language, or the fact that textual meaning is, to some extent, language-bound. Rego has thus applied her own consciousness to this text. Being an admirer of Jung she has also taken individual expressions from the text to unwittingly express archetypal communal meanings.

⁷ By this he meant he understood the subject better than Plato rather than Plato's meaning.



Freud and Jung dispute the question of meaning, as to whether it is something stable which can be directly interpreted and fixed. Freud believed meaning is not simply there - it is built up, it can be determined by totally contradictory associations, and can emerge long after the event which apparently gives it form. For Jung on the other hand, if childhood surfaces after the fact, then it is a fantasy which indicates that the patient is going backwards and running away from the tasks of real life. For Jung, distortion, over-determination, repetition (the terms which Freud uses to characterise our relationship to the unconscious) are the signs of an almost moral evasion. Meaning is no more divided than subjectivity itself (hence his central term "individuation"). Jung's main concern is to restore the original meaning of the symbol or archetype, a meaning which is fixed for all time. Interpreting it serves to establish both our psychic and our historical continuity. Meaning is something which can be grasped according to a strict chronology which leads from the infancy of the race directly to the idolism of mankind.

The idea that symbols simply speak is one with which Freud is most often associated. For Freud, it is thought, what they speak is sexual, for Jung mythical, but in terms of the concept of language and meaning which is involved here, there is not much to choose between them. In both cases symbols contain meanings to which we hold the key. This is the belief of Rego who allows us to hold the answer to her dark symbolic images. Rego has transformed the words or signs of Barrie's into signifiers, which are in themselves visual signs, which hold multiple meanings. She transforms the words into fixed archetypal forms. Yet she constantly expresses a desire that her work is not to be taken with fixed meanings and says it should be viewed with endless possibilities.

Rego also uses deconstructive/post structuralist thought in interpreting the text. Deconstruction is informed by the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, the philosopher and feminist theorist Julia Kristeva and the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault. Deconstruction is the name given to the critical operation by which oppositions can be partly undermined or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other. Woman has been used to denote the opposite or "other" of man assigned a negative value in relation to the male first principle. Barrie uses the notion of binary opposition, throughout his book. His hero for example is Peter, Wendy is assigned a negative value in relation to him. Rego, however, takes the side of the "other" the unfamiliar, the girl-child and sees her as being central to the story, she assigns Wendy the position of hero. She also questions the rigid



boundaries between self and non-self, truth and falsity, sense and nonsense, reason and madness, centrality and marginality.

Terry Eagleton suggests “Much literary scholarship in particular is resolutely devoted to this end, briskly ‘resolving’ ambiguities and staking the text down for the reader’s untroubled inspection.” [Eagleton, 1996, pg. 157]. Rego is not a linguist or a literary scholar and does not therefore view Barrie’s story from these perspectives. She revels in the ambiguous and arbitrary nature of the tale and the words within it. She does not take one meaning or interpretation and tie it down with solid images on a page. She allows the meaning to float, unfixd and changing. She has often expressed the wish that this is how her work is to be read. Like dream interpretation in psychoanalysis she takes the text at hand and uses it as raw material to produce her own language.



Chapter Two

Paula Rego and Peter Pan

“Wendy” he continued in a voice that no woman has ever been yet able to resist, “Wendy, one girl is more use than twenty boys”. Now Wendy was every inch a woman, though there were not very many inches, and she peeped out of the bedclothes. “Do you really think so, Peter?”

“Yes I do . . .”

“Don’t go Peter,” she entreated, “I know such lots of stories”.

Those were her precise words, so there can be no denying that it was she who first tempted him. He came back, and there was a greedy look in his eyes now which ought to have alarmed her, but did not.

“Oh, the stories I could tell to the boys!” she cried, and then Peter gripped her and began to draw her towards the window. “Let me go!” she ordered him. “Wendy do come with me.” Of course she was very pleased to be asked, but she said, “Oh dear, I can’t. Think of Mummy! Besides, I can’t fly.”

“I’ll teach you.”

“Oh how lovely to fly . . .”

He had become frightfully cunning. “Wendy”, he said “how we should all respect you.” She was wriggling her body in distress. It was quite as if she were trying to remain on the nursery floor. He had no pity for her. “Wendy”, he said, the sly one, “you could tuck us in at night.”

“Oo!”

“None of us have ever been tucked in at night.”

“Oo,” and her arms went out to him.

How could she resist. [Barrie, 1911, pg. 47-50].



Function of Fairytales

“Fairy stories represent in imaginative form what the process of healthy human development consists of, and also makes such development attractive for the child to engage in. This growth process begins with the resistance against the parents and fear of growing up, and ends when youth has truly found itself, achieved psychological independence and moral maturity, and no longer views the other sex as threatening or demonic, but is able to relate positively to it.” [Bettelheim, 1978, pg. 12].

In short, a fairytale usually makes great and positive psychological contributions to the child's inner growth. According to Bettelheim this is the essential purpose of the fairytale. This would be a belief held in common with Jack Zipes, who has written extensively on the subject of fairystories. Zipes believes that they may focus on the crucial period of adolescence, dramatising archetypal dilemmas and socially acceptable solutions. Fairytales confront the trauma of blossoming sexuality, for instance, the young adult subliminally responds to fairytale projections of adolescent conflicts. They often achieve comforting release from anxieties by subconsciously perceiving in symbolic tales the commonness of their existential problems. Moreover, the fair justice and optimistic endings instil confidence that obstacles can be overcome as the young adult progresses from childhood to maturity.

Fairytales are unique, not only as a form of literature but as a work of art. Just like a work of art, different meanings can be extracted from the same fairytale by the child depending on his needs of the moment. McEntaggart concludes “As a story told by adults to children, and then by those children, when grown up, to their own children, the fairytale not only enters the repository of collective memory, but also acts as a meeting point between the world of the adult and that of the child. It serves to mediate, for the child, between apparent inequalities: between generations (adult and child) classes (the prince and the pauper or the King and the Shepards) and genders.” [Serpentine Gallery Publications, 1988, pg. 19].

With reference to the function of fairytales we can see the lack of psychological reassurance and lack of resolution that *Peter Pan* holds for the young adult. Indeed we may be delighted as we read, or even feel enchanted by its literary qualities and sweet sentimental reference to “fairies” and “magic dust”. But the tale's deeper meaning does not offer a happy ending to the anxious young male. He is left suspended, physically and



emotionally. His female companion moves on to conquer obstacles and to reach maturity. Peter is the same from the beginning to the end, never having resolved his oedipal dilemma. He remains morally immature and perceives the opposite sex as threatening. In essence his life has not improved. If Peter is Barrie's hero, why is he not rewarded with true happiness? This is normally the hero's reward and to gain it, he undergoes growth experiences that parallel those necessary for the child's development to maturity. Peter does not grow. Barrie may claim his boy is happy, but we are only left with pity for him.

The etchings of the *Peter Pan* series by Paula Rego leave no room for pity. They also tell a story. Rego has given this story a twist. She is beside the beast (Wendy) not the beauty (Peter). She confronts the dark powers emanating from this mixture. Her sympathy may be with Wendy but this is not a simplistic tale of victims and oppressors at all. Rego's own story is very much a part of this series and all her art, in that the influences from her childhood in particular have contributed to these etchings.

Paula Rego was born in Lisbon in 1935. She was an only child who suffered from both incipient tuberculosis and agoraphobia. She was educated at St. Julian's School, Carcavelos from 1945-1951. Her religion, education and upbringing in Salazar's Portugal were very oppressive forces⁸, as a result of which fear was a familiar state. Rego exploits the use of terror in her work to try to give fear a face.

Cinema and theatre had a great impact on her as a child. She watched many Disney films including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Luis Bûnel, the surrealist film-maker was one of her favourite artists. Film stars, such as Brazilian Carmen Miranda, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers and Judy Garland (with her famous red shoes) delighted her. Next to cinema, fairystories had the greatest impact on her work. She is interested in the verbal narrative tradition, whether written or spoken. She was constantly amused as a child by fairystories, folk tales, and legends told to her by relatives. The fairytale not only enters the repository of collective memory, but also acts as a meeting point between the world of the adult and that of the child. She admits the illustrators of many tales she read provided

⁸ Portugal during Paula's childhood was still in touch with this immemorial world, still rural enough to have a living folklore. To a large degree this lack of change had been artificially maintained and at some cost. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar had become Prime Minister in 1932 and ruled as the self appointed leader through four decades. He had a dictatorial hold, the price of his puritanical rule was poor technological improvement and bestial poverty, Religious



inspiration. Also the caricatures of Pluma y Lapis, the cartoons of Walt Disney, and the drawings of Benjamin Rabier and English illustrators such as Gilroy and Rowlandson. She told John McEwen in an interview "I loved the English illustrators. Tenniel, especially his 'Alice in Wonderland' drawings . . . But there's Arthur Rackham, Beatrix Potter, lots and lots of other English illustrators . . ." [McEwen, 1992, pg. 44].

To this day Rego must be inspired by a story to make art. Her stories are not straightforward. Her images do not preach moral lessons like many fairystories do. They are concerned with the dividing line between nurturing and harming, love and hate, and what lies between good and evil.

Being raised in a wealthy home with strict formal behaviour and etiquette, Paula was taught to be polite and lady-like. Many of her paintings mirror this aspect of her life even the instruments which were traditionally wielded in the domestic space by women (cooking instruments and cosmetics), she also portrays as the agents of mutilation and amputation. An example of this can be found in *Pioneers, Rabbit and Weeping Cabbages, Cabbage and Potato*, (1982), and *The Little Murderess*, (1987). As Marina Warner suggests, "Her stern - little girls with bows in their hair intent on their household tasks - recall the female paragons in the moral tales of the Comtesse De Ségur for example *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, which Paul Rego read when she was their age." [Rego, 1994, pg. 7]. The prim and proper heroines of the Comtesse de Ségur's books are less docile than they pretend. This behaviour approximated to Rego's own experience in which demure obedience sometimes hid the most wicked thoughts. Rego enters that disturbing gap between the portrayal of the hero's perfections and the wicked feelings stirring inside oneself. Rego's art concurs that everyone has a public world, a private world and a secret world.

After completing school in Kent, Rego attended The Slade School of Art from 1952-1956⁹. Her Guardian in England, David Philips objected "You can't go, all that happens to girls who go to art school is that they get pregnant." And indeed she did. At the Slade she met

prohibitions, class stratifications, sexual discrimination bourgeois observances lay undisturbed. Television was almost unknown, Americanisation did not begin until the 1960s.

⁹ Her parents were pleased that she wanted to go to Art College - a rare response in the Salazar's Portugal where women were not even allowed a passport without permission from their husband or father. The Slade offered her new freedoms yet angered her. She disapproved of the way women were not treated as equals and the fact that rich girls were admitted at the expense of poorer ones in the hope that they would support struggling young male artists by marrying them.



Victor Willing, who later became her husband. She gave birth to their first child in her final year.

Rego eventually settled in London with her family, after leaving college. Victor Willing became ill with Multiple Sclerosis and became progressively disabled for most of their marriage. In 1963 Willing suffered a heart attack. It is not surprising, therefore, that Rego suffered from depression as the strain of her domestic life took its toll. She continued to work, however and establish herself as an artist.

She has had a remarkable artistic career, moving from a version of Art Brut, influenced by Dubuffet, to her present, much more classical version of figuration. The linking thread has always been not only a strong element of fantasy but also an interest in narrative, and perhaps this is why her work has been so successful, in Britain, where the commitment to narrative remains strong. Her technique is a mixture of old and new methods - the kind of allegory one might find in Tiepolo combined with the kind of symbolism one might discover in Dalí. Victor Willing identified her overriding interest as "times past" and "domination".

Rego is not one of those artists who finds her voice quickly at a London art school, then spends the rest of her career producing variations on the same song. She was in her forties when she achieved artistic independence.

Since 1973 she periodically received Jungian psychotherapy. This was initially to help her with depression but it also revitalised her interest in her own childhood and, consequently, in folk tales, children's art and Art Brut. Her research into fairytales and weekly sessions of analysis were mutually helpful in making her confront the legacy of her own childhood which in turn benefited her art. McEntaggart reminds us that "her childhood is recollected not as a series of distant events from which she as an adult is disconnected, but rather as always present, more or less accessible in the here and now, waiting to be tapped, colouring the incidents that affect her today." [Serpentine Gallery Publications, 1988, pg. 18].

In 1962 she received a Bursary from the Gulbenkian foundation, Lisbon, again in 1975 they gave her a grant. This enabled her to take time off from her painting to research fairytales more comprehensively. In 1983 she became a visiting lecturer in painting at the



Slade School of Art in London. In 1987 Victor Willing died. The sadness and strain of her private life showed in her paintings of this period, mainly large scale works including farewell scenes for example *The Cadet and his Sister*, *Departure* and *The Exile*. Willing was still alive when she began to paint *The Family* (Fig. 1) in 1987, but then she had a different title in mind "The Raising of Lazarus". This period of work which began with *The Maids* (Fig. 2) was the first large scale and purely figurative work she had painted since the 1950s. They showed her development of sophistication and ambition. They also illustrated her ability as a storyteller. The dark subversive power of these paintings is a trademark of Rego's work. As Waldemar Januszczak concurs, "Through her work she supplies the clues and encourages you to add the plot. Her art is totally involving because it manages to be marvellously mysterious and shockingly frank at the same time, which is quite a trick." [The Sunday Times, 16th Feb. 1997, pg. 10]

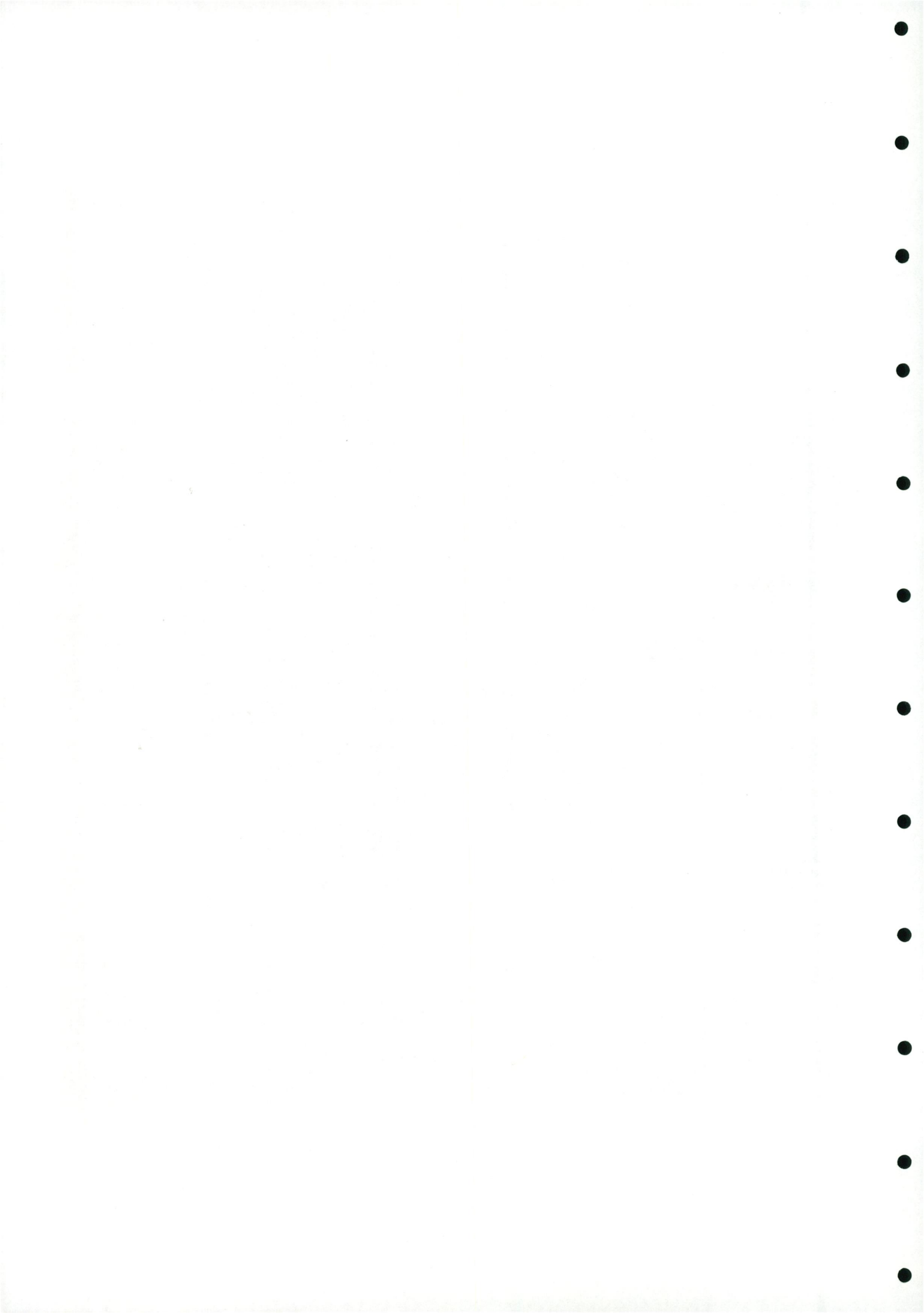
Figure 1





Figure 2





When the Tate Gallery, Liverpool gave her an impressive retrospective, they were intent upon seeing her as a British artist, but the evidence of the show itself suggests otherwise. Her work remains distinctly Iberian. When viewing her work we could only think of her as Portuguese, although she has been influenced more by the Spanish pictorial tradition than by any endemic art she might have encountered in her homeland.

While Rego was not an avid reader, she did read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* planting as it did, the first stirrings of independence in whole generations of women. This was one of the first books she read at college.

Most of Rego's attention is given to reading books on fairytales. She has read Freud and used in particular his writings on *Jokes and their relation to the Unconscious* to explain some of her work. The writings of Henry Darger have had a vast effect on her work. He is an interesting example of the phenomenon of "Outsider Art" or "Art Brut". He had spent most of his adult life between 1916 and 1972 working by day as a toilet-cleaner and bandage-roller in Chicago Hospital, while spending his spare time secretly devoting himself to the great passion of his life, this one long novel, comprising an amazing saga in thirteen volumes. The story tells of a gang called the "Vivian Girls" who lived on a distant planet controlled by wicked soldiers. It tells of the endless ways in which these heroines get the better of the soldiers. Darger wrote and illustrated this volume. *The story of the Vivian Girls in what is called the Realms of the Unreal*. The "Girls" and their pranks immediately appealed to Rego's subversive imagination, and she did a whole series of her own paintings in the 1980s based on the "Vivian Girls". This work is also reminiscent of the novels of the Comtesse de Ségur and of the plays of Jean Genet which she read. Naturally coming through a long period of Jungian psychotherapy she had read Jung and is very familiar with his concepts. Rego's style of working just like her topics for reading could not be called typical.

Among artists she looks to for inspiration are Henry Miller, Dubuffet, Goya, Piero de Cosimo, she is also very devoted to Mexican art and surrealist art.

Rego's work opposes the expressionist and heroic. The pompous self-importance of the grand gesture is most frequently a characteristic of her male characters. The women in her work undergo a humanisation, and while the men making grand gestures fall down on their face, her women are left standing. Rego is interested in the small gestures, for she believes

western art up until recently has been a series of heroic, grand gestures. The small gestures of the illustrators, cartoonists and story-tellers are what Rego loves and are significantly outside the mainstream of "High Art". Rego has always felt at home with popular art rather than High Art - she prefers her work to be instinctive and immediate.

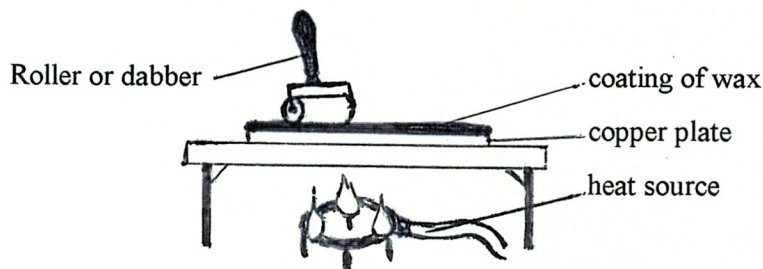
After her last farewell work called *The Dance* in 1988, she turned to a new medium - printmaking. Having abandoned the strain of painting on a large scale she released much pent-up energy in her etchings. Because of her inexperience with etching she chose to work with her friend Paul Coldwell, a printmaker and sculptor. She chose to illustrate some of the most popular English nursery rhymes and these formed her first solo exhibition with Marlborough Fine Art in the Winter of 1989. She had shown some etchings previous to this - which were much influenced by Goya at the Edward Toteh Gallery in 1987 but her series of nursery rhymes was her first sustained involvement with the medium.

In 1992 she executed the *Peter Pan* Series of 15 etchings and aquatints, some in colour, others in black and white. Charles Hall maintains that "Those who come to her new *Peter Pan* series in all innocence, expecting nothing but whimsical fantasy, will find it discomfiting. While there are images of sheer release, they are outnumbered by darker scenes." [Arts Review, V. 45, Jan. 93, pg. 14-15]. She seems to have approached this task, not as an outsider, nor as a seducer, but as if she were speaking of herself and telling tales she knew; tales of her playroom as a child, tales of the stage, tales of the psychoanalysts' consulting room, thereby creating a context for an uninhibited telling of one's story. In the enclosed space of these prints she managed to depict both the interior and exterior world. She has managed to take the images and treat them in an adult way. Paul Coldwell compares Rego's method to "That of a stage director, which tallies with her own childhood delight with her toy theatre . . . by taking the images by the scruff of the neck she returns them to the adult world." [McEwen, 1992, pg. 179].

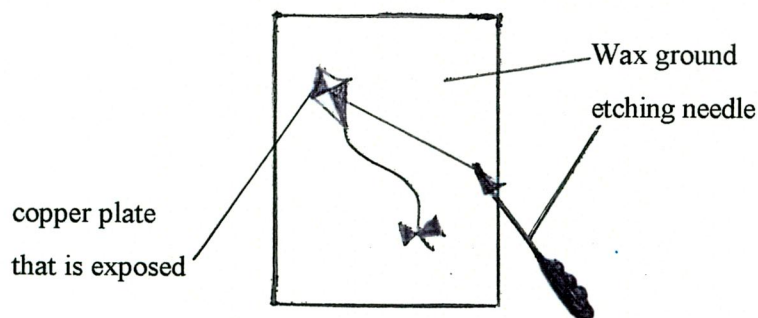
If the underlying themes of Barrie's novel was the difficulties of the Adult/Child relationship and the sexual questions surrounding it, these same ambiguities are at the heart of the *Peter Pan* Series, with one significant exception. Rego is conscious of the fantasy images she creates and of the animal nature that gives desire a licence.

Meaning, however, is only given substance through form, and form is realised through technique. The technique of etching is, therefore, an inherent part of the exposition of ideas and for that reason is given the attention it deserves in the presentation of these ideas.

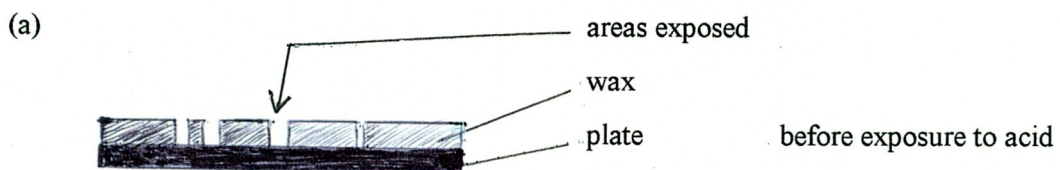
The process of etchings begins with the preparation of a plate. In this case Rego used copper plates. This allowed her to achieve a greater brightness in the white areas of the print, since copper plating does not hold as much ink as steel or aluminium plates. The usual thickness of a plate is 16 or 18 gauge (1/16 in. or 1/18 in). Firstly the plate is prepared with an acid-resistant coating of wax. This is done on a hot-plate or over a source of heat which is sufficient to allow the wax to be melted onto the plate. The back is also coated with varnish usually bitumen.



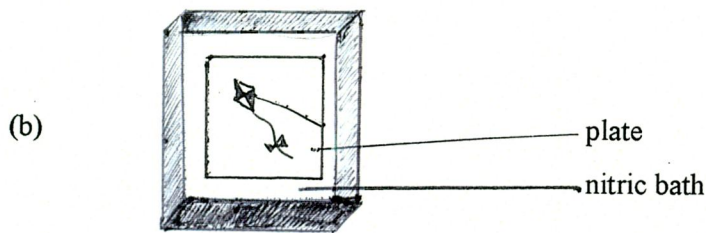
The drawing is then made by removing the ground from the plate surface with a needle or sharp etching tool, so that the desired drawing is exposed.



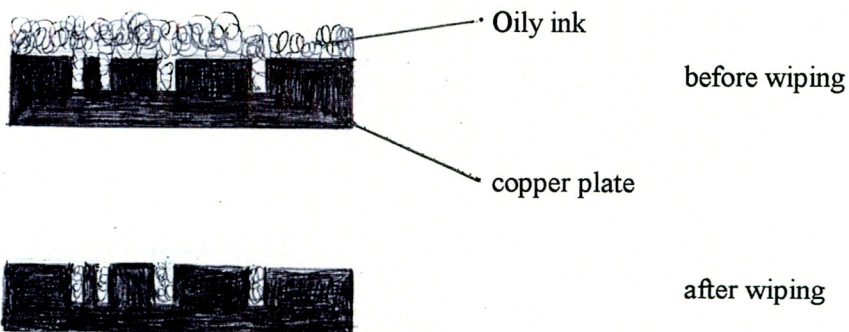
The plate is then immersed in a diluted form of acid, in this case nitric is used as it best suits copper plates. The acid bites the plate in the areas exposed. The deeper a line is bitten the blacker it will print. But it is seldom possible to predict and control exactly the behaviour of the acid and consequently the quality of the line.



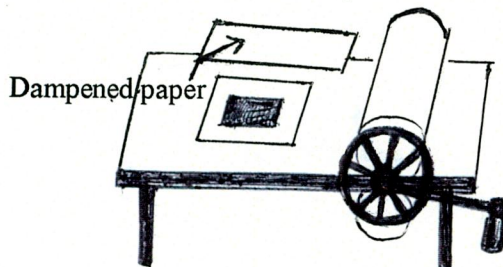




The grey areas can be stopped out during the biting as many times as is required. Bitumen can be applied to grey areas to protect them or hold them while further exposure can be safely given to darken other areas. When the result has been achieved the coating of wax ground and bitumen varnish are cleaned from the plate, using a solvent, normally turpentine or turpentine substitute. Then the plate is ready to be inked. This can be done over a low heat source or not. The oily copperplate ink is applied and wiped into the plate with a stiff muslin cloth. The ink will eventually come away from the un-etched surface, the only ink left being that held in the indentations.



The plate can be placed on the bed of the press. It is safer to put a layer of tissue paper underneath it, in order to keep the border of the print clean.



A sheet of dampened paper is then placed over the plate to receive the print.

The press is like a giant mangle with the bed passing between two heavy rollers. The number of blankets used varies from three to five and is a matter of personal choice. The bed of the press is passed through the rollers, causing tremendous yet soft pressure, using

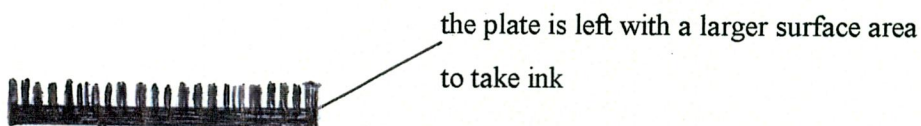


the blankets to force the paper into the grooves of the inked plate and lift the ink from the lines. The blankets are then removed and gently the paper is peeled away from the plate.

This, very simply, is the way in which an etching is made. In order to make a coloured etching, coloured ink is applied. It is the method that Rego used to make these etchings. An aquatint is another variation where a resin ground is applied to give a nice grainy effect with large etched areas.

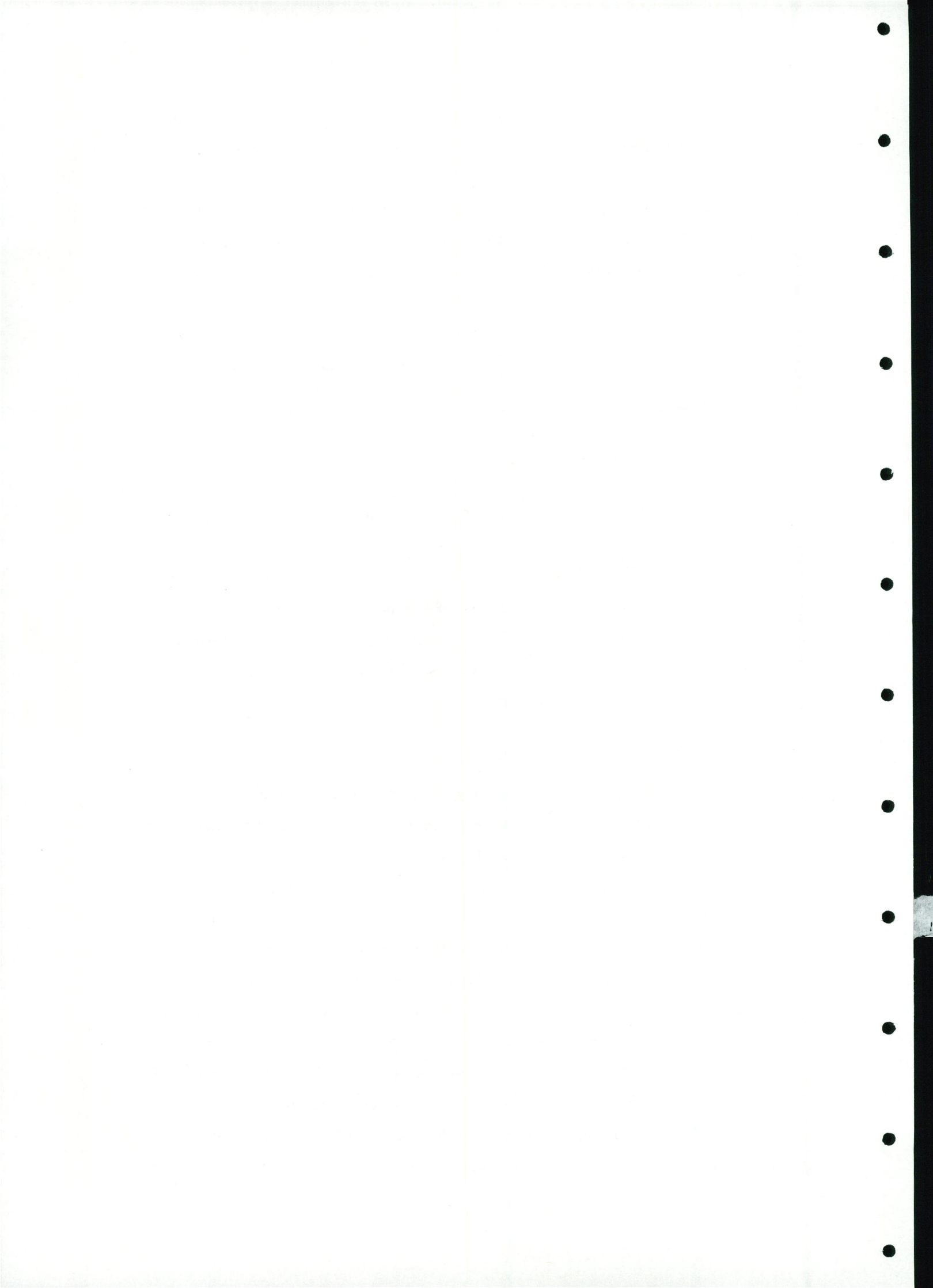


The process is followed as for etching



But as Paul Coldwell says, "The technique of etching can be learned in a day. It's the invention of the drawing that matters. It was a joy for me to work with her because her images are so strongly drawn. At various points in the making of a print she insists on looking at it from a distance. That's another thing most artists don't do". [McEwen, 1992, pg. 179].

These prints carry undercurrents of the nasty, the sinister and the frightening. Brian Fallon chief art critic of the Irish Times describes her method as a "black macabre vision which has made her simultaneously fashionable and controversial" (The Irish Times, 4th November, 1996). This series of prints is highly successful. The subject matter is daring and she has a unique method of dealing with this story in her technique. These plates were made into coloured etchings. Since this was Rego's first attempt at colour, she admitted that she found the process very hard to do, and ascribes her success to the expertise of Paul Coldwell. However, well these etchings are drawn, the colour can seem to weaken their impact. Coldwell admitted that he may have known how to print in colour but was not an expert, hence the colour was kept minimal and mostly in block form. This gives a forced effect. The colour does not always add to the work, at times it questionably distracts our attention from the intriguing subject to the surface. Rego points out there is a sparing use of rather faded colours, each of which is kept quite separate from the others, to create a



quiet wistfulness. "Colour", she says, "is emotional, I use local colours, not sunset colours." [Arts Review, v. 45, Jan. 93, pg. 14]. This notion does work well in her printing of *The Neverland*, *Wendy and Hook*, *Mermaid Drowning Wendy* and *Pirates Taking away the Lost Boys*. But there are other examples where the colour is unnecessary and weakens the impact for example *Wendy and the Lost Boys*, *Captain Hook and Lost Boy* and *Boys and Pirates Fighting*. It is questionable in these prints whether she would not have been better leaving these images in black and white like *Wendy sowing on Peter's Shadow*. The basic black and white prints like her previous *Nursery Rhymes* prints could attribute much of their success to the sharp contrasting quality which added to their mystery, starkness and dreamlike atmosphere. In this series there is a fine line between the success of colour use and its failure. Much of the technical work for these prints was done by Paul Coldwell her technician. Her role was in drawing these images, and working under his direction with the chemical processes. In this regard she could not be described as being very technically accomplished. Many printmakers adopt a dismissive approach to artists who use technicians and do not print their images themselves. Many people believe the work can not be attributed to them but rather to their printer. However, Coldwell is adamant that Rego's work was totally her own with a minimum of input from him, he says "it is a tribute to Paula's own skill that she destroyed only two plates during the entire process." [McEwen, 1992, pg. 179].

Her method of drawing and use of light and shade is distinctive and unique, it is very theatrical. Her drawing technique is quite childlike at times. Her coloured etching is akin to a black and white lined picture being coloured by a child with crayons. In this respect these etchings are technically bold and innovative, they relish in their primitiveness, Rego makes no apologies and no excuses.



Chapter Three

The Adult/Child Relationship

“Mrs. Darling first heard of Peter when she was tidying up her children’s minds. It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for the next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. If you could keep awake (but of course you can’t) you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake up in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind, and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on.

Occasionally in her travels through her children’s minds Mrs. Darling found things she could not understand and of these, quite the most perplexing was the word Peter. She knew of no Peter and yet he was here and there in John and Michael’s minds,, while Wendy’s began to be scrawled all over with him! 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.” [Barrie, 1911, pg. 19-20].



The very habit and faculty that makes apprehensible to us what is known and expected dulls our sensitivity to other forms, even with the most obvious. We must rub our eyes and look again, clear our minds of what we are looking for to see what is there. [Malouf, 1994, pg. 30].

Rego's images of the Neverland are dark and intriguing, sinister and yet exciting. She has managed to plumb darker sides of human relationships than is openly admitted. These prints are challenging, subversive and imaginative. Indeed Charles Hall warns that, "Those who come to her new *Peter Pan* Series in all innocence, expecting nothing but whimsical fantasy, will find it discomfiting. While there are images of sheer release, they are outnumbered by darker scenes." [Hall, *Arts Review*, v. 45, Jan. 93, pg. 14]. In these darker scenes Rego is not anxious about offending the delicate moral equilibrium of the world of the Adult and Child. The images suggest dark and endless possibilities especially in terms of the Adult/Child relationship. Wendy's attraction to Hook, like Beauty's attraction to the Beast inspires fantasies about abduction and echoes pornography's conjuration of sadism and rape.

Rego depicts the complications and tensions, the uneasiness and tenderness between Adult and Child. She provokes questions but never depicts solutions. She hints at uneasy transgressions especially in the sexuality at work. As Victor Willing explains, "The matter for Paula often concerns domination, or rebellion and domination, or freedom and repression, suffocation and escape. In these dramas her sympathy for the protagonists is ambivalent and wavering - as when she watched a child-prostitute in a fairground whose father stood by as the leering bumpkins sidled past. Who was victim, who exploiter, whore, pimp or client?" [McEwen, 1992, pg. 8].

Rego focuses closely on Hook and Wendy. Wendy is her hero and is given dominance in many scenes. But she does not hold this position unequivocally. Rego is a stranger to the world of unequivocality. For her all events are Janus-headed. The entrapper is the trapper and vice-versa. The horrifying picture of Hook escorting Wendy after capture encapsulates this (Fig. 3).



Figure 3



Wendy is small and Hook looms evilly above her. The girl-child timidly draws her jacket together over her non-existent breasts. But her other hand stretches up to the adult pirate, who holds his arm out to her quite gallantly. Her hand stretches up to Hook and disappears into him, claiming him as her prey as much as she is his. Her face is resolute as if accepting of injustice, but it has also a hard gravity. Notwithstanding the protruding phallic



sword and Hook's weapon/hand, she distances him, she controls him. Wendy reminds us of the suffocating child-adult of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*. The longer we look, the less certain we feel of how this encounter will end. Paul Coldwell says, "Hook is supposed to be this rather crusty old crock of a man who is still very much potent, and when we look at him here with Wendy in this meeting, we just know that Hook is going to come out the worst for it." [Coldwell, Interview, 1998].

Marina Warner compares Rego's images to that of Angela Carter's [Warner, 1994, pg. 310] in the fact that the work excites contradictory and powerful feelings in their audience, because while openly challenging conventional misogyny in the very act of speaking and making images, they also refuse the wholesome or pretty picture of female gender (nurturing, caring) and deal plainly with erotic dominance as a source of pleasure for men and women. This statement could also be extended to include erotic dominance as pleasure for children if we are considering Rego's work. Here we see Wendy is capable of subjugating the potent Hook as he attempts to enslave her. If Barrie's motive was the desire for little boys, here we are presented with equally disturbing suggestions, Hook abducting a little girl. But this child is very much complying. We should expect her to be such, only if she was unaware of what may happen to her. Yet Wendy understands and in her awareness is still complying. This notion suggests as a child she has the sexual insight of an adult.

Rego's work has been compared to that of Balthus who is the voyeur of burgeoning sexuality and the imminent corruption of teenage girls. Most of Balthus' paintings contain a sense of male voyeurism, for example, (Fig. 4) *La Leçon de guitare* (1934). Yet Rego's work leaves no room for male voyeurism. Her girls are seen as the memories of a woman. There is no idealisation. Her female figures, unlike those of Balthus, are players in the drama, they are quite dominant. Balthus' principal subject remains unchanged - the sexual corruption of teenage girls, while each set of circumstances in Rego's paintings differ. Her female heroes are not on view as being corruptible, rather her girls are themselves out to get the better of someone. They are intrinsically more novel and complex because they have been painted by a woman. Yet there are unmistakable similarities in the use of body language and positioning of the figures (Fig. 5) *Joan Mirò et sa fille* (1932) and (Fig. 6) *Roger et son fils* (1936) in comparison especially to the prints of *Wendy and Hook* (Fig. 3) and *Captain Hook and Lost Boy* (Fig. 7). Both depict the adult/child relationship and ambivalent sexuality.



Figure 4





Figure 5





Figure 6





Figure 7





Figure 8





A similar print is *Captain Hook and Lost Boy* (Fig. 7). The small child sits on the lap of the unadorned Hook, wigless, undressed, unarmed. Peter himself leans towards his captor, there is no attempt to struggle free, as his hand nestles in Hook's paedophilic clasp. The child's other hand nervously kneads Hook's tense thigh. Hook's eyes are empty. If the eyes are said to be a mirror of the soul, we could conclude Hook has none. The child's eyes are aware and wide to take in what is going on. Just like Samson from the biblical tale who had his hair removed, Hook is now vulnerable and weak. Rego suggests he is vulnerable to his desires and his weakness is for little boys.

According to Freud, the sexuality of the male human contains an element of aggressiveness, symptomatic of a desire to subjugate, the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing. This sadistic element can be seen here. The lost boy is pinned by the Pirates Hook. Although the pirate is restraining the boy, he does not object, indeed he seems to be controlling Hook to an extent. These images therefore suggest a co-dependent relationship. These prints are disquieting. Most portrayals of the adult/child relationship, no matter how intimate, are assumed innocent. If the same spectacle were recreated with two adults, (for example holding hands or sitting on each other's knee) the situation becomes more often than not sexual. Yet simply because of the nature of the adult/child relationship we assume its innocence.

Rego takes nothing for granted, not even the innocence of the child. The sinister undertones to these prints are suggesting situations we would rather not acknowledge. These prints are similar to Arthur Rackham's in their gothic quality and their use of darkness. Both draw their images from a world with dark possibilities. Just like Rego, he does not feel a need to sentimentalise or beautify his audience's world. (Fig. 8). Rackham's Wendy might well be threatened by a moving tree in this foreboding world of dark potential, but Rego's Wendy comes under threat from the adult.

Jeffrey Weeks discusses Adult/Child sexual relations in *Sexuality and its Discontents*. He articulates it as a very difficult subject to confront, suggesting that it does not easily fit into the rhetoric of rights - whose rights and how are they to be expressed: the child's, the adult's? Nor can it be governed by the idea of consent. Kinsey argued that in a sense this was a non-issue: there was no reason, except for our exaggerated fear of sexuality, why a child should be disturbed at seeing the genitalia of others or even at being played with, and

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it was more likely to be adult reactions that upset the child than the sexual activity itself. Problematically, others like Tom O'Carroll whose *Paedophilia: The Radical Case* is the most sustained advocacy of the subject, suggests likewise. O'Carroll presents the case that sexual relations between an adult and child has no negative repercussions once the child is compliant, even if it does not understand exactly what it is engaging in. The flaw in both of these arguments in justifying such relations is that the adult holds the knowledge and therefore holds the power. If the adult has the power then the child is at a disadvantage, and is being exploited. The child might comply in his innocence now, but he will not remain a child forever. When he becomes an adult he will then have sexual knowledge himself, which may no longer leave him compliant with such a past.

Rego's children depicted here are not innocent of sexuality. They appear to be adult-children. This unusual twist does not make the concept of sexual relations between adult and child any less disturbing. Rego's depictions may be dark and unsettling in their suggestions, but she wants us to consider the darker side to ourselves and the ambiguous nature of sexuality. We can never assume what we know when looking at Rego's etchings.

Many feminists argue that children especially young girls, do need protection from adult men in an exploitative and patriarchal society, whatever the utopian possibilities that might exist in a different society. This suggests the adult is fully aware of the sexual connotations of his actions because he (and it is usually he) lives in a world of heavily sexualised symbols and language. The child does not. In a recent study of 25 boys engaged in homosexual-paedophile relations the author Theo Sandfort, found that potentially provocative acts which children make are not necessarily consciously intended to be sexual and are interpreted by the older persons as having a sexual element. This indicates an inherent imbalance in awareness of the situation. An imbalance of awareness which is not present in Rego prints of *Wendy and Hook* (Fig. 3), *Captain Hook and Lost Boy* (Fig. 7) and *Tiger Lily on Marooners' Rock* (Fig. 9). Here we have children more like adults in children's bodies.

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Figure 9





In *Tiger Lily on Marooners' Rock*, the Indian squaw is being tied to the rock by a dark robust pirate who himself seems to be hewn from the rock. The rock/pirate is a symbol of the phallus and the chief's daughter is in ecstasy as she consents to this act of bondage. The pirate is intent upon his task. Tiger Lily appears comfortable. Is there something she knows that the pirate is unaware of? He obviously poses no threat to her. Tiger Lily and Wendy show examples of the influence of Henry Darger and the Comtesse de Segúr in Rego's work. The girls are obedient to the adult, but beneath the obedience lies wicked desires. Both Wendy and Tiger Lily seem to have had a sexual awakening. They are depicted as being without their innocence, in comparison to the lost boys. They are not aware of what is going on. They are innocent and piteous in their half-knowing manner. These prints depict the sexual awakening of the girl child, with all its terrors and mysteries.

Rego's print of *Wendy and the Lost Boys* (Fig. 10) depicts the matured Wendy at the end of the story, here she is nursing a child possibly her own. The thin unwanted little boys creep past Wendy at her feet. They wait for her attention which never arrives. She is portrayed as a mother. If these are her children why does she ignore the naked scrawny children, one of whom is brought to his knees? As Wendy fondles the plump and wanted baby, we question the notion of motherhood. Wendy is indeed being nurturing and caring but only in a selective manner. She has a vested interest in this one child. Could this be her favourite child, the son of Peter whom she so longed to mother. Peter appears fully matured and naked, he has detached himself, still childish in manner he plays with his pipe. Why has Rego made Peter a man in this print? Given the mother role Wendy plays and the children present, it casts him in the role of the father. Here she has defied Barrie, she has forced Peter (the eternal child) to grow up. If Barrie went to extremes to keep his hero from reaching maturity, Rego takes Peter many steps further and makes him a man, with the ultimate act of fathering a child. She has broken the sexual disavowal of the book. This is still by no means a scene of Peter recognising the responsibility of his adulthood. Peter is still childlike and distracted, he does not play a role in caring for his child. Wendy is also unfair in her treatment of the children. Again this print is true to the sinister and dark side of life.



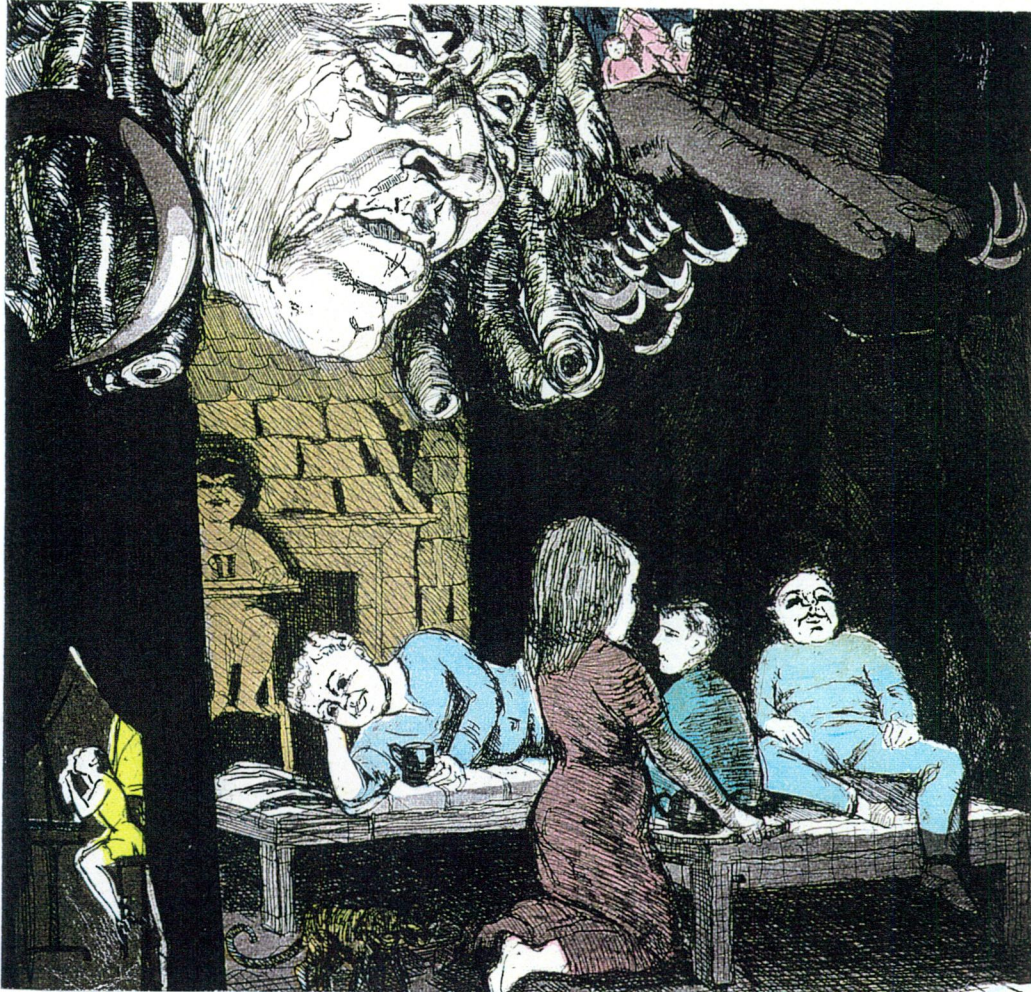
Figure 10



Rego's print of *The House Under the Ground* (Fig. 11), shows a world that echoes the ideas of Jung. We are reminded of the world of dreams and of the unconscious, as most of the story takes place underground, underwater or at night. Rego's view of the children's home is that of the interior, the underground. Hook comes from the exterior and breaks into their world, a giant onlooker with his threatening weapon, disturbing the serenity and self-sufficiency of their domain. He has come searching, expecting to find something in these children that he needs. The contentedness of these children highlights the pirates lack. His dissatisfaction with his own realm drives him to penetrate their world to which he does not belong. An act of anger or jealousy.



Figure 11



We are reminded here of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, in which Alice functions as a giant in a world of miniatures. She looks through the door into their world and wishes to enter it. The viewer is disarmed here as the fairytale world of the nursery is turned upside down. The image takes on a surreal quality in the juxtaposition of doll-like characters which are placed in this nightmarish background. The distortion of scale produces a disquieting effect. The characters are reminiscent of Arthur Rackham's goblins and giants from *Brobdingnag*. This particular etching shows how Rego clearly thought first of all in line, and only second in colour. In this respect she is similar to Rackham whose plates may indeed be described as coloured line drawings. His subject mostly trees, roots, wrinkled faces suited that treatment in fluid line. He was considered successful with his use of colour. Yet Rego's use of line and colour is awkward. This technical flaw works to her advantage by adding to the unsettling effect that gives an overall uneasy atmosphere.



Rego's portrayal of the grand finale between *Peter and Hook* (Fig. 12) shows again the adult and child this time in battle. Notwithstanding his dominant size, Hook appears frail and unfocused as opposed to Peter's nimble, energetic stance. Peter's confident nature suggests that the money's on him. He is the fighting force for the maturing children who are tied helpless like a bunch of asparagus. They are paralysed by the fear of facing or fighting the crocodile. The crocodile is said to be a symbol of the father when it appears in dreams. Peter is ready to take on the challenge of fighting Hook, another symbol of the father, for Wendy, who plays the role of the mother. An Oedipal drama that is depicted with a resolution in Rego's print entitled *The Return* (Fig. 13).

Figure 12

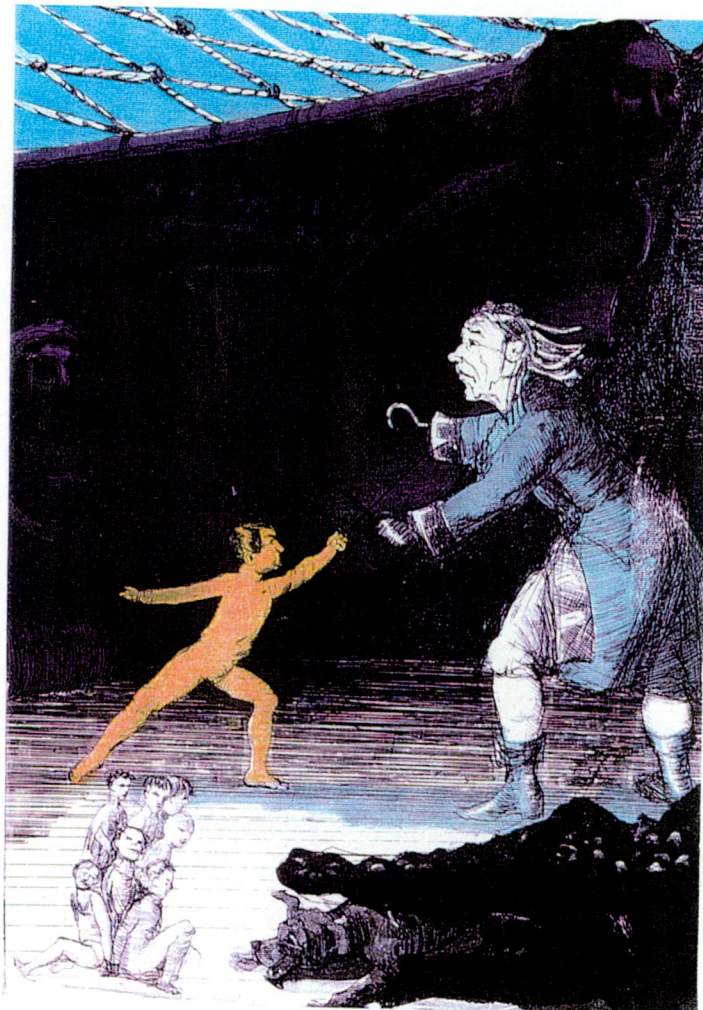




Figure 13



We see here Mr. Darling the humiliated father who played a joke on Nana which went wrong. He challenges the family "Am I master of this house or is she?" [Barrie, 1911, pg. 34]. The children fly off to Neverland and he shamefully crawls into the kennel. On the island the children meet their father in another form (Hook) symbolically murder him through Peter Pan and return home. Whereupon Mr. Darling crawls out of the kennel and so the children can grow up. This picture shows hope for the child and the adult. There is a beauty in the white ship moving steadily through the blueness of the sky, with its cargo of comfort for the ravished adults below. The cargo being the children themselves returning home. They have left behind *The Neverland* (Fig. 14), a place of deadly violence where Hook appears as death and the scene is clotted with images of fear and anxiety. Even the palm tree in the background explodes its foliage like a cannon. The bull from the sea has become the minotaur, and Wendy floats in this threatening chaos about the Neverland. We



know she will be unaffected by this journey. She is untroubled by the minotaur (known for its sexual appetite) the goat (associated in mythology with the devil) and the other unrestrained beasts. This girl child floats happily. She is comfortable with not being in control in the world of confusing adults. The adult pirates push death forward in his chariot, acting like his work horses, while Wendy is a bird of the air.

Figure 14





Childhood was full of moments that left us confused by adult behaviour. Were we witness to an act of love or hate? As witness and not participant, we felt excluded and therefore suspicious. Our curiosity grew, we went seeking forbidden knowledge. We longed to lose our innocence. (Innocence being a reference to the child's lack of knowledge not its lack of guilt). There was great excitement in secrets and prying. A process of growing we were allowed to experience. Yet we normally discovered things that weren't forbidden, for example what it felt like to win a prize, to feel rejected or to stand before an audience. Erotic knowledge came later, but once perceived and within grasp - it was forbidden. This is the normal balance that prevalent culture holds on the child. Without it the world is a dangerous place, without it, the adult would be uneasy. Rego depicts such a domain. She plays on our need to make sense of what we perceive of the Adult/Child relationship, particularly in terms of its sexuality. We need to give it a form that we believe is true, which we can make sense of, and expel the grey areas or any shady truths. Rego confronts the sense of unease in the Adult/Child relationship and challenges our need to keep all disquieting potentials at bay. The sexuality at work between her characters is ambiguous, it suggests tenderness, misunderstanding and manipulation. At times the encounters look innocent, from another perspective they are showing paedophilic relations and children aware of subversively using their sexuality to challenge and dominate the adult. A very real world that we try to control and deny. Rego's depiction of this sinister world is not without morality, rather it is without idealisation.



Chapter Four

Maturation

"Ah, old lady," Peter said aside to Wendy, warming himself by the fire and looking down at her as she sat turning a heel, "there is nothing more pleasant of an evening for you and me when the day's toil is over than to rest by the fire with the little ones near by."

"It is sweet, Peter, isn't it? Wendy said, frightfully gratified. "Peter, I think Curly has your nose." "Michael takes after you."

She went to him and put her hand on his shoulder. "Dear Peter," she said, "with such a large family, of course, I have now passed my best, but you don't want to change me, do you?"

"No, Wendy."

Certainly he did not want a change, but he looked at her uncomfortably, blinking, you know, like one not sure whether he was awake or asleep.

"Peter, what is it?"

"I was just thinking," he said, a little scared, "It is only make-believe, isn't it, that I am their father?"

"Oh yes," Wendy said primly.

"You see," he continued apologetically, "It would make me seem so old to be their real father."

"But they are ours Peter, yours and mine."

"But not really, Wendy?" He asked anxiously.

"Not if you don't wish it," she replied, and she distinctly heard his sigh of relief.

"Peter," she asked, trying to speak firmly, "what are your exact feelings for me?"

"Those of a devoted son, Wendy."

"I thought so," she said, and went and sat by herself at the extreme end of the room.

"You are so queer", he said, frankly puzzled "and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother."

"No, indeed, it is not," Wendy replied with frightful emphasis. Now we know why she was prejudiced against the redskins. [Barrie, 1911, pg. 133].



Rego depicts Maturation as a strange, uneasy phenomenon, yet inevitable. Unlike Barrie's boy *Peter Pan*, the children of Rego's creation do mature. She guarantees their passage to adulthood. This journey, as she reveals, is not straightforward. She believes people do not mature in spirit at the same rate as they physically mature. No two people have the same passage to maturity, if indeed they get there at all. The children in these prints are involved in a process that is fraught with fears, anxieties and terror. Both the girls and the boys are overcome by the life force of maturation in Rego's prints. Unlike Barrie, Rego is not selective with who grows up and who remains a child. She allows the bodily processes to unfold. Her comments are left for the mental and spiritual maturity of the characters. It could be argued that the statements Rego makes are no different from what we already know, that of the female child developing faster than the male child (Brooks-Gunn & Peterson, 1983). Separate from reaching puberty they have a faster emotional development in comparison to the male. Such theories have long been studied and expounded by psychologists and sociologists (for example, M.C. Jones, Westney, Jenkins & Benjamin).

Rego takes on the psychological aspects of a maturing child, the fears, moods and related emotions. Just as she breaks the taboos and strict definitions of adult/child relations, she forces us to reconsider many notions of maturation.

However, she does not suggest any one view of maturity. Her commentary shows maturation as a complex, difficult, exciting, joyous and fearful process, that is not confined to children alone. The sexuality at work is ambivalent. But without a doubt the significance is on the developing sexuality of the girl. Rego has taken Barrie's tale and given it a gender twist. In her prints it becomes the story of a girl's awakening sexuality. These etchings do not simply refer to Rego's theories, they are an ironic commentary on every great female portrait there ever was, with particular reference to Goya and Velázquez, Modigliani and Balthus. In Rego's hands the idealised female form undergoes humanisation. The developing female is not present to give pleasure to the viewer, as stated in the previous chapter, Rego's etchings leave no room for male voyeurism. If we look at the work of Artemisia Gentileschi or Judith Leyster we become aware of something disturbing, at the most obvious level we can see that their female bodies are not simply shape and surface. They have weight and bones. They jostle in the picture frame and do not lie "like Danaë to the stars". Neither Gentileschi's nor Leyster's work was understood. Paula Rego is working now in an environment which should begin to grasp the nature of the female

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commentary upon the male tradition. Rego's work can still be confusing. Her etching entitled, *Tootles Shoots Wendy* (Fig. 15), depicts Wendy lying back in ecstasy. It suggests Rego has drawn an image of female sexuality no different from Balthus. In this respect her work provokes contradictory feelings. If we consider the print more carefully we realise Wendy has not been placed there for our amusement but rather she is concerned with her own pleasure. It is Wendy's world and not ours.

Figure 15





In the print entitled "*Wendy sewing on Peter's Shadow* (Fig. 16), Peter is clearly central, but his gutting male arrogance subtly shifts our attention to the docile stitcher at his feet.

Figure 16

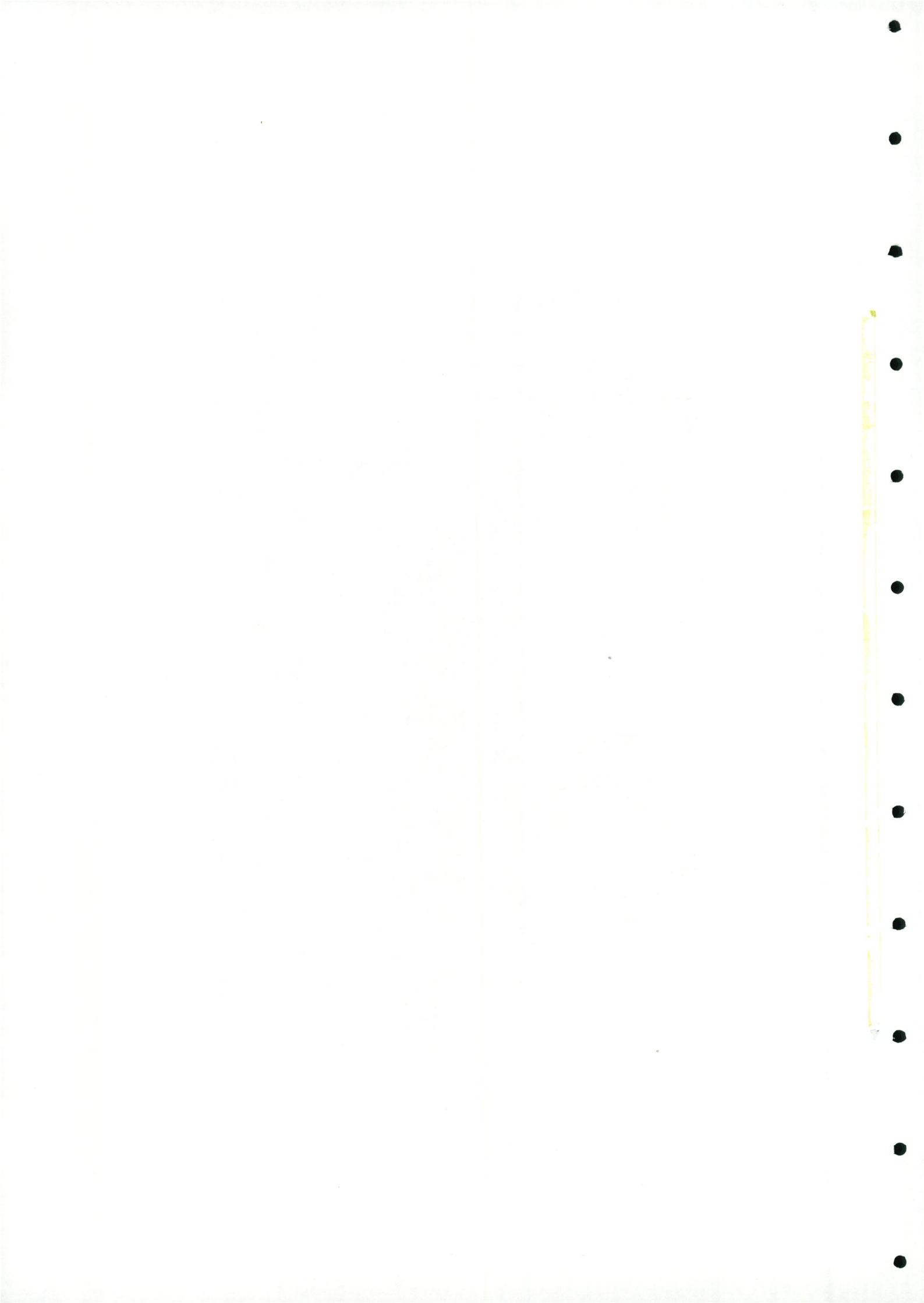




Arthur Rackham's *Peter*, (Fig. 17), is quite different. He is fairylike and playful. This baby Peter is angelic and somewhat ghostly. He is also portrayed as being innocent and loveable.

Figure 17





However, Rego intends her Peter Pan to be highly unlikeable, a manipulator, a user, a fascist, all the things that Barrie admired about him. These qualities are not usually described as admirable, but Barrie found these qualities attractive in Peter and used the power of his sheer charming language to make them admirable to us too. Barrie adored every masculine trait in his hero. Rego abhors them. Her sympathy is with the female. Though Wendy may be earnestly engaged in attaching Peter's shadow to its master in Fig. 16, the shadow being in his mind a surrogate Wendy, she seems rather to be sewing Peter to herself. According to Jung the shadow is a symbol of the darker side that is contained in us all. The shadow vanishes beneath Wendy's legs, and Peter's foot pushes carelessly against a significantly appropriate part of Wendy's body. The foot is itself an age-old sexual symbol which occurs frequently in mythology. Warner writes that, the foot is to be found, among the sexual theories of children: the foot represents a woman's penis, the absence of which is deeply felt. She says Freud also analysed the symbolism of feet in sexual practice and imagery with relative perceptiveness:-

“The foot owes its preference as a fetish - or a part of it - to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up.”

[Warner, 1994, pg. 113].

Freud maintains that “In a number of cases of foot fetishism it has been possible to show that the scopophilic instinct seeking to reach its object (originally the genitals) from underneath was brought to a halt in its pathway by prohibition and repression for this reason it became attached to a fetish in the form of a foot or shoe, the female genitals (in accordance with the expectations of childhood) being imagined as male ones.” [Freud, 1905, pg. 68].

Rego has read Freud and she uses his suggestive sexual reference to the feet and shoe here. If the foot symbolises the penis, then Peter has managed to replace its absence in Wendy. The shoe or slipper is a corresponding symbol of the female genitals. On Peter's side of the print, Wendy's shoe lies just beside Peter's foot: they are matched perfectly in size.

In this haunted nursery, where stars, cupboards, concealings and dark animals form silhouettes that shut the pair in, only a brooding cherub looks on. On Wendy's side of the picture, above her, there is a rabbit, known for both its mating habits and its fertility, and, below that, an eerie drawing of a highchair. Wendy's destiny is clearly signalled, she will reach maturity. Peter's future, on the other hand, is complicated by his shadow. There is a



strong similarity to Goya's work here with the intense contrast of light and shade moulding the figures, and the strong emphasis on line (example in Fig. 18).

Figure 18





The etching entitled *Tootles Shoots Wendy* (Fig. 15), depicts a sexually awakened Wendy. She lies legs spread out like a Coubet Demoiselle, a female Gulliver, while the hairy, animal-like boys cluster round her with alarming brutish intensity, like goblins or dwarfs. Dwarfs evoke other unconscious associations. According to Bettelheim, "Dwarfs are eminently male, but males who are stunted in their development. These 'little men' with their stunted bodies and their mining occupation - they skilfully penetrate into dark holes - all suggest phallic connotations." [Bettelheim, 1996, pg. 210]. The portrayal of these lost boys is highly suggestive of Bettelheim's dwarf theory. It may seem strange to identify a figure that symbolises a phallic existence as also representing childhood before puberty, a period during which sexuality is relatively dormant. But the dwarfs depicted here are free of inner conflicts. Conflicts are what make us dissatisfied with our present way of life and induce us to find other solutions and move on to a different and higher form of living. The lost boys here have no desire to move beyond their phallic existence to intimate relations. They are not mature. Just like the Seven Dwarfs of Snow White's Story - who needed Snow White to be their mother, clean their cottage and look after them - the lost boys need Wendy for their mother.

They may need Wendy for a mother but Wendy needs more than a son. It is Wendy's face that most shocks, she is in ecstasy, rapturously looking heavenwards like Bernini's St. Teresa, while the boys, clad in their animal furs, are like Goya's monks in (Fig. 19). Wendy has passed from childhood, and the others follow her into her Gulliver sprawl. But Wendy has been bloodied by the journey - an arrow has pierced her heart.

Figure 19





The maturation of Rego's female is also displayed as a nightmare, an incident that is close to dying. Wendy is pushed under the water in *Mermaid Drowning Wendy* (Fig. 20). In western Christian culture the mermaid was symbolic of the dangerous powers of female sexuality. They were described as being beautiful and this gave them the ability to tempt men to their doom. This mermaid is ugly and masculine. She attempts to drown Wendy. She is jealous of Wendy's attention. As Wendy matures here, she learns that women do not just use their sexuality to get men's attention but also to compete with each other for it. Wendy lives through this encounter and is more knowledgeable as a result.

Figure 20





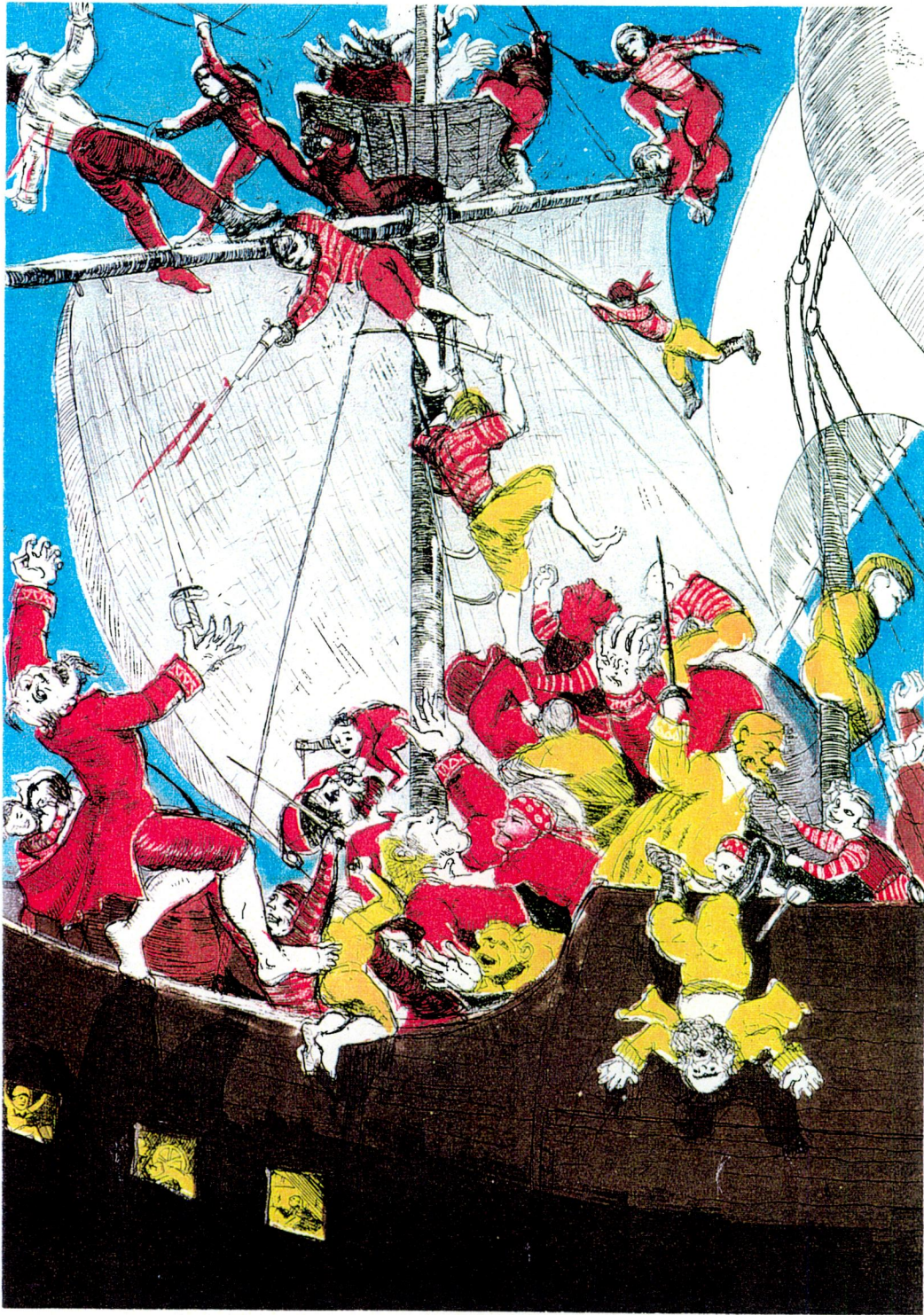
The boys' maturation is different. They are dragged into their future, kicking and screaming by the giant pirates. They are helpless and terrified. It is a cruel scene *Pirates taking away the Lost Boys* (Fig. 21). Wendy is not involved in this. She stands to one side and looks on, her clothes and posture suggest that she is in mourning. Rego has no compassion for these males. Protruding from Wendy's dress is a second pair of legs, a younger boy she is possibly shielding from the brutal scene. She is protecting his innocence by hiding him in her skirt. The hairy pirates are like blue-beard himself, the very name stirs associations with sex, virility, male readiness and desire. These bearded pirates take the boys and force them to grow up. Beardedness divided the men from the boys in Olympic Games; in St. Augustine's view "the beard signifies strong men: [it] signifies young, vigorous, active, quick men." [Warner, 1994, pg. 242]. The beard is also associated with the goat who is akin to the god Pan and the devil himself. These men take the boys with them and delight in teaching them a lesson. The boys do not want to be men, yet they do not have a choice. The boys do attempt to fight back in *Boys and Pirates fighting* (Fig. 22). Here the boys are taking revenge. The bearded pirates swing their full-length swords at the boys. The boys scoff, they tug their beards and brandish their own daggers and pistols. For all these fierce bluebeards have including their reputation, they cannot win this fight. The lost boys are no longer afraid. They can easily take over the ship.

Figure 21





Figure 22





Rego's children do triumph in the adult world, eventually surmounting difficulties over sexuality. *Flying Children* (Fig. 23) shows the children are uncontained. The etching emanates dream-like quality, that is comparable to Arthur Rackham's print of *Peter Flying* (Fig. 24). There is a strong comparison to the drawing technique and composition of Goya's print entitled *Fools Fantasy* (Fig. 25). There is a seductiveness about this picture. We wish we could be drawn into this childlike world of uninhibited release. Though we recognise the shapes of these children, at the same time we are obliged to register their strangeness. They float, unanchored and unbound. They enjoy the freedom. Because of the uninhibited nature of this picture (Fig. 23) along with the exhibition of Wendy, (her skirt riding up her thigh) it is suggestive of sexual activity. Michel Foucault expounds "All children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity, and that being unwarranted, at the same time 'natural' and 'contrary' to nature, this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers; children are defined as preliminary sexual beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous dividing line. Parents, families, educators, doctors and eventually psychologists would have to take charge, in a continuous way, of this precious and perilous, dangerous and endangered sexual potential." [Foucault, 1976, pg. 104].

Figure 23





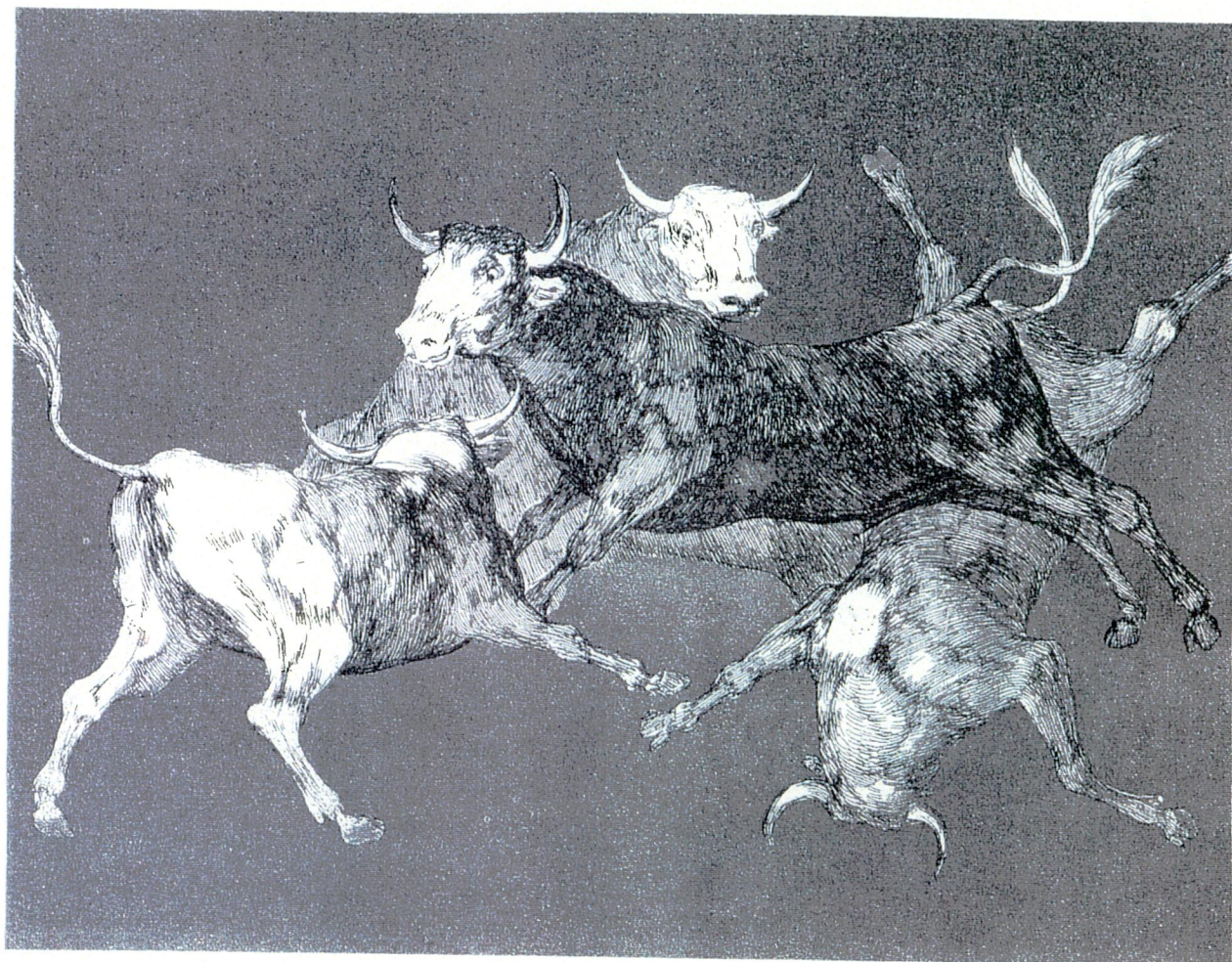
Figure 24





Rego expresses the undefined nature of sexuality in these children. Wendy is aware of her skirt, and of what it might reveal. The boys who are more innocent are unbothered. This image of freedom is also depicted in Rackham's print (Fig. 24) (*Away he flew, right over the houses to the Gardens*). There is an energy in the way the children move in the vastness of the sky that stretches behind them. We are reminded of the limitless imagination of the child, their fearlessness in aspiring to dreams that may sound unattainable to the adult. Paula Rego's children may have a more realistic quality in terms of their future. They fly unsure about where they are going; more likely of children they are focused on the pleasure (of flying). Rackham's Peter is intent on his task, he has a mission, like superman flying to save Lois Lane. He has a purpose. Rego's children are content with not knowing their destiny. Wendy is aware of her sexuality but she does not let it stop her from flying. She might not be certain of exactly what it is she is feeling, but she trusts she will enjoy finding out.

Figure 25





The final print *Wendy's Song* (Fig. 26) shows Wendy at the end of the story, intent upon her destiny. Her stomach swells, she is pregnant, her head is bound in a matronly cloth. She looks very grim as she stands outside the dreamhouse of childhood where she played, Mammy's and Daddy's with Peter. She stirs a blood-red pot and within her house, four red foetus forms look out at her, unformed and bloody. Are these the five Llewlyn Davies boys about whom Barrie wrote the story, with number five on the way? Barrie loved Peter with a passion, indeed it has been said that Peter was a side of Barrie himself. The book may well have been a disavowal of sexual origins and sexual maturation, but these etchings do not hold back. Here Wendy has been impregnated by Peter himself and she is going to have his children. It is as if Barrie has been overcome and forced to face the unsettling and fearful nature of maturation. Wendy is unhappy even after getting what she thought she wanted. Peter is nowhere to be seen. She stands alone, cooking up her future. She is also forced to face her decisions, however sad. This is a world of human misunderstanding, fear, child pregnancy and confusing sexuality. A world sometimes we would rather not face. This is an adult world. Rego's character's realise this. She suggests children's games are not a frivolous pastime. They are the first step toward entering the adult world of strategies, where the line between influencing others while not allowing others to gain control of oneself must be carefully learned. Children do not just mimic adult sexuality, but are sexual themselves.

Figure 26





Conclusion

The investigation of *Peter Pan* and Paula Rego's series of 15 prints has shown that Rego has managed to illustrate the internal and the external *Peter Pan*. She takes away our false sense of security and with her acute eye for social predicament she makes us sit up and take notice of this story. Peter Pan has one life and purpose within Barrie's novel; his function is different in Rego's interpretation of this story. Even in our post rural world she is much more interested in the verbal tradition of storytelling. She has used and stretched Barrie's narrative to the dark limits of the imagination. She has exposed the meaning of the story, ruthlessly torn away its amusing trappings and forced us to contemplate truths we would rather not acknowledge. Rego does not blandly pardon, but sees the sinister for what it is. She acknowledges the cruelty, terror, tragedy and sexuality of human relations. Freud was passionately reviled for his discussion of infantile sexuality. Rego touches on this sensitive theme, but takes for granted our contemporary understanding of its essential innocence (as opposed to its unavoidable ignorance). Rego believe that what children sense we do not know. She is aware that they have access to areas that are tenacious and thrilling. Innocence is an adult's attribution and refers surely to the child's lack of knowledge, not its lack of guilty. Victor Willing assets that: "Later in life, the child's games of mimicry are bent to adult purposes, but maturity never obliterates our childhood. The image of the child can be that of the 'father of the man' or it may presage an as yet unrealised possibility within us." [McEwen, 1992, pg. 8].

It is this ambivalent suggestive quality that is explored in these etchings. They hold a dark wisdom, but are not empty of hope. Rego invokes the inexorable advance of body-maturing and the questionable matter of the simultaneous maturation of the spirit. We do not mature physically and spiritually at the same rate, she accepts that, and the grief of it is the subject of these marvellous and terrible works of art.



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