The Dream Child: How Alice, Dorothy, and Wendy Influenced Heroines in Children’s Fantasy Literature

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

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Abstract

Despite the lack of female representation in children’s literature, three novels with young female leads continue to remain universally popular: Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Peter Pan. The protagonists Alice, Dorothy and Wendy all share this archetype in common: a young girl who finds herself in a fantasy realm who has to overcome the obstacles in her path in order to return home. I analyze each of these stories, in addition to others, to determine the characteristics these three characters share. Furthermore, I formulate that they comprise one archetype in children’s fantasy literature: The ‘Dream Child.’
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Process Analysis

My thesis was heavily researched-focused. I started by re-reading the three main works I was focusing on: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and *Peter Pan*. I read those and focused on the journey of the female protagonists, looking for criteria that tied them all together. Following that, I gathered academic journals and articles that broke down the characters I was writing on and helped to provide insight into either their background or how they can be viewed from a scholarly perspective. This was the longest part of my process because reading academic articles is a lot harder than reading fantasy fiction. I spent a lot of time creating flow charts in my thesis notebook, where I kept my notes and ramblings, so that I could hash out all of the details before attempting to write them down as a paper.

I also learned to simplify my goals. I originally wanted to have an additional character in my modern heroines section but found that the three I was covering were more than enough. It's not the quantity, but the quality of the work. I could delve deeper into the characters I already had started to analyze if I let go of any superfluous tangents.

This project built upon my research and literary analysis skills and called for me to challenge my pre-conceived notions of these characters. I learned that the hardest part is gathering the data itself. Rereading novels and finding credible articles takes a lot more time than anybody ever gives it credit for. Putting it together the results in a paper is actually the fun part because you get to put together all of pages of notes into one cohesive thought. I enjoyed writing this thesis because I felt that it validated all of my (previously) incoherent ramblings. I liked putting attention on young female literary protagonists, especially considering how unequal gender representation in literature is.
When thinking about how far gender representation has come in recent decades, publishing companies have not made greater progress than we would like to think. In a study conducted by Johnson State College, results showed that in selected children’s literature “males were more numerous than females,” and “the range of occupations for males was much broader than for females.” (Hillman 84) Female characters are traditionally cast in secondary character positions: friends, mothers, witches, etc. Several publishers have claimed that projects with young female leads are not profitable because male audiences cannot connect with the main character, if she is female.

However, adaptations of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Peter Pan continue to be some of the most produced and profitable entertainment ventures. In the past three years alone, The Walt Disney Company released a sequel to their live action Alice franchise; NBC released Emerald City, a modern adaptation of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz; only to be preceded by Peter Pan Live!, an updated take on the 1954 musical with several additional scenes & songs for Wendy Darling.

All three of these stories feature a female lead: a young girl who finds herself in a fantasy realm who has to overcome the obstacles in her path in order to return home. Each of these stories feature a famous female heroine: Alice, Dorothy, and Wendy. I argue that each of these heroines build off of the one who came before her, both in complexity of character and eventual outcome of the character. Each heroine has something that they want to escape. Alice wants to escape the social rigidity of Victorian society. Dorothy wants to escape the work of poverty-ridden Kansas. Wendy wants to escape impending adulthood. It’s only when they are able to escape their circumstances that they are able to grow and mature as children do.
Judith Stevinson Hillman argues that "literature plays a meaningful role in shaping a child's cognitive and emotional growth." (Hillman 84) This is why it is imperative that these popular characters be explored and scrutinized. These heroines have become the quintessential representation of girlhood to millions of people around the world. If these characters are who we expect young girls to emulate themselves after, it is imperative that the link between these characters be explored. What makes them unique? What traits do they possess that we want to emulate? Why do we love these 'Dream Children' and how do they continue to influence the heroines seen in modern children's literature?

Each of the aforementioned young heroines is in herself a 'Dream Child': a concept of how these adult authors perceive girlhood. A 'Dream Child' is the personification of how adults perceive childhood after the fact and how they think it should be: a place of wonder and exploration. It is important to note that each of these female characters is created and written by a male author, meaning that these authors do not and cannot have a comprehensive grasp of the female experience. These characters are not meant to be considered realistic portrayals of young girls, but rather be symbolic representations of childhood innocence and wonder. Each Dream Child sets the standards for behavior for young girls in their respective time period: Alice the Phantom Child, Dorothy the Brave Farm-girl, and Wendy the Girl Who Grew Up.
Lewis Carroll’s Alice of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is the first such “Dream Child.” She is the fantastical combination of a real little girl and an author’s attempt to immortalize the wonder and innocence of childhood. Author Lewis Carroll was the playful persona of noted mathematician Reverend Charles Dodgson. He published *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865, originally as a manuscript *Alice’s Adventures Underground* for his child friend Alice Liddell and her sisters. It is actually Carroll himself that first used the term “Dream Child.” The term makes its first appearance in the opening poem to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*: “The dream-child moving through a land, of wonders wild and new, in friendly chat with bird or beast – and half believe it true.” (Carroll 7) Carroll uses this term to differentiate between Secunda, his nickname for Alice Liddell, and the character Alice.

It is evident that the creation of the Alice character was a very personal journey for Dodgson, allowing readers a glimpse into his personal life. Author Martin Gardner notes that much of the wit in the Alice books is “interwoven with Victorian events and customs unfamiliar to American readers today” and many of the “jokes in the books could be appreciated only by Oxford residents, and others were private jokes intended solely for Alice.” (Gardner xxiii)

The character of Alice is the first of her kind: a female lead in juvenile fantasy fiction. It was remarked that “Lewis Carroll’s death in 1898 inspired a subgenre in American juvenile literature as the trade fed the market imitations of the famous English fantasy.” (Hearn xliii) She was a young girl finding her way in the world, in a way that did not end the favored moral ending of a socially acceptable marriage. While Alice does not seem like a strong heroine by today’s standards, she was what Victorian girls would secretly credit as being badass. She is
alone in the strange world, without any male chaperone or companion, tasked to find her way home from the impossible.

One of the most unique aspects of the Alice character’s creation is her close ties to a real-life counterpart, a doppelganger if you will. Some would argue that a large part of the initial curiosity surrounding the *Alice* books was the relationship between the author and his muse, Alice Liddell. While it is not known for certain how much of the *Alice* character derives from her real life counter-part, you cannot discuss *Alice* without bringing up Alice Liddell. Both girls are mischievous and loved to push boundaries. While the character of Alice is usually seen as unwilling to push the boundaries of polite society, she definitely has her more devious moments. For example, after setting the baby-pig free, Alice “began thinking over other children she knew, who might do very well as pigs, and was just saying to herself ‘if one only knew the right way to change them.’” (Carroll 78)

Author Robert Douglas-Fairhurst reports that Alice Liddell “...was an imaginative child, who enjoyed acting...” and “...had a keen eye for the absurd...” (Douglas-Fairhurst 109) She often made cheeky remarks to her grandparents and guests at her parents’ numerous social events held at the Deanery. As one of the daughters of the Dean of Christ College, “she was also encouraged to read,” making her fairly intelligent and educated. (Douglas-Fairhurst 109)

But the truth of the matter is that the girls are not identical. One is a real little girl who with short dark hair rebelling against societal norms as she imagines herself as a Beggar girl, a Fairy Queen, and a Goddess. The other girl is a child with blonde ringlets who is curious about the fantastical world around her and is always polite to the amazing creatures that she meets on her journey.
Yet while Alice has partial basis in the real life Alice Liddell, she is the only main heroine without a last name. While both Dorothy and Wendy possess the surnames Gale and Darling, respectively, Alice was left unfinished. While some might interpret this as Carroll leaving the audience to assume that his Alice shared the Liddell surname, it poses a second theory. Meaning that, Carroll intentionally left his young protagonist without a surname in order to make her more accessible to his audience, and perhaps himself. By only giving his character a first name, she is both personable to an audience and a private secret to the author.

One of the markers of a ‘Dream Child’ is the appearance of adult maturity in a child, especially if the child’s companions and/or acquaintances are immature in comparison. Carroll has Alice show maturity by having her recite what would be considered common sense, things that would be considered common knowledge by his 19th century audience. For example, in the scene with the infamous “Drink Me” bottle, Alice makes the note to check for poison because she had been told numerous stories of children who met unfortunate ends “because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them,” (Carroll 17) However, Alice still does not possess the full maturity of a grown adult, because she drinks the bottle anyway since the bottle is not explicitly labeled poison. (Carroll 19)

Another marker of a ‘Dream Child’ is the journey to the fantastical realm and the subsequent return home. Alice makes the journey to Wonderland only twice, the basis of each novel. Each journey starts with a fantastical entrance, either by rabbit hole or dreamlike mirror. Alice does not immediately aim to go back home, but is content to explore the new world around her. While at first, she questions the odd things she sees, such as a Rabbit who “actually
took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket,” she starts to expect the unexpected as normal. (Carroll 12) Carroll writes that soon “Alice was not much surprised... she was getting so well used to queer things happening.” (Carroll 80) However, each journey is eventually decided to be a dream, nothing more than the daydreams of an imaginative schoolgirl.

Carroll creates a strong basis for the idea of a personal ‘Dream Child,’ specifically in his poetry. In the opening poem to Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, famously entitled “All in the golden afternoon,” Carroll mentions how the three Liddell girls stop to watch, “The dream-child moving through a land/Of wonders wild and new/In friendly chat with bird or beast/And half believe it true.” (Carroll 7) In this poem, Alice is not Alice Liddell or any of the Liddell girls, but a wholly new creation created to entertain the three children. Carroll concludes Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There with a poem entitled “Life is but a Dream.” In this poem, he writes “Still she haunts me, phantom wise/Alice moving under skies/ never seen by waking eyes.” (Carroll 319) Here Alice is not a real little girl nor curious entertainment, but a strange ghost-like creature that haunts Carroll’s very thoughts.

While is not the most well-developed character, she is the original ‘Dream Child,” a vision of innocent childhood trying to navigate the impossible cruelties that strike all children. Carroll’s use of dreams as a way of navigating these challenges begins a tradition of authors creating fantasy realms that allow children to explore their wildest dreams. While Alice is the first in line, she begins a rich legacy.
While Dorothy should in no way be considered an exact copy of Alice, she is nevertheless the Dream Child of L. Frank Baum. Originally published as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1900, it was the first novel to come close to Carroll in 35 years since Alice’s publication.

Baum took a different approach to creating his heroine than Carroll. Carroll’s heroine was definitely a combination of pure imagination and inspiration from the Liddell girls, Baum’s heroine was a creation of his own. Named for the stillborn daughter of his wife’s sister, Baum created a character that his wife could imagine that her niece grew up to be. (Hearn 12) But the basic outline for their protagonists is where Baum intended the similarities between his novel and Carroll’s books to end. L. Frank Baum felt that the plot was the most critical element of the story. He famously “criticized Carroll’s books for being ‘rambling and incoherent.’” (Hearn xlviii) In order not to fall into the same category, Baum created a clear structure for his story. He organizes the physical layout of Oz into quadrants, overseen by four witches. Baum’s actual story is further organized into twos and fours. The story starts off with the main duo of Dorothy and Toto, only to form the Quartet: Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion. Griswold explains that “Baum creates a situation and then tells the reader: (1) how Dorothy reacted, (2) how the Scarecrow reacted, (3) how the Tinman reacted, and (4) how the Lion reacted.” (Griswold 467) Dorothy kills two witches, and so on and so forth. Yet, he still found inspiration from Alice’s rambling adventures as “he admired Alice’s ability to be ‘doing something every moment, and doing something strange and marvelous too,’” prompting the child to “[follow] her with rapturous delight.” (Hearn xlviii) This journey was important to Baum because “rapturous delight was what [he] sought in his fairy tales.” (Hearn xlviii)
Dorothy is a truly unique female character created in the 19th century, far ahead of a lot of her modern descendants. She is a young girl capable of safely traversing a foreign land, as well as being a leader in her own right. Many academics consider *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as "the earliest truly feminist American children’s book, because of spunky and tenacious Dorothy." (Hearn xxii-xxiii) She takes charge and removes obstacles in her path. Unlike Carroll’s delicate English rose Alice, Dorothy does not just let situations happen to her. While she introduces herself as "Dorothy, the Small and Meek," to the Wizard, she is already known throughout Oz as the Vanquisher of the Wicked Witch of the East. However, it is important to note that Dorothy does not accomplish anything alone and has a lot of help throughout the original Oz novel. Before leaving on her journey to the Emerald City, she is placed under the protection of the Good Witch of the North by a magical kiss to the forehead. This protection allows her to travel through Oz rather safely in comparison. For example, the Winged Monkeys are unable to kill her as ordered by the Wicked Witch of the West due to the fact that Dorothy was "protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil. (Baum 215)

While she protests her innocence throughout the book, Dorothy arguably has the most blood on her hands. Griswold claims that Baum is saying that regardless of whether or not Dorothy was intentionally murdering witches, it is the same thing. (Griswold 471) She inadvertently kills both the Wicked Witches. Author Jerry Griswold argues in his article "There’s No Place but Home: The Wizard of Oz that Dorothy commits "symbolic matricide," by killing the witches. She uses the death of the witches to symbolically kill the parts of her Aunt Em that she detests: the old woman who forces the young girl to work instead of play.
Young adult author Danielle Paige takes this further in her series *Dorothy Must Die*, creating an Oz where Dorothy has taken over as a tyrannical homicidal dictator. She believes that she is entitled to the magical powers of Oz, deposing Ozma as ruler and draining the resources of Oz to twist it into a gray wasteland. In a twist, Glinda manipulates the lonely feelings of a betrayed farm girl in Kansas in order to gain the underlying power of the fairies of Oz. Paige’s Dorothy is a teenager who twists the world around her to her every whim. She even manipulates her famous friends the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion into becoming grotesque shells who commit heinous crimes in Dorothy’s name. The Wicked Witches lead the resistance, trying a young Kansas girl Amy to not make the same power-hungry mistakes that Dorothy did.

Dorothy is a young girl who takes charge to become a female leader. In the main quartet, each of the males lack something. The Scarecrow lacks brains, the Tin Woodman lacks a heart, and the Cowardly Lion lacks courage. Each of these things is something that Dorothy possesses as a human. She is both the model that they strive to live up to and the one who proves that they already possess that which they seek. In the same fashion as Alice, Dorothy is ironically the mature one of the group, even though she is just a child. She is the one to keep the group focused on the practical aspects of their journey. For instance, when the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman argue over whether a brain or a heart is more valuable, Dorothy is more concerned about the pragmatic aspects of food collection. (Baum 102) She takes care of her fellow companions. When the Cowardly Lion attacks the Scarecrow, it is Dorothy who “[picks] up the Scarecrow and set him upon his feet, while she patted him into shape again.” (Baum 107) Dorothy almost acts like a parent to her friends, a true mother hen.
Dorothy shows what Baum defines courage to be: the ability to overcome fear in order to achieve something for the good of others. It is Dorothy that stands up to the Lion in order to protect those she cares about. Once he makes the intention to attack Toto, Dorothy overcomes her initial fright and “slap[s] the Lion upon his nose as hard as she could.” (Baum, Hearn 106-107)

In creating his young heroine, Baum is sure to include her faults. He creates a well-written character that is both flawed and virtuous, giving Dorothy the classic childhood flaw of vanity. She stops herself from crying because she cannot stand the idea of ruining her beautiful new dress with spots from her falling tears. (Baum 199) She is attracted to pretty things as young children often are. The only reason that Dorothy is able to control the Winged Monkeys that transport the Quartet to Glinda’s Southern palace is that she saw the Golden Cap in the Wicked Witch’s castle and wanted the pretty hat for herself. (Baum 239) For this transgression, she is forgiven when she gives the Cap over to Glinda who eventually frees the Winged Monkeys from their forced servitude. While she is normally the group member with the positive attitude to keep the story moving forward, even Dorothy has her doubts. After getting lost when trying to return to the Emerald City, Dorothy looses heart and believes the cause to be lost. (Baum 244)

While Dorothy returns home to Kansas in the original Oz novel, she makes multiple return trips to Oz before a permanent return in the sixth book The Emerald City of Oz. As a result of Uncle Henry and Aunt Em being unable to pay the mortgage on their new farmhouse, Dorothy persuades Princess Ozma to bring Henry and Em to Oz to give them a new life in the realm that they thought Dorothy had dreamt up in a fantasy.
In the spirit of Lewis Carroll’s original Alice creation, Dorothy is the next step in the evolution of the Dream Child. While she does find herself in a wonderful and fantastical realm, Dorothy is able to establish herself as a force to be reckoned with, removing obstacles and establishing a set of allies, and successfully reaching her goal of returning home. While not without flaws, Baum establishes a multi-dimensional character who overcomes her hardships to better eventually herself. Dorothy Gale is the Dream Child who left her fantasy realm, but returned in order to escape the harsh pains of reality.
Wendy Darling, as originally conceived by J.M. Barrie, is arguably the most original of the three heroines. While Dorothy and Alice were originally created for the literary novel, Wendy was a character written for the stage with a premiere in 1904. This distinction is important because Barrie’s audience was introduced to Wendy via an actress’s performance onstage rather than the written word. The novel Peter and Wendy, later renamed to its more well-known title Peter Pan would not be released for seven more years in 1911. While we do not possess archival footage of these early performances, it is important to note that Hilda Trevelyan did have input over how the audiences were introduced to the character of Wendy Darling.

In order to discuss the character of Wendy, it is necessary to briefly discuss the titular character of Peter Pan. In her article “Magic Abjured: Closure in Children’s Fantasy Fiction,” author Sarah Gilead argues that “Peter is death itself as well as the desire for eternal childhood...the product of a guilt-ridden, self-consciously sentimental swerve from fears of sexuality and death.” (Gilead 286) He is not an actual child, but the product of an author long caught up in the grief and unable to move on.

Wendy’s relationship with Peter Pan is also the most unique of the three heroines. Neither Alice nor Dorothy possess such a relationship: a semi-romantic relationship with a boy. While often characterized as a sweet connection between two young children, it does present some attributes that are questionable. Peter sees Wendy as a combination of a mother, playmate, and romantic interest. One of the things that Colleen Oakes explores in her literary series Wendy Darling is how dangerous Wendy’s relationship with Peter actually is. Through her writing, she argues that Peter is more obsessed with Wendy than actually in love with her.
However, the truly unique thing about Wendy Darling is that she is both a child and an adult. While both Alice and Dorothy act as the mature responsible person of their stories, Wendy is thrust into adulthood at a young age. While her brothers and peers are able to engage in their youthful play, Wendy is asked to step up and be the parent to a large group of young boys. Peter tells the Lost Boys that “[he has] brought at last a mother for [them] all.” (Barrie 79) Wendy is brought to Neverland, not to play with the fairies not as she intended, but to be the person who takes care of the other kids. She is apprehensive at first at her new position, and does not want to be a mother. She tells Peter that she is “only a little girl...” and “[has] no experience.” (Barrie 86) But that does not matter to Peter. He tells Wendy that “what we need is just a nice motherly person,” before she realizes that is what she is. (Barrie 86) She chooses to go ahead and take on the role of mother. Her magical adventure turns into a venture into the domestic sphere of motherhood. She rarely leaves the Lost Boys’ tree because “those rampageous boys of hers [give] her so much to do,” between cooking, sewing ruined clothes, and establishing a school in an attempt to keep the memory of her former life alive. Wendy tries to bring a sense of order to the chaos of Neverland, establishing a system of rules similar to the society she left at home. Even when faced with death by pirates, Wendy’s supposed final words to the Lost Boys are “a message... from [their] real mothers, and it is this: ‘We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen.” (Barrie 152) She is able to turn her wild band of boys into a young men that her father and mother desire her brothers to be.

In a promotional interview with MTV, Oakes argues that what makes Wendy Darling a unique heroine is that “she’s not a warrior, nor would she have any inclination to be...she’s a perfectly good girl who always does what her parents expect of her, until she’s thrust into this
almost feral word of Neverland, where her politeness serves no purpose.” While we often associate strong heroines with physical strength, it is telling that one of our most beloved heroines is a young girl whose primary advantage is her ability to care deeply about others. While Wendy is not the girl sword fighting pirates, she is the one to rally those around her into a strong family unit.

J.M. Barrie is credited with the creation of the name “Wendy.” While now often used as a shortened nickname for the name Gwendolyn, it is considered a unique creation of the time. Barrie said that the name derived from the nickname “Fwendy,” a name given to him by Margaret Henley, the daughter of a friend & colleague. It was the closest she could get to the word “friend” at five years old. (Tatar 12) The choice of a unique and originally crafted name is significant because it signals to the level of care that Barrie had when creating his characters.

According to England’s Office for National Statistics, the names of Mary, Florence, and Doris were the most popular names for baby girls in England and Wales in 1904, the year of Peter Pan’s premiere. Mrs. Darling is often credited with having the name Mary, while never being given the name by the original author. The servant, Liza, is assumed to have a full name of Elizabeth, another popular name of the time. By contrast, the females of Neverland both possess unique names as well: Tinker Bell and Tiger Lily. Both names are indicative of what they are in Neverland. Tinker Bell, a fairy who is considered a “tinkerer” for mending the fairy kitchenware who communicates with sounds the equivalent of a small bell. Tiger Lily, a leader of her people who is fierce, like the jungle cat, and beautiful, like the flower. Wendy also has the addition of a full name: Wendy Moira Angela Darling. Tatar points out that Moira can mean either fate/destiny or the British Isles variant of Mary, meaning bitter. The name Angela comes
from the Greek, meaning “messenger of the Gods.” While Alice and Dorothy have names derived from children close to the authors of their stories, Wendy is a character not burdened with the name of a real child. This does not mean however that Wendy did not have a real-life counterpart.

It is common knowledge that J.M. Barrie’s relationship with Sylvia Llewelyn Davies and her five children was an instrumental influence on the creation of the Peter Pan story. While both Barrie himself and the Llewelyn Davies boys have often been cited as the inspiration for the characters of Peter Pan and the Lost Boys, there has not been a definitive answer for who was the inspiration behind the character of Wendy. I argue that Sylvia herself is the inspiration behind the character of Wendy. Sylvia was both a mother and a playmate to her children, especially after their father died. The recent Broadway musical Finding Neverland, based on the 2004 film, allows for this argument to play out in the scene depicting Sylvia’s death. Rather than have a traditional death onstage, Sylvia’s death is played out metaphorically. As the original acting company gives a special home performance for a sick Sylvia, Neverland slowly starts to take shape and become real for the dying woman. The actress portraying Hilda Trevelyan leads Sylvia to the center of the stage, taking her robe from her so that Sylvia resembles the character of Wendy. Then the actress playing Nina Boucicault slowly becomes the actual character of Peter Pan, throwing fairy dust on Sylvia before taking her hand and “flying out” the nursery window in a visual extremely reminiscent of Peter and Wendy’s first flight.

What makes Wendy truly different from Alice and Dorothy is that Wendy returns home of her own volition and grows up. In a special one-night performance on February 22, 1908, J.M. Barrie added an additional scene entitled “An Afterthought.” After the usual conclusion of
the story where the Darling Children return home to London with the Lost Boys, a Baby Mermaid appeared onstage to announce “We are now going to do a new act for the first and only time onstage about what happened to Peter when Wendy grew up...and it will never be done again.” (Tatar 175). Following the introduction, an adult Wendy is introduced in the nursery when Peter Pan comes back. He is distraught to learn that Wendy has grown up and is the mother to her own daughter, Jane. As he sobs, Jane wakes up and agrees to go with Peter to Neverland for a week of spring cleaning as his mother, starting the tradition of the female descendants of Wendy Darling going to Neverland to act as Peter’s mother. During this performance, Barrie also made his first and only stage appearance. While this scene was met with a fifteen-minute standing ovation, it was not added to Barrie’s permanent script. (Tatar 175). However, it has since been added as the ending to the 1954 stage musical. Wendy is the only heroine of the trio who grows up to have a child of her own: a daughter that continues her legacy.

While Wendy is not necessarily the Dream Child that Barrie intended to create from his work, she is the heroine that becomes the custodian of the Dream Child. Wendy is the Dream Child that grows up. She survives Neverland, “a realm of death under the cover story of...fun and adventure,” and is able to move on from the experience. (Gilead 286) She is the final incarnation of the Dream Child, a child that has grown up and is ready to face the world.

C.S. Lewis takes the idea of the ‘Dream Child’ and adapts it to suit his purposes in his Chronicles of Narnia series. Rather than having one young girl as his protagonist, he creates the Pevensie children, a group of four children: Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy. While Lucy Pevensie can be seen as the main character of the four children because she is the first to discover Narnia, this expansion of main characters is a direct departure from the classic ‘Dream Child’ archetype. However, Lewis still follows this archetype: a young child that discovers a fantasy world before eventually journeying home. In a similar fashion to the character of Alice, Lucy Pevensie was created to entertain the goddaughter of C.S. Lewis and was named for her. Lewis dedicated the first book published of his Narnia series to the original Lucy, Lucy Barfield.

In a unique twist of events, Lucy and Susan live in Narnia for fifteen years before returning home at the end of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Over the course of four out of the seven Narnia books, Lucy and Susan grow and mature into young women. What makes Lewis truly unique is his twist ending in the final book The Last Battle. Over the course of the previous six books, Lewis establishes that there is both a Narnia and an Aslan’s Country, a thinly veiled allegory for Heaven. In the climax of the seventh novel Aslan reveals that in an attempt to save Narnia, three of the Pevensie children died in a train accident.

While Lucy can be more easily seen in the ‘Dream Child’ role due to her steadfast belief in Aslan and Narnia, Lewis presents an alternate ‘Dream Child’ in Susan Pevensie. She is the ‘Dream Child’ corrupted by the distractions of adulthood. As Susan matures, she begins to
dismiss Narnia as a childhood game. Peter remarks to the others that she “is no longer a friend of Narnia,” due to her newfound focus on her physical appearance and social life. (Lewis 154) However, Lewis himself writes that Susan may be redeemed. In a letter to a reader, Lewis reassures us that “there is plenty of time for [Susan] to mend, and perhaps she will get to Aslan’s country in the end.” (Coffin 6) Aslan states that “Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen.” (Lewis 182)

There is no character that has had a larger impact on female representation in modern children’s fantasy literature than Hermione Granger from J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series. She is one of the most popular female characters in young adult literature, only growing more popular with the Harry Potter film franchise. Hermione is the Dream Child Grown Up. She starts off as Alice, the curious child exploring a newly discovered world. In the first book, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, Hermione cheerfully admits to both Harry and Ron that she is a Muggle-born and has been reading any book she can find so that way she will be prepared to enter the Wizarding World. (Rowling 132) Then she becomes Dorothy, the headstrong girl who helps her friends on their journeys, as well as bettering the world around her. It goes without saying that without Hermione, Harry Potter would have never been able to accomplish nearly half of what he did. For instance, in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Hermione is still able to provide the crucial research that allows Harry and Ron to make their way to the Chamber of Secrets from her petrified state in the hospital wing. (Rowling 290) Finally, she is Wendy. Realizing she must grow up in the world she has found, she makes her children ready to continue her story. Rowling concludes her epic saga with a short scene on the train platform, with the Golden Trio (Harry, Ron, and Hermione) preparing their own children to start their
time at Hogwarts, after having defeated Lord Voldemort nineteen years earlier. Their time as saviors of the Wizarding World is over. (Rowling 753-759)
As we look to the future of story-telling, specifically gender representation, it is important to observe the trends of the past. Three of the most popular youth fantasy literature pieces of all time feature the same lead: a young girl who finds herself in a fantasy realm who has to overcome the obstacles in her path in order to return home. The heroines of Alice, Dorothy Gale, and Wendy Darling point to a pattern of female characters named the ‘Dream Child,’ each one building off of the one who came before her. This pattern can even be seen in more modern pieces of children’s fantasy literature. C.S. Lewis attempts to test the defined nature of a ‘Dream Child’ with his characters of Lucy and Susan Pevensie in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, making the case that these characters should show readers both the power of faith and the possibility of forgiveness. Rowling brings forth qualities of all three heroines in her character Hermione Granger of the *Harry Potter* series. By showing that young heroines can emulate all three of these characters, Rowling sets the bar for the modern era ‘Dream Child,’ a female character that finds herself as the reader starts on their own journey of self-discovery.
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