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Novel Theorising: Lessons from School-Like Literature

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Abstract
Literature provides a unique creative space for theorising education, and in particular for describing in appropriately richly ambiguous ways the complexity of education lived out in contemporary schooling. This is an exploration of three novels by Golding, Tolkien, and Barrie. These novels are represented as examples of school-like literature illustrating contrasting theories of education. Dyadic models of schooling are exemplified by Golding's *Lord of the Flies;* cyclical models of schooling are exemplified by Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* exemplifies both models, providing both a critique and a defence of childhood as needing to be controlled and childhood as a kind of apprenticeship in adulthood.

Keywords J. M. Barrie, William Golding, J. R. R. Tolkien, cyclical, dyadic, apprenticeship learning

Introduction

This article brings together educational theory and a group of novels, in order to see what educationalists might learn from school-like novels. Literature can enable those involved in schools both to imagine educational alternatives, and to imagine the consequences of following more traditional approaches to schooling. This novel approach offers potential insights into schooling relevant to the teaching profession, educational research and policy-making. It also suggests a potential educational use of novels as elements in educational studies. Educational theory is rarely the most popular element in teacher education programmes, either for those wishing to join the profession or those completing in-service programmes. Even the educational philosopher Dunne recommends (perhaps tongue-in-cheek) that student-teachers should "devote more time to practice teaching, and perhaps less to lecture courses in 'educational theory'" (Dunne, 1997, p. 369). Yet the need to gain a deep understanding of education in general and schooling in particular is apparent to all,

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certainly including Dunne. Using novels to illuminate core educational theories, and to stimulate an imaginative engagement with education, is a strategy that can break the artificial division between theory and practice. As Schiller (1967) would describe it in his guide to education, "man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays" (Schiller, 1967, fifteenth letter). Novels, especially school-like novels, can open up possibilities for understanding schools that may be otherwise unattainable.

Cycle clips and the awkward reverence of educational theory

The educational theorising of Lave and Wenger (Lave, 2011, Lave & Wenger 1991, Wenger, 1998) is the starting point of this project, especially the distinction made between "the dyadic form characteristic of conventional learning studies" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 57) and the more cyclical form of learning characteristic of "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 55). (It is hoped that these "clips" of educational theory are still treated with an albeit "awkward" reverence, to misquote Larkin.) Describing learning as typically like an apprenticeship, Lave re-evaluates the nature of apprenticeship: an apprentice is not "someone who doesn't know, learning from someone who does" (Lave, 2011, p. 156, quoting Goody):

> I would now say, quite to the contrary, that we are all apprentices, engaged in learning to do what we are already doing. The differences between these two definitions are significant. To begin with, the distinction between one who knows and one who doesn't invokes the binary comparative theory and its epistemological politics. (Lave, 2011, p. 156.)

Describing education in terms of dyadic relations—of knower and unknower, teacher and pupil, master and apprentice—is misleading. It fails to recognise the cyclical character of learning (that putative knowers, teachers, and masters are creating their own *replacements*), and it fails to recognise the continuing coming to know of all involved in the process, such that we are all "apprentices to our own future practice" (Lave, 2011, p. 156).

Lave and Wenger highlight how conventional educational theory is dyadic and based, therefore, on intellectual and disciplinary authority and status. This is seen as particularly problematic when it comes to schooling, at one point "[s]teering clear of the problem of school learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 40) and later explicitly criticising school learning as pointing inwards: "[s]chool learning is just learning school" (Wenger, 1998, p. 267). The possibility of schools recognising cyclical, continuous, learning is evident in some theories of teacher development such as the move towards teachers as action researchers (Elliott, 1991; 1993) and

towards a sense of research as underpinning the roles of both teachers and pupils[1] (Stern, 2010). The cyclical theorising of Lave and Wenger can therefore be applied to schooling, we suggest, if all in school are seen as learners and if schooling is seen as pointing beyond itself, as an "apprenticeship in life." This is an approach of the radical philosopher of schooling Macmurray:

> [W]hen we teach we must deal with living human beings. We, the teachers, are persons. Those whom we would teach are persons. We must meet them face to face, in a personal intercourse. This is the primary fact about education. It is one of the forms of personal relationship. It is a continuing personal exchange between two generations. To assert this is by no means to define an ideal but to state a fact. It declares not what education ought to be, but what it is, and is inescapably. We may ignore this fact; we may imagine that our task is of a different order, but this will make no difference to what is actually taking place. We may act as though we were teaching arithmetic or history. In fact we are teaching people. The arithmetic or the history is merely a medium through which a personal intercourse is established and maintained. (Macmurray, 1946a, p. 1)

That is, for Macmurray, "[f]rom the teacher's point of view education is helping other people to learn to be human" (Macmurray, 2012, p. 9). A similarly holistic and cyclical account of schooling as a kind of apprenticeship in personhood is provided by Noddings, for whom "[i]t is a bad mistake…for a mathematics teacher to 'think of her or himself as a mathematician' [as MacIntyre suggests]" (Noddings, 2003, p. 248): the activity of schools is "to produce better people" (Noddings, in Stern, 2016, p. 29).

Such cyclical theories are contrasted with more dyadic theories, such as those centred specifically on the authority of "knowers" and their knowledge or culture—notably Hirsch (2016) and Leavis (1948a, 1948b). Although the theories of Lave and Wenger and of Hirsch have in common a sense of "learning in community," and both approaches are justice-oriented, the emphasis of the former is on the circulation within relatively small communities, whilst the emphasis of the latter, Hirsh, is on the learning of knowledge held by the (usually national) community. Similarly contrasting theories of power in school can be found. More cyclical theories can be found in writers such as Macmurray, for whom "discipline" in school is "the condition of all freedom" (Macmurray, 1946b, p. 4), and so the (only) value of discipline is in ultimately freeing someone, rather than in controlling them.

[1] The term "pupil" rather than "student" is used here, in recognition of the school contexts studied, rather than more general educational contexts.

This contrasts with the more dyadic approach of those for whom schooling involves the direct instruction of virtues, as in the writings of Lickona and Davidson (2005), for whom "education rightly conceived has had two great goals: to help students become smart and to help them become good" and "[t]hey need character for both," so the approach is one "committed to developing the performance character and moral character of adolescents within an ethical learning community" (Lickona & Davison, 2005, p. xxi). This is a dyadic approach to character and morality; others have similar approaches to other aspects of schooling.

An extended account, going beyond these "clips" of theories, might draw together a fuller account of more cyclical and more dyadic educational theories, with Lave and Wenger, and Macmurray, representing the former theories (in terms of the curriculum and authority structures, respectively), and Hirsch, and Lickona and Davison, representing the latter theories. Here, however, these two traditions or clusters of theories are described as represented in novels. The novels may be particularly rich tools for learning—or learning about—the clusters of educational theories, and what is proposed here is that novels can be used to illuminate these contrasting approaches to theorising learning in general and schooling in particular. Using literature in philosophical-educational theory is relatively common, from the intellectual and cultural theorising of Steiner (1967) to the more narrowly-focused work of Cavell (2004), Tucker (2018), or Truffin (2013). This article presents and explores three novels that appear to illustrate contrasting theories of learning. There are many novels about schools: perhaps not as many as there are about families, but more than enough. (Goodreads describe—at the time of writing—the 420 "best family sagas," http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/12890.Best_Family_Sagas, whereas, by comparison, there are only 80 "school novels" http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/17017.School_Novels). However, as well as family-based and school-based novels, there are groups of novels that might appropriately be called "family-like" and "school-like." The signs of family-like novels are intense, small-scale relationships, with one or two authority-figures. Examples might include Stephen King's short story *Rita Hayworth and The Shawshank Redemption* (in King, 1982), which is set in prison but has a family-like feeling, or Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess, 1996), about a violent gang-leader. School-like literature, in contrast, involves relatively large and disparate groups of young people brought together less intimately, with a number of authority figures who may be more varied and distant[2].

This proposed category of school-like literature is of interest precisely because it does not explicitly describe schooling, but describes the type of relationships and

[2] The descriptions of the categories school-like and family-like inevitably have blurred outlines. There are school-like elements of King's novel, for example, and family-like elements of Barrie's novel.

processes common to schools: the age-related group authority relations that are less intimate than typical family relationships, and the learning/apprenticeship processes in the absence of conventional industrial employment contexts or specialised learning communities as described by Lave and Wenger (1991). Novels that are school-like are investigated here. The authors are not directly describing or critiquing schools, so the power of their fictional creations may more freely and imaginatively represent or illuminate educational theories. Three novels are used, each of which is presented as school-like: Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and Barrie's *Peter* [Pan] *and Wendy*. Two were written by authors who taught—one, a schoolteacher, the other, a university teacher—and the third by an author explicitly concerned with the problems of schooling. All three novels are presented as illustrating different, deep, approaches to educational theory in general, with particular value for understanding schooling.

Lords of the classroom: Golding's nightmare and Tolkien's fantastic realism

Two novels that are school-like, and that—it is suggested—illustrate, respectively, dyadic and cyclical educational theories are William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 2012), and J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1969). Golding's best-known novel is liked and disliked almost equally—with the author himself being in the "dislike" camp. The novel seems at first reading to represent a theory of the "basic savagery" of humanity. However, at the time of writing the novel, Golding was a teacher at Bishop Wordsworth's School in Salisbury—a boys' school where he worked briefly in the 1930s and then, after war service, from 1945 to 1961 (see accounts at, for example, http://www.william-golding.co.uk and in Carey, 2009). Staff at the school, visited by one of this article's authors, have talked informally of how Golding was regarded—a great novelist, but perhaps not the best of their teachers. This suggests an alternative theory of the novel, not so much as a theory of savage human nature, but as the kind of nightmare that most teachers have: the nightmare that the pupils will take over, and the teacher will lose all their authority. Even though Golding had lived through the horrors of the Second World War, it is suggested here that the novel represented a much more quotidian teacher fear. (Golding is reported as disliking teaching 'very much' and being 'troubled by guilt about his incompetence as well as his lack of commitment', Carey, 2009, p. 111)

The account of the death of Piggy is a good illustration of "school pupils out of control." "The intention of a charge was forming among them," and "[h]igh overhead, Roger, with a sense of delirious abandonment, leaned all his weight on the lever": Piggy is killed and then, "the silence was complete" (Golding, 2012, p. 222-223, chapter 11). The odd sense of a "group intention" of a class, the "delirious abandonment" of serious misbehaviour, and the consequence of a temporary shocked silence is familiar to most teachers looking in on a teacherless class. (The

killing of a fellow-pupil is rarer, of course.) What further confirms the possibility of a "school-like" interpretation of the novel is the appearance, at the end of the novel, of a traditional adult-with-authority teacher-like figure, implying a return to some sort of order following a temporary absence of the "teacher". A ship arrives and the officer initially expresses the somewhat artificial disbelief typical of a teacher observing a group of misbehaving pupils:

> "I should have thought," said the officer as he visualized the search before him, "I should have thought that a pack of British boys—you're all British aren't you?—would have been able to put up a better show that that—I mean—"
>
> The boys begin to cry, remorseful.
>
> The officer, surrounded by these noises, was moved and a little embarrassed. He turned away to give them time to pull themselves together; and waited, allowing his eyes to rest on the trim cruiser in the distance. (Golding, 2012, p. 248, chapter 12, the final words of the book.)

There are many interpretations of this ending of the novel, from it being an old-fashioned assertion of "Britishness" to it being a sly post-colonial deconstruction of Britishness; a Freudian account of oedipal aggression, or a boys' school fable. Here, it is presented as school-like, and as describing how dyadic authority relations—the boys in the story needing an authority-figure to impose discipline, otherwise they will revert to misbehaviour—are seen by a teacher-novelist.

A second novel which can be seen as school-like is Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1969). Tolkien was working as an English language tutor at Oxford university (specialising in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English http://www.tolkiensociety.org/) when he was writing the books for which he is best known. At that time, the college in which he worked was single-sex, for men only. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is described here, like *Lord of the Flies*, as a version of the (boys') school experience, but in a fantasy world. For all its fantastic characters and creatures and events, though, it still can be plausibly portrayed as a rather realistic account of young men growing up away from home—as in the boarding schools catering for 13-18-year-olds commonly experienced by those who would later go on to Oxford university in the period during which the novels were written. (*The Hobbit*, the prequel to the later books, might be portrayed as representative of younger boys, perhaps aged eleven or twelve, notwithstanding the given ages of the hobbits.) Instead of concluding with the re-imposition of (dyadic) adult authority, it has a cyclical approach to power. A critical moment in the final book describes how Frodo takes on the authority given by the ring:

> The light sprang up again, and there on the brink of the chasm, at the very Crack of Doom, stood Frodo, black against the glare, tense, erect, but still as if he had been turned to stone.
>
> "Master!" cried Sam. (Tolkien, 1969, p. 981)

As Frodo sets the ring on his finger, "the Power in Barad-dûr was shaken" and the "Dark Lord…knew his deadly peril and the thread upon which his doom now hung" (Tolkien, 1969, p. 981, from chapter III of book six, *The Return of the King*, this being the third book in the Lord of the Rings trilogy) Affirming the cyclical nature of the fiction, Tolkien's novel ends with Sam returning home as (now) a traditional father-figure:

> he went on, and there was yellow light, and fire within; and the evening meal was ready, and he was expected. And Rose drew him in, and set him in his chair, and put little Elanor upon his lap.
>
> He drew a deep breath. "Well, I'm back," he said. (Tolkien, 1969, p. 1069, the final words of chapter IX of book six, *The Return of the King*.)

Instead of requiring a re-imposition of adult authority, as in Golding's account, Tolkien provides a surprisingly bucolic "adult" ending, suggesting—in terms of educational theory—that schools teach personhood or create, in Noddings' terms, "better people." Leaving home to learn and grow in a world characterised by age-related group authority relations that are less intimate than typical family relationships, and by intensive learning within distinct communities (of talkative trees, for example, and elves) makes the books particularly redolent of schooling.

Panish attack

A third school-like novel presents a more complex and ambiguous account of educational theories, as it describes both dyadic and cyclical approaches to growing up—and the refusal to grow up, what might be called a "Panish attack" on adulthood itself. Barrie's *Peter* [Pan] *and Wendy* provides a depiction which, like the *Lord of The Flies*, is often represented as a world lacking adult authority. As with Golding and *Lord of the Flies*, critics and biographers have explored the connections between Barrie's life and his fiction (see for example Birkin, 2003 and Howard, 2015). Among other interpretations, the story is seen as a narrative of escapism, an idealisation of childhood, and an exploration on how children are integrated and assimilated into the adult world (see for example the seminal work by Rose, 1993). Recent scholarship has explored *Peter Pan* as a comment on gender, race and empire (Donaldson, 1992; Kinchen Smith, 2006), and its position

in a historical context shaping masculine identities (Feldmeyer, 2017). It has also been read as more savage representation of childhood relationships (similar to Golding's account), and as a psychoanalytical exploration of desire and sexuality (Kincaid, 1992; Owen, 2010; Gryctko, 2016) (also in common with some interpretations of Golding's novel). Throughout, the character of Peter Pan is represented as "a rebel," a boy who refuses to grow up and accept society.

Despite being well-known and much-loved, there is not a single definitive text about, or titled, *Peter Pan*. Barrie wrote a number of texts—a novel (Barrie, 1911/2004), short stories (e.g., Barrie, 1906/2004), a play (Barrie, 1995) — featuring the character Peter Pan, although none of them had the title *Peter Pan*. That title, however, is in common critical use (referring to the group of texts containing the character) and is in common popular use, including for accounts not written by Barrie, such as the Disney book (Barry, Pearson & Blair, 2017), television adaptions, and films (although Steven Spielberg's film is called *Hook*). Barrie's own texts involving the character Peter Pan were written across three decades, from 1901 to 1928 The present analysis is primarily based on the novel (Barrie, 1911/2004). The novel is the main focus of this account, as it provides the most complex and nuanced representation of the Peter Pan story. Whilst presented as children's fiction, the novel—like some of the other accounts—can also be read as adult fiction, with George Bernard Shaw describing the play as "ostensibly a holiday entertainment for children but really a play for grown-up people" (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/1Yf51GCyHyLLvlkwZTx57r2/j-m-barrie). The novel occupies a much more complicated space than might be expected of a popular children's story, and it offers "a critical distance" from the characters. And the various Peter Pan texts are characterised by "irresolvable hybridity and malleability" (Stoddard Holmes, 2009, p. 139, and see also Rose, 1993).

Zipes, in his introduction, characterises the novel as "difficult for young readers to enjoy" and as a "commentary to the play" (Barrie, 2004, p. xxiii). The novel certainly seems directed towards an adult audience with the narrator frequently intervening within the text offering an explanatory commentary on the action and addressing the reader on many levels. This commentary provides an interesting and important layering of voices. The narrative voice seems at times to provide an authority perspective on the narrative which can be read as an embodiment of the dyadic teacher-pupil relationship. Indeed, Neverland is fundamentally dyadic in nature: you are either there or you have lost it almost entirely by growing up. However, the layering of voices, the use of free indirect discourse and, we would argue, the constant undermining of (and by) the narratorial voice can be read as a challenge to the formal dyadic teacher-learner relationship. Instead the novel can be read as a complex representation of both dyadic and cyclical relationships providing a metaphor to explore the relationship between teacher and learner through the "fictive classroom" (Stern, 2007, p. 41). Bakhtin

(1981) writes of the dialogic and many-voiced (heteroglossic) character of the novel—notwithstanding a novel generally being single-authored. He extended his description of the novel to apply to social groups, such that '[e]very language in the novel is a point of view, a socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives' (Bakhtin 1981, p 411). The distinctive character of a school—it is suggested in this article—is also many-voiced and also "one" (each school is a single social institution, however complex the connections beyond the school), and this is a basis for considering how the novel is able to model, imaginatively, the school. It also suggests how the school can be described as an imaginative creation by those within the institution, as all are making meaning through dialogue—itself, for Buber, necessarily an imaginative act (Buber, 1998, p. 71, quoted below). Hence the sense of a "fictive classroom" and "fictive school." *Peter and Wendy* is a particularly strong example of heteroglossia, with contrasting perspectives even in the narratorial voice. The novel reveals the tensions between dyadic and cyclical educational theories, offering broader comments on the relationship between power and authority in education.

Various critical responses have interpreted Peter Pan as an extended metaphor for school. Schaverien defines the narrative as "James Barrie's attuned metaphor for boarding school" (Schaverien, 2015, p. 160). Peter Pan seems to embody a particular British public (independent, fee-paying) school experience, and in the play Hook is referred to directly as an old Etonian, his dying words being Floreat Etona, the Eton school motto (Barrie, 1995, p. 146). Throughout the Pan accounts, Etonian traditions are evident. A narratorial voice intervenes constantly to offer a critical lens on the British public school system, and the potentially damaging affect it has on individual character.

> Hook was not his true name. To reveal who he really was would even at this date set the country in a blaze; but as those who read between the lines must have already guessed, he had been at a famous public school; and its traditions still clung to him like the garments, with which indeed they are largely concerned. Thus it was offensive to him even now to board a ship in the same dress in which he grappled her, and he still adhered in his walk to the school's distinguished slouch. But above all he retained the passion for good form. (Barrie, 2004, p. 117.)

Zipes points to the fact that early drafts of the play represent Hook as a head teacher (in Barrie, 2004, p. 228), but Hook can also be read as an older boy bullying his younger counterparts. Hook's casual cruelty, his obsession with "good form" and "bad form" offers a sustained critique of a particular type of British public school. This system suppresses imagination and instils a regard for outward behaviour and appearance over kindness and morality. A lack of empathy is the result of the

suppressed imagination and as Ridley (2016, p. 12) states, "it was Barrie's view that education can seriously damage a child's imagination."

After Peter's victory over Hook, Peter literally becomes Hook's replacement, adopting both Hook's mannerisms and authoritative control over the ship and the boys. The physical punishment of the "dozen" meted out to Slightly evokes the physical beatings associated with the British public school system. Similarly, Peter's reaction to his changed role reflects the exploitation of power evident in the *Lord of The Flies*.

> Some of them wanted it to be an honest ship and others were in favour of keeping it a pirate; but the captain treated them as dogs, and they dared not express their wishes to him even in a round robin. Instant obedience was the only safe thing. Slightly got a dozen for looking perplexed when told to take soundings. The general feeling was that Peter was honest just now to lull Wendy's suspicions, but there might be a change when the new suit was ready which, against her will, she was making for him out of some of Hook's wickedest garments. It was afterwards whispered among them that on the first night he wore this suit he sat long in the cabin with Hook's cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which he bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook. (Barrie, 2004, p. 134-135)

The adoption of Hook's clothing is both a literal and symbolic representation of Peter's transformation into Hook's replacement; perhaps a dystopic version of Lave and Wenger's apprenticeship model.

In addition to functioning as a cautionary tale about the potentially corrupting nature of power, the novel also presents a fictional reimagining of school-like activities in a context without teachers or formal authority. Much of the action of the novel can be read as largely those of playtime—representing what school pupils do when teachers are not there, as is also evident to an extent with *Lord of the Flies*. More formal visions of school activities and education are represented through Wendy's setting of "examination papers" (Barrie, 2004, p. 70), and the representation of a metaphoric Neverland of the "first day at school" (Barrie, 2004, p. 9). Story-telling, a seemingly adult activity which can be read as analogous to formal education, is central to the narrative and is particularly evident in Wendy's role. After the Lost Boys return to the "real" world, their education is presented as a mundane, reductionist and gradual stultifying process presented in stark contrast to a gradually disappearing Neverland.

> Of course all of the boys went to school; and most of them got into Class III., but Slightly was put first into Class IV. and then into Class V. Class

> I. is the top class. Before they had attended a school a week they saw what goats they had been not to remain on the island; but it was too late now, and soon they settled down to being as ordinary as you or me or Jenkin minor. (Barrie, 2004, p. 145).

The teacher-pupil relationship is further revealed through the narratorial voice in the novel. Initially, the narrator is presented as omniscient, but the narratorial voice is frequently undermined and challenged through shifting tones, layered perspectives and direct addresses to the reader. The existence of a multiplicity of voices (heteroglossia) represents the internal conflicts and tensions within the novel. Holmes points to the ways in which the "dual-address narrative does not hover so much as dart strategically, even sadistically, between mature and naïve modes" (Stoddard Holmes, 2009, p. 140).

> Off we skip like the most heartless things in the world, which is what children are, but so attractive; and we have an entirely selfish time, and then we have a need of special attention we nobly return for it, confident that we shall be rewarded instead of smacked. (Barrie, 2004, p. 97).

This narratorial intervention represents a complex interplay of perspectives between that of the "omniscient" external narrative voice to a collective "childlike" voice. The narrative voice is simultaneously adult and child and the use of the pronoun "we" is important in creating a conspiratorial tone with the reader. However, this is undercut immediately within the following clause when the perspective returns once again to the seemingly omniscient narrator who tells the reader "which is what children are." However, this is not an uncomplicated authoritative voice representing the "antagonistic relationship between childhood and adulthood…grounded in an irrational hatred" identified by Coats (and quoted in Stoddard Holmes (2009, p. 137) and arguably also evident in *Lord of The Flies*. Arguably, the narrative voice challenges the nature of authority and for education presents a challenge to the dyadic model of learning. It also points to the ways in which language simultaneously reflects and constructs identity. As Rose (1993, p. 141) argues "All subjects—adults and children—have finally to take up a position of identity in language; they have to recognise themselves in the first-person pronoun and cohere themselves to the accepted register of words and signs." The use of the pronoun "we" is also significant if read alongside Buber's concept of Realphantasie, "imagining the real" (Buber, 1998, p. 71), may be read as an attempt, if one that is ultimately unsuccessful, to use dialogue to reconcile the inherent tensions and conflicts operating within the novel.

Towards the end of the novel the narrator again assumes a more dyadic formal role. In this passage, the narrator is presented as an oppositional voice to the child,

suggesting moral education and raising questions about the role of the parent/teacher/authority figure.

> Even now we venture into that familiar nursery only because its lawful occupants are on their way home; we are merely hurrying on in advance of them to see that their beds are properly aired and that Mr and Mrs Darling do not go out for the evening. We are no more than servants. Why on earth should their beds be properly aired, seeing that they left them in such a thankless hurry? Would it not serve them jolly well right if they came back and found their parents were spending the week-end in the country? It would be the moral lesson they have been in need of ever since we met them; but if we contrived things in this way Mrs Darling would never forgive us. (Barrie, 2004, p. 135).

Here, the narrator's version of moral education is positioned as cruel and bitter in opposition to the maternal influences. Ultimately, the dialogism and layering of the narratorial voices throughout the novel functions to reveal rather than resolve the conflicts and tensions inherent in this "fictive classroom."

At the beginning and the end of the novel, cyclical relationships are foregrounded. This is particularly evident both in the opening and closing paragraphs:

> All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew this was this: One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, "Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!" This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you're two. Two is the beginning of the end. (Barrie, 2004, p. 5).

The opening paragraph emphasises a sense of the loss of childhood and innocence, a sense of foreboding about an inevitable conclusion. There are multiple layers of subjectivities within the section: Wendy's, Mrs Darling's and the narrator's. These perspectives point to the cyclical relationship as the parent creating their own replacement. The tone of loss signifying Mrs Darling's own loss as well as the loss of Wendy's childhood.

The concluding paragraph points again to the passage of time and the cyclical relationship this creates:

> As you look at Wendy you may see her hair becoming white, and her figure little again, for all this happened long ago. Jane is now a common grown-up, with a daughter called Margaret; and every spring-cleaning time, except when he forgets, Peter comes for Margaret and takes her to Neverland, where she tells him stories about herself, to which he listens eagerly. When Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and so it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless. (Barrie, 2004, p. 152-153)

So, Peter Pan and Wendy can be read as a novel presenting both cyclical and dyadic relationships. Its form follows the content, presenting the complex tensions which structure the relationship between the child and the adult. The novel questions the purpose of education both formal and informal, the role of teachers, parents and authority figures and the ways in which education can both limit and potentially create possibilities. It also engages explicitly with the nature of children themselves, perhaps ultimately suggesting the resilience of children to withstand "bad education."

Conclusion

Learning and power relationships in school can be seen as dyadic or cyclical. The three novels explored here provide fictional accounts of situations that we propose can be considered school-like, one putatively illustrating dyadic relationships, one cyclical, and one that attempts both. This article suggests that all three novelists—all, in different ways, concerned with young people's education—were (intentionally or inadvertently) describing and critiquing contemporary educational theories. Golding's *Lord of the Flies* can be read as a dystopian vision of a classroom 'out of control' and the novel perhaps reveals a fear in the potential of children. The second novel offers a more apprenticeship based model while the third provides a complex and nuanced exploration of the interplay between teacher and pupil relationships and the role of the parent. Arguably, Peter Pan and Wendy ultimately offers a positive (if not uncomplicated) vision of the resilience and creative imagination of children. In cyclical accounts, the "power" implied in a teaching role is precisely to create your own replacement. That is, to make oneself redundant. This is most easily illustrated in family lives, where parents (often) see their roles as creating children who can be independent—who can live without their parents. Our mortality, if nothing else, makes this somewhat obvious. But not all parents realise it. The same can be said for teaching and for education more broadly. That is why the three novels are presented, not simply to illustrate different educational theories, but to provide subtle, nuanced, and appropriately ambiguous accounts of the complexity of schooling.

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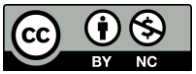

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