Taking the TARDIS to Neverland:
The Undefined Self in *Doctor Who* and *Peter Pan*

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Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)
-Walt Whitman (“Song of Myself”)

A discussion of popular fiction seems to invariably give rise to a question of value, and the query “So what?” lingers, implicitly or explicitly, in the air. Older and more academically esteemed works need not justify their scholarship in the same way that artifacts of popular culture must, their value not yet given testament by the passage of time and a saturation of scholarly ink. But while we may not be used to considering them as such, popular works may indeed be relevant, worthy of our attention and worthy of scholarship. If I may draw upon the introduction to the collection of scholarly essays titled *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Star Trek and Doctor Who*:

> There are many good reasons for studying popular fiction. The best, though, is that it matters. In the many and varied forms in which they are produced and circulated - by the cinema, broadcasting institutions, and the publishing industry - popular fictions saturate the rhythms of everyday life. In doing so, they help to define our sense of ourselves, shaping our desires, fantasies, imagined pasts, and projected futures. An understanding of such fictions - of how they are produced and circulated, organized and received - is thus central to an understanding of ourselves; of how those selves have been shaped and how they might have been changed. (Bennett and Martin ix)

While Milton, Shakespeare, Proust, and the proud legions of others held in consistent scholarly esteem may indeed inform, shape, and reflect us, works falling under the popular culture category may do so in a way that is more widespread, more immediate, and certainly worthy of our attention.

Peter Pan is one such work worthy of consideration. It provides a vision of freedom and flight, of youthful delight and imaginative adventure. It provides an escape from the

responsibilities and restrictions of everyday life for both the characters and the readership, and its appeal has let it permeate Western culture and made Peter Pan an enduring icon. The very first theatrical performance of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* was so well-received that, as Peter Hollindale describes in "A Hundred Years Of Peter Pan", the "first almost wholly adult audience clapped spontaneously, not even needing to be prompted by the orchestra, which had been primed to start the clapping if a terrible silence fell" (Hollindale 209). The book *Peter Pan and Wendy* was released soon thereafter, and the eager reception of Barrie's narrative has continued through generations of texts, theatrical, musical, and ballet performances, radio and television programs, a host of cinematic features, and the theme parks and merchandising of Disney. *Peter Pan*, and the characterization of the *puer aeternus* that he has come to represent, has become a cultural mainstay - he is a peanut butter, a bus line, a collar style, and a psychological disorder.

Indeed, many of the things that have informed the enduring appeal of *Peter Pan* have also laid the foundation for the enduring appeal of yet another great work of fantasy - Britain's tremendously popular television show, *Doctor Who*. To quote the *Guinness Book of World Records* editor in chief Craig Glenday, "It is too good a show to have just one record" (Oppenheimer). Indeed, this classic show with a cult following has been recognized by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the "longest-running" and "most successful" science fiction television show "of all time" ("Doctor Who 50th Anniversary: The Time Lord's World Records") and the very recent 50th anniversary special episode titled "The Day of the Doctor" was awarded the title of "the world's largest ever simulcast of a TV drama" ("Millions tune in for Doctor Who 50th anniversary show"). The critical acclaim for the show is eager and substantial, the list of nominations and awards for the show, the actors, and the directors is lengthy and impressive, but even so, the eager viewership of millions seems the most telling testament to its popularity.

Stephen Moffitt, a recent director of *Doctor Who*, once made explicit the connection between the series and *Peter Pan* in his description of the companion Amy Pond's introduction to the Doctor:

> She's like Wendy in 'Peter Pan', she's wearing a big silly nightie and a dressing gown and slippers. She returns to her childhood, on the night before her wedding, the night she's supposed to grow up. She's flown off with Peter Pan to have an amazing, mad adventure on a fairytale ship. ("She's like Wendy in Peter Pan")

This is a small hint at the deep and significant parallels between these two works. *Doctor Who* and *Peter Pan* have many striking similarities in the characterizations of their protagonists and narratives in which these protagonists operate, but such connections seem to derive from one "defining" feature of these protagonists. Peter Pan and the Doctor are paradoxically defined by their ability to elude definition and their operation in liminal states, which can be seen with particular clarity in their own conceptions of personal identity and the ambiguous characterization of their identities within the narrative, and is further developed by the interplay between memory and ethics and how the issues of time, suffering, and death are handled. Their internal indefinability and ability to operate in liminal spaces determines how they interface with the world, for they embody the freedom that they are able to provide for other characters and, vicariously, for the readership, in works that themselves elude strict boundaries with respect to genre, media platforms, and audience appeal.

As it is the longest-running sci-fi show in the history of television, incorporating the entirety of the show into a comparison with *Peter Pan* would be complicated and impractical. It first aired from 1963 to 1989 and after a substantial hiatus it was revived with great success in 2005 with a new cast and production team (Booth 39). As there is this distinct division between

the old and new incarnation of the show, this paper will focus on the incarnations of the Doctor after the 2005 reboot. These are the ninth, tenth, and eleventh doctors, played by Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant, and Matt Smith respectively. While the appearances, and to a certain extent the personalities, of the Doctors change with each incarnation, there is an understanding within the narrative that the essence of self remains the same. This continuity allows for a discussion of the nature of the Doctor across the span of several incarnations.

An important part of *Doctor Who's* longevity and success as a show, and also an important aspect of the Doctor's indefinability, is his regeneration. Whenever the Doctor is dying, he undergoes a Phoenix-like transformation that gives him new life along with a new body and personality. This both averts death in a narrative context where death is an ever-present source of danger and excitement and allows a new actor to step into the role. However, a crucial part of this transformation is the understanding that, on a fundamental level, the Doctor remains the same person through the transformations. Since he has neither continuity of body nor continuity of personality, this has prompted many scholars to speculate about how the Doctor's identity can rationally be defined.

Paul Dawson argues that psychological connectedness is sufficient for personal identity: "if C remembers as his own some thought or experience that B regarded as his own, then C is the same person as B" (Dawson 233). However, Patrick Stokes does not believe that this is "intuitively satisfying" (Stokes 10) and ultimately concludes that the audience's sense of the Doctor's continuity of self comes from the Doctor's identification of himself as the same person as his other incarnations. The implication of this is that identity less a matter of objective continuity as much as a subjective attitude and a personal acknowledgement that past and future selves are the same as the present self. Citing instances of memory loss, transferred memories,

and false memories that appear within the series, scholars like Richard Hanley and Greg Littman point out that memory is not actually a reliable means of defining identity. After considering this body of evidence, Littman and Hanley both find themselves struggling and ultimately unable to find a consistently valid means of defining individual identity in this context. David Johnson suggests that we can think of people as a collection that is part of a set and that perhaps "persons don't exist at particular moments, but instead are collections of things that exist at particular moments" (Johnson 49). This means that rather than asking if different generations of the Doctor are the same person, "we should be asking whether they're members of the set of objects that is The Doctor" (Johnson 49-50). This makes him an entity that exists in four dimensions – a collection of three-dimensional objects stretching across space and time and held together by causal connections and common elements. However, the question of what exactly defines a "collection" keeps the question of identity subjective.

While there is certainly a concentration of academic attention on this area, the variety of perspectives, the undercurrent of uncertainty, and tentative or absent resolutions are ultimately a testament to the way the Doctor's identity eludes and thwarts definition. The Doctor himself isn't even able to give himself a consistent definition, as we can see in an interaction with a Sycorax alien shortly after the Ninth Doctor has regenerated into the Tenth.

> SYCORAX: Who exactly are you?
>
> DOCTOR: Well, that's the question.
>
> SYCORAX: I demand to know who you are!
>
> DOCTOR: I don't know! See, there's the thing. I'm the Doctor, but beyond that, I just don't know. I literally do not know who I am. It's all untested. Am I funny? Am I sarcastic? Sexy? Right old misery? Life and soul? Right handed? Left

> handed? A gambler? A fighter? A coward? A traitor? A liar? A nervous wreck? I mean, judging by the evidence, I've certainly got a gab.
>
> ("The Christmas Invasion")

It seems that the Doctor's elusive and undefined sense of self is the underlying reason for his mixed feelings about regeneration. As Paul Dawson argues:

> The Doctor can never be sure that any of the thoughts and experiences he now regards as his own, or has ever regarded as his own, will be regarded in the same way by the consciousness emerging on the other side of the process. Psychological continuity and connectedness might fail. Thus it might strike him as a real possibility that the person he is will be extinguished along with his current body, even though the underlying organism – the animal – survives. (Dawson 235)

The Doctor expresses relief at being able to evade death but also sees regeneration as an occasion for sad goodbyes because there really is uncertainty about whether he will really have a continuity of self after his regeneration. Yet the continuity of the show depends on a continuity of self, and so he is something between an old and new self. Whatever identity he may maintain is liminal and elusive.

Indeed, his very name obscures his identity rather than reveals it. "The Doctor" isn't even his real name – it is a title that allows the protagonist to avoid revealing his true identity. Even the title of the show *Doctor Who* reflects a running joke about this indefinition. Again and again, the protagonist will introduce himself as "The Doctor", someone will ask (if not verbatim then in essence) "Doctor Who?" and the question and its implied request for the self to be further

defined, is invariably ignored. Although he has a human appearance and can navigate our world as such, he is as alien as the worlds and dimensions that he transverses.

The elusiveness quality of the Doctor's identity is shared by Peter Pan, and Jonathan Padley asserts in "Peter Pan: Indefinition Defined" that "when Barrie's narrative is allowed to stand as its own master, it functions first and foremost to reveal in Peter a protagonist who is imagined, written, and thus defined above all else by his resistance to definition" (Padley 274). In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, Barrie characterizes Peter Pan as being part bird, part child, but fully neither - or as Solomon explains, "a Betwixt-and-Between" (Barrie). He appears human, but his crowing and pan-pipe-playing give him a birdlike musicality and his power of flight is a clear link to his avian aspect. In *Peter Pan and Wendy*, Barrie describes how "He could sleep in the air without falling, by merely lying on his back and floating, but this was, partly at least, because he was so light that if you got behind him and blew he flew faster" (Barrie, 43), and in her article, "The History and Epistemology of Peter Pan", Kavey asserts that "Peter's lack of physical mass harkens back to his days as a bird, and it represents his fundamentally divided identity" (Kavey 77). He is also tremendously fairy-like, living with them, flying on adventures with them, and adopting their habits, temperaments, and ways, but ultimately fundamentally different from them. His human aspect, distinct from the humanity of others in its connection to magic, and the natural world, also consistently and persistently evades categorization.

Peter Pan's seemingly contradictory or fictionalized conception of his own identity seems to fit with this characterization. He does frequently give his name when queried, though it is a name far more likely to have been adopted than rightly given, but when others ask him more probing questions about his identity, he is unable to answer and is instead apt to make up some

sort of imaginative response on the spot. We can see such a reaction in this early scene with Wendy when she asks him his age.

> It was not really a happy question to ask him; it was like an examination paper that asks grammar, when what you want to be asked is Kings of England.
>
> "I don't know," he replied uneasily, "but I am quite young." He really knew nothing about it; he had merely suspicions, but he said at a venture, "Wendy, I ran away the day I was born." (Barry 29)

Indeed, "to his surprise" (Barrie 29), Wendy keeps asking Peter questions and "they were rather a nuisance to him, getting in his way and so on" (Barrie 30) - a discomfort and difficulty that seems to derive from both a poor memory and a nebulous sense of identity. Another situation in which he is directly asked about his identity is in an encounter with Captain Hook.

> "Pan, who and what art thou?" he cried huskily.
>
> "I'm youth, I'm joy," Peter answered at a venture, "I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg."
>
> This, of course, was nonsense; but it was proof to the unhappy Hook that Peter did not know in the least who or what he was." (Barrie 155)

This answer clearly only serves to obscure Peter Pan's identity even further and it remains elusive throughout the text as Peter imitates other figures from Hook to the crocodile, play-acts as a father figure in the underground home, and in the theatrical production even pretends to be a comely lady to make a fool of Hook. When other characters are put in positions where they must give account of Peter's identity, they too find themselves limited in what consistent aspects of his identity they can provide. When Wendy's mother asks her daughter about Peter, whose name she

has been finding many a time as she rummages through the thoughts of her children, Wendy's response is brief and self-evident: "He is Peter Pan, you know, mother" (Barrie 6).

His rejection of masculine social conventions and responsibilities and his absence of sexuality give his expression of gender and sexuality a remarkable degree of ambiguity as well, which is underscored by the convention of having his role played by a woman in theatrical productions. Additionally, the contrast created by the strict and occasionally comical or absurd ways that other characters uphold their expected gender roles further emphasizes the liminality and indefinition of Peter and makes this state all the more appealing. According to Allison Kavey, "To say that James Barrie acutely depicted the suffocating, limited opportunities for expression available to bourgeois men of his period is like saying that Peter Pan can fly" (Kavey 10). Women are limited as well, their behavior dictated by custom and constraint and inevitably living out their lives in obscurity. By the end of the book, even Mrs. Darling, the pinnacle of Edwardian femininity, is described as "now dead and forgotten" (Barrie 178). Indeed, Kavey observes that simply "being human – growing up, growing old, dying – is fundamentally limited" (Kavey 9).

Peter Pan is not confined or defined by the strictures of time and age, of space, gender and social expectations, or indeed our notion of reality. He has a tremendous desire to not be pinned down or controlled and this can be seen in his endlessly episodic adventures, his lack of a real home, and ultimately, his loneliness. The Doctor shares all of these qualities with Peter Pan, and his relentless resistance to definition is underscored by his changing bodies, changing identities, and changing companions. There is such fluidity in terms of his identity that when a new actor was being selected for the most recent regeneration, there was a significant amount of speculation about whether the Doctor might be of a different ethnicity or gender. The fact that

such questions were a part of the public discourse says much about how undefined the Doctor really is. Each flies unhindered between different dimensions of reality - Peter with fairy dust and the Doctor with the TARDIS.

However, it is worth noting that, while both of them are playful, ageless beings, the presence of memory determines their respective ethical frameworks (or lack thereof), modes of decision-making, and ambiguous conception of self. Peter has no memory and no solid ethical framework, but because he is so present in each moment and isn't changed by the combination of memory and experience, he is in some sense stagnant. The Doctor very much has memory and acts more thoughtfully because of it, but his memories are so more vast and varied than that of a human and his interior life is consequently so complex that it eludes definition. Peter and the Doctor show two ways that memory can relate to an undefined self and this is both one of the most significant differences between the protagonists and at the same time a source of unity.

Peter Pan's borderline amnesiatic memory and the extent of its unreliability first becomes clear while he is flying with the Darling children to Neverland.

> He could go so much faster than they that he would suddenly shoot out of sight, to have some adventure in which they had no share. He would come down laughing over something fearfully funny he had been saying to a star, but he had already forgotten what it was, or he would come up with mermaid scales still sticking to him, and yet not be able to say for certain what had been happening. It was really rather quite irritating to children who had never seen a mermaid.
>
> "And if he forgets them so quickly," Wendy argued, "how can we expect that he will go on remembering us?"

> Indeed, sometimes when he returned he did not remember them, at least not well. Wendy was sure of it. She saw recognition come into his eyes as he was about to pass them the time of day and go on; once even she had to tell him her name.
>
> "I'm Wendy," she said agitatedly.
>
> He was very sorry. "I say, Wendy." he whispered to her, "always if you see me forgetting you, just keep on saying 'I'm Wendy,' and then I'll remember."
>
> Of course this was rather unsatisfactory. (Barrie 43-44)

This forgetfulness allows him to live in the present to a remarkable degree, enjoying the intensity of fresh experience while for the most part being free from anxiety and regret. But it can also make him irritating, inconsiderate, and unreliable. This is particularly painful for Wendy when she returns back home and waits for him to fulfill his promise to come and take her back to Neverland. He forgets, of course: "the years came and went without bringing the careless boy; and when they met again Wendy was a married woman, and Peter was no more to her than a little dust in the box in which she kept her toys" (Barrie 177). He takes her daughter with him to Neverland, and generations of children after that, "every spring cleaning time, except when he forgets" (Barrie 184), and leaves behind many a heartbroken mother. He remains cheerfully oblivious to the pain he causes, quickly forgetting any grief that may ever-so-briefly touch him.

His lack of memory can also make him seem rather dangerous and unstable at times, as can be seen in a description of Peter's life in Neverland.

> He often went out alone, and when he came back you were never absolutely certain whether he had had an adventure or not. He might have forgotten it so completely that he said nothing about it; and then when you went out you found

> the body; and, on the other hand, he might say a great deal about it, and yet you could not find the body. Sometimes he came home with his head bandaged, and then Wendy cooed over him and bathed it in lukewarm water, while he told a dazzling tale. But she was never quite sure, you know. (Barrie 81-82)

At times he seems downright amoral. His lack of memory deprives him of the experiences needed to cultivate empathy, compassion, and really any kind of moral framework. Examples are mentioned in off-hand ways that easily avoid the reader's gaze, but their casual inclusion in the narrative make it clear that Peter gives the actions little thought or reflection, which ultimately makes them more disturbing. When Barrie describes how "The boys on the island vary, of course, in numbers, according as they get killed and so on; and when they seem to be growing up, which is against the rules, Peter thins them out" (Barrie 51) he is letting the reader know that Peter Pan kills the Lost Boys. The description of how the children are fit for the trees that serve as entrances to the underground home is also unsettling. "Peter measures you for your tree as carefully as for a suit of clothes: the only difference being that the clothes are made to fit you, while you have to be made to fit the tree. Usually it is done quite easily, as by your wearing too many garments or too few; but if you are bumpy in awkward places or the only available tree is an odd shape, Peter does some things to you and after that you fit." (Barrie 75). What exactly these "things" are is unclear, but if they are considerable enough to make a child "fit the tree", they are unlikely to be pleasant. A battle with the redskins is described as "a sanguinary affair, and especially interesting as showing one of Peter's peculiarities, which was that in the middle of a fight he would suddenly change sides" (Barrie 82). This may be directly related to his unreliable memory, but there is the clear implication that he violently turned against his comrades and harmed or even killed them. And when Wendy asks Peter about the pirates that he

has killed, his response is to "carelessly" reply, "'I forget them after I kill them'" (Barrie 176). While he may have occasional nightmares or weep upon discovering that Wendy has grown up, he quickly moves on and forgets it. As Barrie succinctly articulates in the scene at Marooner's Rock, "Peter had seen many tragedies, but he had forgotten them all" (Barrie 89).

This scene at Marooner's rock also reveals that, in the rare instances when Peter Pan does avail himself of an ethical framework, it is rule-based. While Wendy's weeping seems to indicate a care-based perspective, Peter "was less sorry than Wendy for Tiger Lily: it was two against one that angered him, and he meant to save her" (Barrie 89). It seems likely that his lack of memory keeps him from having a more care-based ethical framework because he does not have cognitive access to experiences that might inform empathy. This rule-based ethical framework comes into play later on in the scene when Hook and Peter fight.

> Quick as thought he snatched a knife from Hook's belt and was about to drive it home, when he saw that he was higher up the rock than his foe. It would not have been fighting fair. He gave the pirate a hand to help him up.
>
> It was then that Hook bit him.
>
> Not the pain of this but its unfairness was what dazed Peter. It made him quite helpless. He could only stare, horrified. Every child is affected thus the first time he is treated unfairly. All he thinks he has a right to when he comes to you to be yours is fairness. After you have been unfair to him he will love you again, but he will never afterwards be quite the same boy. No one ever gets over that first unfairnness; no one except Peter. I suppose that was the real difference between him and all the rest.

> So when he met it now it was like the first time; he could just stare, helpless. Twice the iron hand clawed him. (Barrie 96)

When Peter and Wendy are later trapped on Marooner's rock and face the threat of rising waters, a gender-oriented rule-based framework seems to inform his decision making when a kite appears that is able to transport one of them to safety.

> "Let us draw lots," Wendy said bravely.
>
> "And you a lady; never." Already he had tied the tail round her. She clung to him; she refused to go without him; but with a "Goodbye, Wendy," he pushed her from the rock; and in a few minutes she was borne out of his sight. Peter was alone on the lagoon.
>
> (Barrie 99)

Peter continues to elude definition. He is cruel yet idealistic, fierce yet naive. He hurts others, either physically or emotionally, but he is also willing to bravely go and save them. He has a strong rule-based ethical framework, but he rarely employs it. He has witnessed countless tragedies, but he can't remember them. Hudson argues that this is responsible for his agelessness, his synonymity with the archetypal "puer aeternus".

> Peter's dearth of memory is a condition of his being an immortal child. Wisdom is acquired from the memory of past experiences, and adulthood is reached by assimilating these memories. Unhappy memories can trigger sorrow and grief and, therefore, they have the potential to alter radically the nonchalant, mischievous attitude of such children as Peter Pan. But because Peter cannot remember, he cannot be touched by sorrow and the coming of age. (Hudson 322)

His lack of memory gives him innocence, heartlessness, and liminality.

The Doctor, on the other hand, has a sufficient continuity of memory with his previous incarnations to let him remember and consider the actions of himself and others and their consequences on an incredible scale. This lets him experience the empathy and regret that Peter Pan's amnesiatic memory in large part denies him, but the fundamental nature of the Doctor has nevertheless remained to a large extent a mystery. According to Gary Gillatt, "In many ways, the Doctor is defined by our distance from him… we are rarely given access to his thought-processes or motivations, which in turn only adds to the character's enigmatic appeal." (Gillatt 11). It has also made the Doctor's internal life, particularly his ethical framework, the subject of a great deal of scholarly speculation.

Unlike the Peter Pan, most scholars seem to agree that the Doctor is a moral being and is not guided by "a rule-based ethic of abstract principles" or even "a calculated cost-benefit approach" (Akers 148). Instead, scholars like Akers and Sylvia assert that the Doctor's ethical framework seems to be one of relational ethics, or "ethics of care", and Akers describes how "He responds to individuals, not abstractions, and for the Doctor, emotion is the very key to appropriate moral response" (Akers148). The Doctor clearly cares for others and sees value in them, and one of his most frequently cited quotes is "in nine hundred years of time and space and I've never met anybody who wasn't important" ("A Christmas Carol"). Sylvia sees even the Doctor's adoption of the title "Doctor" as being indicative of his role being one of providing care. He also finds it interesting that the Doctor, as a male, seems to represent "an ideal example of the ethics of caring" when this philosophy was originally developed by Nel Noddings and other feminist scholars who believed that "traditional ethical systems are male-biased and don't account for the way women experience the world" (Sylvia 157), an unusual aspect that makes the

Doctor's identity all the more elusive. Donna Marie Smith expands on this idea of an ethical framework based on caring for others and explores how rather than simply caring for individuals, the Doctor is willing to make tough decisions and personal sacrifices that are for a broader social good and inspires others to do the same – as in the "Doomsday" episode where the Doctor and Rose become irrevocably stuck in different dimensions while saving the world.

However, while the Doctor seems to so often be characterized by his compassion, his moral identity still eludes definition. On many occasions, he has enabled death and destruction to happen by trying to avoid fighting with malevolent entities, and he has often inspired violence in his companions. The Doctor has a pattern of trying to reason with dangerous and hostile forces, from the Nestene Consciousness to the Sontarans, rather than immediately engaging in conflict and Alschuler notes that on multiple occasions, "the Doctor has placed the lives of others at risk, sometimes resulting in many deaths, in order to avoid seemingly inevitable violence" (Altshuler 284). When Joan Redfern asks in "Family of Blood", "If the Doctor had never visited us, had never chosen this place on a whim, would anyone here have died?" ("Family of Blood"), the question rings painfully true. Additionally, in "Journey's End" Davros brings up the point that the Doctor's influence on other people can have very destructive consequences:

> The man who abhors violence, never carrying a gun. But this is the truth, Doctor: you take ordinary people and you fashion them into weapons. Behold your children of time transformed into murderers. I made the Daleks, Doctor. You made this.
>
> Already I have seen them sacrifice today for their beloved Doctor… How many more? Just think, how many have died in your name?

> The Doctor, the man who keeps running, never looking back because he dare not out of shame. This is my final victory, Doctor. I have shown you yourself. ("Journey's End")

In an effort to reconcile these problems with what seems to be a fundamentally beneficent disposition, Altshuler asks "Is the Doctor wrong to risk the deaths of innocent people, sometimes with devastating consequences, and if so, what could justify such apparent disregard for life? Also, how can the Doctor's connection to his companions reveal his soul, and why should this revelation show him to be a destroyer?" (Altshuler 284)

Looking at Aristotelian virtue ethics, he establishes that while compassion is an important ethic of the Doctor, it isn't his primary motivating factor. He seems to relearn it from his companions and is markedly uncompassionate in episodes like "End of the World" (2005) when he allows Cassandra to die. However, Altshuler observes that an emphasis on choice is far more consistent and "throughout the show, whenever any creature threatens the well-being of others, the Doctor offers it a choice" and "this attempt to allow others to make their own choices, to seek their own good or destruction, thus seems to be the Doctor's most characteristic virtue" (Altshuler 286-287). This is what Martin Heidegger considers to be "authentic concern" in his work *Being and Time*, as Altshuler explains in the following passage:

> Heidegger distinguishes between two kinds of concern that characterize our relations with others. First, we might attempt to resolve others' problems for them, making decisions for their own good. Treating a person in this inauthentic way compromises her role in shaping her own existence, her ability to choose the sort of being she is, and her responsibility for her life. Instead *we* shape her existence, or "leap in" for her, and drop her back into her life unchanged.

> Authentic concern, on the other hand, gives the other person a role in the way she relates to and cares about the world, others, and most importantly, herself. It allows "the other to become transparent to himself *in* his care and *free for* it" (p. 115). In other words, we can choose to treat others as objects in ways we see fit for their own good, or we can treat them as persons capable of shaping and taking responsibility for their own lives. The latter way helps others recognize that they *are* free to choose the ways in which they care about others and themselves, and to take responsibility for that freedom. (Altshuler 287-288)

The Doctor is tremendously powerful. If he were to act only on concern and punish hostile creatures without first giving them choice (and through that choice perspective), he very well "might quickly pave the road to hell with his good intentions" (Altshuler 289). Indeed, "The Doctor's genuine concern for the responsibility and choice of every entity, no matter its nature or history, is what makes him a morally sympathetic hero rather than a violent destroyer like the Master" (Altschuler 289).

However, the Doctor's companions are guided by compassion that can at times cloud moral judgment rather than the impartiality of concern. As the companions travel with the Doctor, "their humanity keeps them from having the knowledge and, more importantly (since

not actually be the Doctor's ethical framework, and indeed that the Doctor's rule-based moral foundation is portrayed as preferable to the subjectivity of a care-based perspective.

The Doctor's expanse of memory and experience gives him a unique moral perspective that makes his ethical identity elusive and complex, and Kevin Decker focuses on this ethical indefinability in "The Ethics of the Last of the Time Lords". In what seems to be the most appropriate compromise between such fundamentally different scholarly perspectives, he argues that a standard approach of ethical theory is not really appropriate in the case of the Doctor since "complex motivations make it difficult to apply traditional ethical theories to judge the Doctor's conduct" because "not only are the Doctor's intentions both complex and usually private, but they often relate to unique situations in which conventional rules don't seem to apply" (Decker 134). The Doctor ultimately seems to reject the idea that there is a clear formula for making right decisions, and his unique relationship with time gives him a unique perspective on cause and effect, intention and consequence.

Decker also explores another realm in which the Doctor eludes strict definition – the embodiment of intellectual movements. He rejects the idea that the Doctor is a positivist whose moral foundation lies with logical proofs and scientific testing and instead relates him to the humanistic and passionate Romantics. With ideals like "infinite potential for richness and depth", the Romantics share with the later existentialists the idea that "human nature isn't given, but that its shaping is essentially in the hands of each free and expressive person" (Decker 136). The Doctor values imagination and, through his adventures, invites his companions and his audience to be imaginative, question judgments, and remain open and receptive to new experiences. But the Doctor also has the "divided consciousness" (Decker 137) of a Romantic Gothic Hero. As John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado describe in *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text*, "because the

dividing line between heroic revolt and manic villainy could never be demarcated… the Romantic Gothic generated a degree of angst, guilt, and alienation around its central narrative oppositions which attached doubt to its heroic performance and emotional sympathy to its villainous ones." (Tulloch and Alvarado 137). However, the Doctor is also a kind of existentialist adventurer who values inconsistency and ambiguity while facing "both the opportunities and the dreadful responsibilities of being free" (Decker 140). The Doctor once again eludes definition and understanding, and even beyond the tentative conclusions that are reached by scholars the variety of perspectives and the disagreements among scholars is indicative of the difficulty of coming to any solid conclusion about the Doctor's ethical framework and the Doctor himself.

Like Decker argues for *Doctor Who*, *Peter Pan* also incorporates multiple seemingly incongruous paradigms of thought, though in this case the Romantic ideals about childhood innocence and Darwinian ideas about the survival of the fittest seem to be more readily applicable. Peter is not confined by the principles of the reality we know and operates in a kind of liminal zone between this reality and a realm of imagination, able to transverse as he wishes but not fully belonging in either. It is in this kind of limbo that he is not subject to the laws of physical reality that govern space and the progression of time and aging for the rest of us. He is an eternal youth who is adamantly opposed to any of the bonds and responsibilities associated with growing up and because his reality is so shaped by his imagination, he does not age. Yet there is the sense that Peter can perish, and he thus straddles the realms of mortality and immortality – ageless but mortal.

The agelessness of Peter and the Doctor allows them to experience tremendous expanses of time. Though the personalities of the Doctor do vary, we see how the pain of experience brings the Doctor significant grief. For instance, The Ninth Doctor must come to terms with his

role in the war between the Time Lords and the Daleks while the Tenth Doctor must deal with the loss of his beloved Rose. While Peter's fragile and faulty memory provides some protection against the maturing pain of experience, it does seems to surface in the subconscious landscape of his dreams.

> Sometimes, though not often, he had dreams, and they were more painful than the dreams of other boys. For hours he could not be separated from these dreams, though he wailed piteously in them. They had to do with the riddle of his existence. (Barrie 130)

We also see a differentiation between Peter and "other boys" in his brush with death on Marooner's Rock.

> Peter was not quite like other boys; but he was afraid at last. A tremor ran through him, like a shudder passing over the sea; but on the sea one shudder follows another till there are hundreds of them, and Peter felt just one. Next moment he was standing erect on the rock again, with that smile on his face and a drum beating within him. It was saying, "To die will be an awfully big adventure." (Barrie 99)

This shows a drive for Thanatos, for oblivion, that seems remarkably unchildlike, especially when one considers the intense nostalgia for childhood elsewhere in the book, and adds further indefinability to Peter's identity while putting a rather dark twist on Peter's adamant opposition to growing up.

This rosy image of childhood that can be found in *Peter Pan*, most poignantly expressed through adults who reminisce about those youthful years to which they cannot return, seems to have its roots in the Wordsworthian glorification of youth in the Romantic literary tradition.

However, the allure of death that we see in this scene seems to correspond much more strongly to the sentiments found in Romantic adventure literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the model of manhood portrayed in these works by authors such as Sir Walter Scott, George Alfred Henty, Rider Haggard, Lord Alfred Tennyson, and William Morris, Linda Robertson describes in ""To die will be an awfully big adventure": Peter Pan in World War I" how "Love, marriage, (and) children were stultifying; what men yearned for in their imaginations was the ultimate challenge of facing death" (Robertson 64). The contemporary masculine ideal of bravely facing a noble death also seems to inspire Wendy's final words to the boys when Hook is about to make them walk the plank: "I feel that I have a message from your real mothers, and it is this: 'We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen.'" (Barrie 143). As an eternally playful and joyful youth who actively rejects the responsibilities and constraints of adulthood, Peter nevertheless seems to embody the virtues of mature manhood that appeared in literature during this turn of the century. Indeed, it was this literature and its masculine values of bravery, sacrifice, fortitude, and rejection of romantic and sexual love that helped to inspire so many young men to eagerly enlist in the early years of World War I. But the romantic notions of noble death and sacrifice quickly dissipated in the senseless slaughter of the trenches, and death was simply awful rather than an "awfully big adventure" (Barrie 99) for so many, including J.M. Barrie's ward George Llewelyn-Davies (Robertson 72). The lines, "They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: / Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn" (Binyon) in Laurence Binyon's poem "For the Fallen" brings to light a terrible parallel between the ageless Peter Pan and the scores and scores of young men who would never grow up because they were killed in World War I.

As Kavey explains in “The History and Epistemology of Peter Pan”, “Peter himself is a composite of bodies and characteristics borrowed from Pan, birds, fairies, and children that cannot fit into a single world but fits perfectly into neither the world of the living or the dead, the material or the natural, the real or the imagined, the human or the nonhuman (preternatural or animal). Because he cannot fit in existing categories, he straddles the worlds from which those categories derive their meanings, pressing hardest on the divide between the real and the imagined to create a space that can intrude into both places, the Neverland.” (Kavey 102). Both Peter Pan and the Doctor are protagonists who embody the freedom they provide. They operate beyond the strictures of identity, time, space, and the expectations of others and there is a sense of freedom and possibility permeating their narratives as a result. This is what they offer their companion characters - a taste of radical freedom. *Peter Pan* and *Doctor Who* clearly appeal to us because, in the manner of most fantasy or science fiction, they offer an opportunity for escapism. However, the way in which they offer escapism is rather unique. While escapism in many fictions tends to come through the vicarious participation in adventures that take place in a reality entirely outside our own, *Doctor Who* and *Peter Pan* offer the possibility that these adventures could happen to any of us. The presence of a liminal and magical world of extraordinary adventure that is in hidden parallel to our own creates the implication that we ourselves live in a world where magic is around every corner, just out of sight but with the potential to be found, and that we too may be invited to escape from our ordinary lives to grand adventures beyond our imagination. Peter Pan could fly in our window at night and sprinkle us with fairy dust. The TARDIS could materialize out of thin air with its rhythmic whooshing and the Doctor could open the door and beckon us inside. If nothing else, Peter and the Doctor give us a sense that, as we go about our ordinary lives, there are secret, beautiful, magical,

tremendous things happening all around us, even if we cannot see them, that we can free ourselves from some of the strictures and bounds that may no longer serve us, and that some of these ties may ultimately be worthwhile.

Both *Peter Pan* and *Doctor Who* navigate a liminal space between the boundaries of science fiction and fantasy genres to operate in a kind of intermediary space where science and magic seem almost one and the same, and they also both transcend the bounds of audience demographics. While *Peter Pan* is widely considered to be a work of children's literature and was originally written as such, it is now primarily read by adults (Kavey 3). Few modern young readers have actually read the book itself, and their knowledge instead comes mainly from other media like films, theatrical productions (particularly school plays), Disneyland and Disneyworld, and endless cultural references, particularly in advertising (Holmes 132). The manner, in addition to the mode in which the narrative is absorbed also varies across the generations of audiences, and Kavey describes how "like its curious namesake, this story is really liminal, straddling age groups and meaning different things to all of us at different moments in our lives." (Kavey 3).

To take an even broader closing perspective of these works, *Doctor Who* is comparable to *Peter Pan* both in its appeal across all age groups and its integration of a variety of media. Matt Hills defines "intertextuality" in *Triumph of a Time Lord: Regenerating Doctor Who in the Twenty-first Century* as "the integrated transmedia development of the "Doctor Who" brand across mobile phones and websites" that gives long-time fans a "consistent, multi-platformed hyperdiegesis, or narrative world" and also appeals to "emergent cult-like fans, who could follow *Doctor Who* across platforms as a matter of interactive 'tele-participation,' without necessarily thinking of themselves as including traditional 'cultists'" (Hills 219). Porter builds on this

definition, considering “intertextuality” to include “multimedia forms from print publications (e.g. novelizations, comic books, magazines, posters) to audiovisual platforms requiring a specific playing device that may not be mobile for all viewers (e.g., television episodes, webisodes, radio dramas, videogames, CDs, DVDs, Blu-ray discs), to tangible objects (e.g. action figures, t-shirts, collectible plates, coffee mugs, other fan-purchased official or BBC-sanctioned ephemera), as well as the transmedia Hills includes in his definition (e.g. smartphone-, iPad-, iPod-, etc.- downloadable or accessible media, websites)” (Porter 78). *Doctor Who* has particularly striking level of intertextuality when defined in this way. To say that *Peter Pan* is just a play or just a book is as inaccurate as saying that *Doctor Who* is just a television show. These artifacts operate in an integrated, liminal cultural space, as powerful as their protagonists in their popularity, cultural presence, and ability to elude stricture and definition.

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