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Introduction

In the 1920s an English author by the name of A. A. Milne wrote two books about a bear named Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends. The former was called simply *Winnie-the-Pooh* (WP) and was published in 1926, and the second, *The House at Pooh Corner* (HPC), was published in 1928. The books contain a collection of stories that the author used to tell to his son before he went to bed in the evening and they came to be counted among the most widely known children's stories in literary history. Many consider the books about Winnie-the-Pooh some of the greatest literary works ever written for children. They have been lined up and compared with such classic masterpieces as *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll and *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Graham. How Milne uses poetry and prose together in his stories has earned him a place next to some of the great poets, such as E. Nesbit, Walter de la Mare and Robert Louis Stevenson (Greene).

In my view, the author's basic purpose with writing the books was to make children, his son in particular, happy, and to give them a chance to enter an "enchanted place" (HPC 508). The books were not written to be a means of education or to be the source of constant in-depth analysis of over-zealous critics. They do not have a hidden meaning or message, but rather provide a friendly and lovable fantasy world where children are allowed to let their imagination take control.

In the year 1961 the Walt Disney Corporation acquired the rights to *Winnie-the-Pooh*. The first full length animated movie, *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, was released in 1977 with success. Over the years the Disney Corporation has

marketed Winnie the Pooh¹ globally and still to this day he is one of the most popular characters in the Disney Parks and a renowned trademark realized in all sorts of merchandise. But has Winnie-the-Pooh changed from the bear that Milne originally wrote about? If so, what has been lost in the “Disneyfication”² of Winnie the Pooh?

Disney wanted to stay true to Milne’s version in a number of ways; for example they felt it was important that the characters kept their stuffed – toy characteristics. They also wanted to keep the friendly and lovable tone of the stories and they wanted to integrate the fact that Winnie the Pooh was a character from a story book. This is why there is a narrator and the characters are sometimes shown walking across the pages of a story book. Interestingly, both Milne and Walt Disney were inspired by their children in their approach to *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Milne wrote the story about the bear for his son Christopher and Walt Disney heard how much his daughters enjoyed the stories when their mother read them to them and wanted to bring them to other children.

The primary text used in this essay is *The Complete Collection of Stories: Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner* (CCS 2002) and the movie is the original full length movie released by Disney in 1977, *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*. The rich background to the book is also the background to the movie, which is why the life and work of Milne will be explored, as well as criticism and secondary literature on the books.

A part of the stories’ charm is how they are structured. Milne combines rhymes and prose redundant, which – along with his use of childlike vocabulary –

¹ In Milne’s view the name Winnie-the-Pooh was not three words but a whole and thus he used hyphens. When Disney took over they dropped the hyphenation. In this essay this distinction between Milne’s character and the movie character will be used.

²The transformation from Milne’s version of Winnie-the-Pooh to the Disney version of Winnie the Pooh.

makes the text flowing and easy to read. Interestingly, some of the words are misspelled in the way a young child might write them. This gives the book a unique style and allows the reader to connect with the mindset of a child so vividly portrayed in the stories. In accordance with Milne's text, the names of chapters and specific words are not changed to fit the correct spelling. This is one of the issues that will be put up for comparison in this essay; i.e., how did the creative team at Disney incorporate Milne's language and verses into the movie – if they even did it at all? Unfortunately, there is not much literature available on this particular subject, and therefore, for further information about the world of Pooh it was necessary to use various websites to increase the information span of the essay.

The character creation in both books and the movie will also be examined and compared and some literature to that effect discussed. The wisdom of Pooh and the way he lives has intrigued many. The life of Pooh and his friends has been the topic of a number of books and studies – as an interesting topic worth exploring. The character of Winnie-the-Pooh and all his friends, are well known in Iceland, but most know it through the Disney version displayed on television, in books and toystores. Only a few may realize that these characters actually stem from Milne's story collection. For an in-depth understanding of the world of Winnie-the-Pooh it is necessary to know the background information about the author and what inspired him to write his tales – how this character was created and for whom – because without the background, one cannot fully understand the changes over the years.

Background and Criticism

The stories about Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends were written in the early 20th century by an Englishman, Alan Alexander Milne, who wrote under the abbreviation of A. A. Milne. Milne was born the 18th of January, 1882, in Hampstead, London. He was educated in a school run by his father and then went on to study at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he received a mathematics scholarship to study. He then went on to write for *Punch*, a British humor magazine where he later became an assistant editor. At *Punch* he met an artist named E. H. Shepard, later on sometimes referred to as “the man who drew Pooh” (CCS:10). Their meeting was to be the beginning of a very successful collaboration between the two of them.

A. A. Milne and Dorothy de Sélincourt were married in 1913 and in 1920 their only son, Christopher Robin, was born. Christopher Robin and his toys became Milne’s greatest inspiration for writing his books and poems. In 1924 he published a collection of poems called *When We Were Very Young*. When asked for whom the book was written, Milne answered: “They are a curious collection; some for children, some about children, some by, with or from children” (Hunt 13). The book contains wonderful poems about Christopher Robin and the marvelous activities he enjoys during his days, for instance about his joyful trips to the zoo, the countryside and the wonderful streets of London. The book is brought to life with illustrations from the talented E. H. Shepard. Shepard’s drawings in Milne’s children’s books greatly contributed to their success. He was able to capture the mood of Milne’s text to its core: the pictures and the text go perfectly together. The drawings are full of life and through them the adventures become beautifully vivid and, consequently, more enjoyable.

Milne himself realized how important the illustrations were after the success of their first book collaboration. Milne happily acknowledged Shepard's part in the success of the book, and instead of paying Shepard a flat rate, Milne chose to pay him a share of the royalties of *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Milne received 80% and Shepard received 20% and this was very rare in that day and age. Also very rare, still to this day, is the fact that an illustrator could claim the rank as co-creator (Kirkpatrick 895). Since the first publication, the stories of Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends have sold extremely well and today they continue to charm children and adults alike.

For the purpose of this essay it is very important to understand that when Milne wrote his children's books, his son was not only the central source of inspiration from the very beginning of the creative process but he also became the main character. This is clear in the dedication of the book *When We Were Very Young* to his son:

To
Christopher Robin Milne
 OR, AS HE PREFERS TO CALL HIMSELF,
 BILLY MOON
 THIS BOOK
 WHICH OWES SO MUCH TO HIM
 IS NOW
 HUMBLY OFFERED

As stated in the Introduction, Milne's books were written for his son's pleasure and they have no greater purpose than this, nor a hidden meaning. In order to stress this point, there is a note from the author to the readers in the preface to the book titled "Just Before We Begin", instructing them that the book should be read like Christopher Robin is not only the protagonist but also the speaker in the poems. Following is a sample from a poem in this book that shows the reader that the main character is Christopher Robin himself. The poem is called "Buckingham Palace":

*They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace –
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
Alice is marrying one of the guard.
“A soldier's life is terrible hard,”*

Says Alice.
(WWWVY:2-3)

Two years after he wrote *When We Were Very Young*, Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* was published. Again, Milne demonstrates that he is a very sophisticated and capable writer. His words flow through the pages and the adventures of Pooh and his friends, which sometimes even approach the ridiculous, always have funny plots which are both clever and interesting. As the years went by and Christopher grew older Milne lost the interest of writing for children because his inspiration, and at the same time his audience, had grown up. As a result, Milne did not write other children's books.

Children's literature is unlike any other genre, as it is a very specific and complicated field of writing. The author has great responsibility towards his reader, having the capability to shape the mind and cultural values of a young child. C. S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* – books that are enjoyed by children and adults alike – states:

“I am almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story”...”In much the same way, a book which is not worth reading at age 50 is not worth reading at age 10, either.”

(C. S. Lewis quoted in Hunt 186)

What sets children's books apart from books written for adults are a number of things; among the obvious differences being that the print is bigger, there are more pictures and they are usually shorter. The style and tone is short and simple, often in prose. Children relate to other children, and therefore the main character is usually a child, as are the other central characters. The topic of the story has to be something that

interests a child; for instance in *Winnie-the-Pooh* some of the topics are birthday presents, adventures, balloons and friendship.

Children's books are generally written by adults and read to young children by adults; therefore it has been argued by some that children's books do not exist at all. I have to disagree with this statement. I believe that we do have specific children's books. As stated above books for children have a different style than books for adults, i.e. the text is bigger, there are pictures and so on, that is; they specifically target at children and are written in a style that is first and foremost appealing to children. Children usually do not enjoy the same books as adults and in some cases there is a question whether they even should. However, when it comes to the case of adults enjoying children's literature, I am inclined to agree somewhat with C. S. Lewis' statement quoted above to the extent that it certainly does seem that books enjoyed equally by children and adults tend to be the best ones. In my opinion, *Winnie-the-Pooh* is a perfect example.

In books for children there tends to be a different way of speaking to the audience. Some books address the children directly, while others speak to the adults. The most common are the books that have a double address. They appeal both to adults and children. The topic might be childlike but the underlying humor reaches the adults. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* is one of the most famous children books that use double address. According to Hunt,

many of the jokes – Pooh living “under the name of Sanders”, Milne's use of Significant Capital Letters, and probably the whole of the character of Eeyore – are aimed at an adult audience.

(Hunt 13)

Hunt believes that the fact that both children and adults understand the humor and enjoy the stories of *Winnie-the-Pooh* is the reason why they have been so long lived. Milne himself stated:

Children's books ... are books chosen for us by others; either because they pleased us when we were young; or because we have reason for thinking that they please children today; or because we have read them lately, and believe that our adult enjoyment of them is one which younger people can share. Unfortunately, none of these reasons is in itself a sure guide.

(A. A. Milne quoted in Hunt 1)

A myriad of academic books about Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* have been written.

Many of them critique while others offer analysis. When the books were first published they were critiqued rather harshly. Popular books tend to be critiqued and left to the scrutiny of other authors and literary critics. In a literary review of *The House at Pooh Corner* published in *The New Yorker* October 20th 1928 under the pseudonym Constant Reader, A. A. Milne's story is heavily criticized. It turned out that Dorothy Parker, an American writer and a poet, was behind the pseudonym. Parker was herself known for her writing, which was witty, sharp and caustic. Her view of A. A. Milne's writing, as well as of some other children's authors, was that they were practicing the "dumbing down of English for children" ("Dorothy Parker" Wikipedia. 2004). Marion Meade writes in her biography of Dorothy Parker, *What Fresh Hell Is This?:*

Constant Reader's best-known review was of A. A. Milne's *The House at Pooh Corner*. Milne's whimsy had always nauseated her. When she came to the word *hummy*, her stomach revolted. 'And it is that word 'hummy', my darlings', she wrote, 'that marks the first place in *The House at Pooh Corner* at which Tonstant Weader Fwowed up'.

(Meade 188)

Parker's view that Milne's stories are dumbifying children is actually contrary to what philosophers and other academics have written books about. They agree that Winnie-the-Pooh actually is the ultimate philosopher and has perhaps even become a denominator for various philosophical theories. In the book *The Tao of Pooh* (1992), Benjamin Hoff is able to relate the Winnie-the-Pooh stories to Chinese taoism. In his book, *Pooh And The Philosophers* (1996), John Tyerman Williams explains and

connects to the story how Pooh is the ultimate philosopher, even greater than Aristotle and Plato, because he lives according to his philosophy.

A. N. Whitehead told us that the European philosophical tradition “consists in a series of footnotes to Plato”. And he was partly right. All we need to do is to delete “Plato”, insert “Winnie-the-Pooh”, and change “a series of footnotes” to “a series of introductions”. This work will demonstrate beyond all reasonable doubt that the whole of Western philosophy – including, of course, Plato himself--is best considered as a long preparation for Winnie-the-Pooh. Philosophy *since* Winnie-the-Pooh does naturally consist of footnotes to “*that* sort of Bear”.

(Williams 1)

Another critic of Milne’s work was Vera Ohanian. She criticizes that in the stories there is only one animal of each type, except of course Kanga and Roo. Furthermore she maintains that there is a denial of ageing and that the story teaches children to escape their problems and burdens by going to an imaginary world instead of dealing with their problems head on. Most importantly she is very critical of Milne’s lack of female characters in his stories and feels his view of women is very negative (Greene).

There is clear evidence of this in the story. When Kanga, the only female animal, is first introduced, the male animals’ first instinct is to chase her away from the forest. She simply arrives in the forest one day: “Nobody seemed to know where they came from. But there they were in the Forest: Kanga and Baby Roo” (WP 141). In Milne’s defense Kanga and Roo are not chased out of the forest, they become very important characters and when Tigger comes along, Kanga’s motherly side is allowed to blossom and her affection for Tigger is shown.

Despite these examples, it is generally hard to find negative critiques about the books, especially in later years. I think that the reason may lie in the fact that critiqueing such a masterpiece involves great responsibility because Winnie-the-Pooh has become a cultural icon that no one dares to touch.

As mentioned above, not all books on Winnie-the-Pooh were a direct criticism. In 1963 Frederick C. Crews wrote a book called *The Pooh Perplex*. The book became a surprise bestseller. The book is a satire, which mocks the sorts of casebooks that were assigned to first-year university students at the time, in their introductory English or rhetoric courses (“Frederick Crews” Wikipedia, 2004). It features twelve fake Pooh experts and the stories about *Winnie-the-Pooh* are analyzed according to different theories, such as Marxist, Freudian and feminist theories to name a few. Every essay is a fiction and the same goes for all of the suggested extra reading material. The book is very interesting, witty and enjoyable. In writing this book and showing how easily one can pick out a simple story and maintain that it devotedly follows a certain literary movement, Crews proved that one could analyze the *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories until the point the author originally wanted to make, or not to make, is lost. Nonetheless, that never changes the fact that most children are oblivious to all literary theories of any kind and still enjoy the books for what they are; simple and enjoyable bedtime stories.

Crews, a very noted literary critic, is trying to make a point that not all books contain a hidden message or analogies underneath the surface. *Winnie-the-Pooh* is a children’s book, specifically written to entertain children and thus it does not have a hidden nor a deeper meaning than simply to entertain. Literary critics tend to over-analyze the works they deal with. Crews’ book certainly shows in a very amusing way that an innocent children’s book can be over-analysed to the point of silliness.

The Books

In 1921, a year after Christopher Robin's birth, his mother went to Harrods, the department store, in search of the most perfect birthday present for her little boy. What started out as a simple search for a birthday present turned out to be extremely important because Christopher's mother got him a little teddy bear who, although this was oblivious to everyone at the time, was destined to become the inspiration for one of the most famous characters in children's literature. As is common with many children at this age, young Christopher became extremely attached to his teddy bear and the two seldom parted. The teddy bear did not start his life with the Milne family as Winnie-the-Pooh. He had a couple of other names to start with, to list a few; Big Bear, Mr. Edward, Edward Bear and Teddy Bear. How he finally became known as Winnie-the-Pooh is quite a mystery. Neither Milne nor his son Christopher were even perfectly sure where the name came from. There are a few different stories about how the teddy bear ended up being called Winnie-the-Pooh. The name Winnie most likely comes from Christopher's frequent visits to the Zoo. Christopher Robin loved to go to the London Zoo and his favorite animal there was a bear named Winnie named after his hometown Winnipeg in Canada. In 1926 *Winnie-the-Pooh* was first published and this passage is from the introduction of the book from the 2002 edition:

"You can't be in London for long without going to the Zoo. There are some people who begin the Zoo at the beginning, called WAYIN, and walk as quickly as they can past every cage until they get to the one called WAYOUT, but the nicest people go straight to the animal they love the most, and stay there. So when Christopher Robin goes to the Zoo, he goes to where the Polar Bears are, and he whispers something to the third keeper from the left, and doors are unlocked and we wander through dark passages and up steep stairs until at last we come to the special cage, and the cage is opened, and out trots something brown and furry, and with a happy cry of 'Oh, Bear!' Christopher Robin rushes into its arms, Now this bear's name is Winnie, which shows what a good name for bears it is, but the funny thing is that we

can't remember whether Winnie is called after Pooh or Pooh after Winnie. We did know once, but we have forgotten..."

(CCS:18)

Here the name Winnie has been explained, however, "-the-Pooh" is still unexplained.

A. A. Milne offers one explanation which is that the bear is also named after a swan that Christopher "had" and his name was Pooh and that is why he is called Winnie-the-Pooh. The first chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh* introduces Pooh and Christopher Robin. The bear's name is explained to the reader in the first paragraph, it is Christopher Robin himself who introduces the bear.

"Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it. And then he feels that perhaps there isn't. Anyhow, here he is at the bottom, and ready to be introduced to you.

WINNIE-THE-POOH..."

(WP 23)

From this extract the huge influence Christopher Robin had on his father is clear. Not only did he serve as his father's inspiration, he actually spelled out some of the dialogues displayed in the text. It can be seen clearly from the dialogue on page 24:

"When I first heard his name, I said, just as you are going to say, 'But I thought he was a boy?

"So did I", said Christopher Robin.

"Then you can't call him Winnie"?

"I don't".

"But you said—"

"He's Winnie-ther-Pooh. Don't you know what "ther" means"?

"Ah, yes, now I do", I said quickly; and I hope you do too, because it is all the explanation you are going to get"?

(WP 24)

Most importantly, Christopher Robin was the one who gave Milne the title of his masterpiece. By incorporating actual dialogues and vocabulary from his son, Milne stays true to the childlike tone which resonates throughout the books.

As the years went by and Christopher became older he wanted to hear stories about their adventures together and A. A. Milne, his father, happily obliged. The Milnes were a middle-class family and Christopher was raised by his nanny Alice, as was common at the time. He met his parents in the morning over breakfast and after their daily routines his father usually put him to bed in the evenings. He rarely met both of his parents at the same time. When his father was tucking Christopher in, the young boy asked him for a story and more than often these stories were about Christopher Robin and the adventures he shared with his stuffed animals. Mr. Milne incorporated many of his son's fluffy friends into his stories. Amazingly enough Christopher Robin's personalized bedtime stories ended up being the bedtime story for thousands of children around the world, translated to many different languages.

In the 1940s A. A. Milne donated Christopher Robins' stuffed animals to the American E.P. Dutton. In 1988 Dutton gave the dolls to the Donnell Library Center, New York. Today Pooh, Tigger, Piglet and Eeyore can be found in the children's reading room where they are on display behind a bulletproof glass.

It demonstrates the big appeal that Winnie-the-Pooh has on his readers that even though the Winnie-the-Pooh books do not have an educational purpose in itself or a direct message, they allow the reader to enter a charming world full of wonderful adventures, which is what Milne created for his son.

The Movie

In 1961 The Walt Disney Company bought all rights to Winnie-the-Pooh from the Slesinger family that had previously bought them from Milne. Mrs. Disney used to read Winnie-the-Pooh at bedtime for their girls and Mr. Disney heard the laughter coming from the bedroom and knew that other children would love them too. Though the stories were a part of British childhood they had not reached that status in the United States. Walt Disney knew that he had to be very careful when introducing the characters of Winnie-the-Pooh to the American public. Instead of making a full feature movie he decided that it would be better to start by making a featurette (a short movie), and slowly introducing the characters to the public. In 1966 the first featurette came out: *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*. It was followed by *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* in 1968 and the last featurette was *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too!* in 1974. Sadly Walt Disney himself was not able to witness the popularity of the Winnie-the-Pooh movies as he passed away in December 1966, making the Pooh featurette the last movie he worked on. In 1977 the three featurettes were combined with some added material and the first full length movie was released, *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*.

For the Disney scriptwriters it was quite a challenge converting the book to a movie and naturally there are some differences between the Disney version of Winnie the Pooh and Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh. Milne's text was the inspiration for the movie and the Disney team has kept relatively true to the text in the movie. Although the Disney team has kept close to the original text, other important Milne trademarks have been lost in the "Disneyfication" of the friendly bear.

The first thing is that the tone of the movie is different from the tone of Milne's stories. The Disney creative team has kept Milne's childlike spelling and

added to it. However, the verses from the story have been omitted and instead the songwriting team at Disney has written songs to keep the story going through the songs as Disney productions have long been famous for. Another and a very important thing is that the simplicity of Milne's writing is lost.

In the Disney movie, Winnie-the-Pooh is portrayed more daft than he is in Milne's story. Even though he is described in the book as a bear of very little brains (or even none) the reader never gets the feeling that he is stupid, and in fact many books have been written to prove otherwise. The difference between how Milne writes the story and how Disney views the story is that instead of trying to be overly funny Milne knows where to quit, while Disney keeps at it for extra laughs. A clear example of this is in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, chapter two, in the story "Pooh goes visiting and gets into a tight place". Pooh goes to visit Rabbit and eats too much honey offered to him by Rabbit and ends up getting stuck in the door hole when he is leaving the house. Sadly Pooh has to stay in the hole until his friends are able to pull him out. A few days later Pooh finally budes and Christopher Robin and friends pull him out and "So, with a nod of thanks to his friends, he went on with his walk through the Forest, humming proudly to himself" (WP 61). However in the movie version when they finally are able to pull him out of Rabbit's hole he goes flying into the air and gets stuck in a hole in a tree. In my opinion, Milne's version resulting in Pooh "proudly" walking away from this hilarious and embarrassing situation shows such a brilliantly subtle humor that is perhaps more apparent to adults, while the Disney version of Pooh flying with funny noises only to get stuck in another hole is maybe overstating the comical antics of the situation a little in order to guarantee a laugh from the younger audience.

Another thing that differs between book and movie is the order in which Milne's book is put together. It is somehow magical, everything happens in a chronological order; first he introduces us to Christopher Robin and then slowly the reader meets the other inhabitants of the forest as the story unfolds. In the Disney movie the stories are all out of order and as a result the audience does not experience the same intimate connection with the characters as the reader of the book does. There are some other differences, such as, in Milne's version one story is set in summertime, but happens during winter in the movie. Disney has added dialogue and phrases to make the stories more comical, for instance in the movie Tigger says "TTFN" that stands for TaTa for now. The main difference though is that some endings in the movie are different than in the original stories and along the way the simplicity and directness that is so clear and appealing in Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh is lost.

Though the Disney company tries to stay close to Milne's original characters, it seems that it has fallen into the pit of altering and adding characters in order to become more marketable for American children and culture. That is, however, not to say that these changes are necessarily bad for the audience but nonetheless it seems sad that Milne's original tone in the books, which was all about the children and not making it salable, is lost on account of marketability and mere business.

Eeyore is a good example of what has been sacrificed from the original to make the story more appealing to purchasers. This is quite different from how he is portrayed in Milne's book. The main external difference is that he now has a bow on his tail, which is never mentioned in Milne's text, let alone a pink one. He seldom portrays any type of feelings and is generally not really bothered about anything around him. It is clear that the Disney Corporation has re-defined the character of Eeyore to make him more approachable towards American parents and children.

Milne's gloomy Eeyore would not comply well with the picture perfect world Disney tries to convey to American families. The change of other characters will be discussed in more details in the next chapter.

In the featurette *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* a new character is introduced by the name of Samuel J. Gopher who is as the name suggests, an actual gopher. In the documentary, *The Story Behind the Masterpiece*, the creative team at Disney explain that they felt it was very important to have one truly American character who represented American culture and since gophers are only found in America they chose him. Gophers are very hard working animals, a reference towards the American nation whose main philosophy of life is that if you work hard, you can achieve the American dream. He is always making tunnels and he shows up out of the blue e.g. when Pooh has gotten himself stuck in a hole and offers his services "I'm not in the book but I am at your service". This sentence carries a double meaning, he is not in the phonebook and more importantly he is not in Milne's original book. However, he is there and ready to help. One of his characteristics are his long front teeth and his trademark is that he whistles when he talks. By bringing in a new character the Disney corporation in my opinion made a mistake. There are wonderful characters that Milne created that they could have highlighted instead of creating a "truly American" one that does not belong in an English forest.

Winnie-the-Pooh has been a great success for the Disney Corporation. They earn a fortune every year by selling various merchandise, books and movies. Since the release of the first full length movie in 1977 Disney has released more than 10 full length movies about the adventures of Pooh and his friends as well as a few shorter ones for television.

Because of Disney's involvement Winnie-the-Pooh is now known all over the world and clearly many do not know about the bear's background. This has created a tiff between America and England because the original bear has been taken over by the Americans and the English want him back to his country of origin. For that reason in 1998 a member of the British Parliament, Gwyneth Dunwoody, encouraged the American people to return the dolls to their rightful home, insisting that she "detected sadness" ("Donnell Library Center" Wikipedia, 2004) in their eyes. Rudolph W. Giuliani, the Mayor of New York at the time, responded by leaking a conversation that he proclaimed to have had with the bear. He insisted that Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends were "very, very happy to be in New York City" ("Donnell Library Center" Wikipedia, 2004). Bill Clinton the President of the United States of America was apparently concerned about the matter and a spokesman for the President proclaimed that he had indicated to some of his staff that if the country would lose the bear it would be "utterly unbearable" ("Donnell Library Center" Wikipedia, 2004).

Winnie-the-Pooh has always been most popular with the youngest children, and in fact even targeted at that audience. In 2005 the Disney Corporation announced that they had created a new television show, "My Friends Tigger and Pooh" based on Milne's characters and further yet that they would be adding another character. That character was to be a six year old girl. Interestingly the Disney Corporation has tried to make Milne's story more politically correct by adding a girl to the TV show about Winnie the Pooh. However, it is my belief that it was not a conscious decision for Milne to eliminate girls from his stories. It is a fact that the stories started out as bedtime stories for Christopher Robin and naturally the characters are boys like him. I think it is safe to assume that if Milne had had a girl the stories of Winnie-the-Pooh would be quite different.

Winnie-the-Pooh and Friends

The character creation in *Winnie-the-Pooh* is very well implemented. The main characters of the books are Winnie-the-Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga, Roo, Owl, Rabbit, Tigger and Christopher Robin. All of them, except for Rabbit and Owl, are based on stuffed animals that Christopher Robin himself had and played with. Disney uses the same characters to a certain extent but gives them significant makeover of look and persona to fit their more sugar-sweet world. In their latest releases they also add new characters to be more political correct and to appeal to a wider audience.

The story of Pooh and his friends takes place in the fictional land of “100 Aker Wood”. It is a “a happy self-contained Arcadian world in which all animals are equal and none more equal than others, a reassuring world in which nobody will ever come to any harm” (Kirkpatrick 895). The inhabitants of the forest are: Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Rabbit, Owl, Kanga, Roo, a couple of Rabbit’s friends and relations and last but not least is Tigger. Pooh and Piglet also search for a Woozle and a Heffalump, animals that Pooh proclaims exist and live in the Forest though he has never seen them. They enjoy their days reading, organizing, eating honey, finding the North Pole and spending quality time with Christopher Robin. The setting is mainly the same in the Disney movie, typical English forest.

Winnie-the-Pooh is one of the animals that inhabits the forest and is the main character. Pooh is a very likable bear. He is kind, sweet and naïve and he is Christopher Robin’s best friend. Pooh is often very insecure which is caused by his lack of brain, a fact that his friends repeatedly remind him of throughout the books:

“That day when Pooh and Piglet tried to catch the Heffalump –“
 “They didn’t catch it, did they”?
 “No”.
 “Pooh couldn’t because he hasn’t any brain. Did *I* catch it”?

(WP 43)

On the other hand he is a very resourceful bear. He is, for instance, capable of solving a problem which neither Christopher Robin nor Rabbit are able to solve. One of those problems presents itself in the story “Surrounded by Water” when Piglet’s house gets flooded in when a long period of rain hits 100 Aker Wood. In an attempt to save little Piglet from being marooned, Pooh gets the clever idea to use Christopher Robin’s umbrella as a boat to carry the two of them to Piglet’s house. In the Disney version Pooh is even more silly and dimwitted than in the book Disney have also changed his appearance in their version he is portrayed wearing his red winter shirt throughout the year.

Piglet is a very small animal, the second shortest of all the animals in 100 Aker Wood, Roo being only slightly smaller. Even though Pooh is Christopher Robin’s best friend Piglet is very close to Christopher’s heart, as Milne points out in his introduction to *Winnie-the-Pooh*:

Pooh is the favourite, of course, there’s no denying it, but Piglet comes in for a good many things which Pooh misses; because you can’t take Pooh to school without everybody knowing it, but Piglet is so small that he slips into a pocket, where it is very comforting to feel him when you are not quite sure whether twice seven is twelve of twenty-two.

(CCS 19)

Piglet is Pooh’s best friend and even though they are both quite fearful, together they are able to conquer some of their fears. They go through a lot of life experiences together, for instance they search for a Woozle, build a house for Eeyore and play Poohstick together. Piglet is a warm, thoughtful and kind animal. He is afraid of many situations although he really wants to be brave and full of courage. Despite his own belief, he is usually able to conquer his fears, like for instance in a chapter called “A Very Grand Thing” in *The House at Pooh Corner*, Piglet shows his courage when he climbs through the letterbox of Owl’s collapsed house and is able to get help. Pooh

writes a song to honor Piglet's bravery and it has seven verses in it. Here is an extract from the Respectful Pooh Song:

Then Piglet (PIGLET) thought a thing:
 "Courage!" he said. "There's always hope.
 I want a thinnish piece of rope.
 Or, if there isn't any, bring
 A thickish piece of string"

[...]

O gallant Piglet (PIGLET)! Ho!
 Did Piglet tremble? Did he blinch?
 No, no, he struggled inch by inch
 Through LETTER ONLY, as I know
 Because I saw him go.
 (HPC 466)

Piglet who used to wear a green sweater in E. H. Shepard's original drawings wears a pink one in the Disney version. In the book, Piglet was a constant companion of Pooh but this has been toned down in the movie.

Eeyore is a gloomy grey donkey with a very dry and sarcastic sense of humor. An example of his special humor is when he has fallen into a river:

"Oh, Eeyore, you are wet"! said Piglet, feeling him.
 Eeyore shook himself, and asked somebody to explain to Piglet what
 happened when you had been inside a river for quite a long time.
 (HPC 397)

His humor is very British. His voice in the books is described as melancholy. He does not seem to enjoy his life very much. Eeyore is an important character in the stories as he is a very dramatic type, as well as extremely blunt. In an attempt to be kind and caring to Owl after his house falls apart, he gives away Piglet's house. This is a typical mistake for him, he just does not seem to be able to get things right. Peter Hunt, an authority on children's literature, suggests in his *Introduction to Children's Literature* that the character of Eeyore is written for the pleasure of adults, as it is not likely that children understand his sarcasm. Eeyore has undergone the most drastic

makeover of all the characters through his “Disneyfication”. In the book he is adorably sarcastic and ironic, i.e. very British. Unfortunately, he has been one of the characters who has lost some of his most endearing exentricities in the “Disneyfication” of *Winnie-the-Pooh*. As the film is American, Eeyore has been Americanized. The most obvious example of this is that instead of his cockney accent he now has an American accent. This is the character description of Eeyore from the Walt Disney offical website:

Eeyore is everyone's favorite delightfully dismal donkey. But Eeyore doesn't see himself as gloomy -- he just has low expectations. He expects nothing from anybody, so whenever his friends do come to his aid his expectations of the worst are overthrown, and he is sincerely grateful. Eeyore's tiny bright pink bow on his tail, the one hint of color against his gray, is a perfect symbol of the kernel of joy that occasionally surfaces in Eeyore. Though he may pretend he's helping because there's nothing better to do -- make no mistake, Eeyore is always there for his friends.

(“Eeyore”)

Rabbit is very controlling and conceited. He likes to organize and plan. He is a friend of all the other animals and is respected by them. Following is an interesting point that is discussed in *The Pooh Perplex*, the hierarchy of 100 Aker Wood. According to Crews the order is established in a chapter in *Winnie-the-Pooh* called “Expotition [*sic*]to the North Pole”:

In a little while they were all ready at the top of the Forest, and the Expotition started. First came Christopher Robin and Rabbit, then Piglet and Pooh; then Kanga, with Roo in her pocket, and Owl; then Eeyore; and, at the end, in a long line, all Rabbit's friends-and-relations.'

(WP 177)

The hierarchy is firmly drawn out in this passage. First comes Christopher Robin who is the only human. Next comes Rabbit who is the bossiest and very self-important. Pooh and Piglet follow as number three and four and then the rest. In my opinion, what is interesting about this hierarchy is that Pooh, who is Christopher Robin's best

friend, does not follow him directly as number two. The reason is probably Rabbit's bossiness and in turn Pooh's kind nature and inclination to give in to the others' wishes to keep the peace. Rabbit seems to be more self-absorbed in the movie and he dislikes Tigger to the point of no return.

Owl is considered very wise, he writes most of the signs and cards for Pooh and his friends. He is highly regarded and examples of this can be found in Milne's text as is clear from this passage from the *The House at Pooh Corner*:

[A]nd Kanga said, "Roo, dear!" very quickly, because that's *not* the way to talk to anybody who can spell TUESDAY.

(HPC 476)

Little has been changed about Owl in the Disney version, he even still speaks with a British accent.

Kanga and her baby Roo are also very important characters. They suddenly appear in the forest and no one seems to know where they come from. Kanga is the only female animal in the forest. She is protective of her baby and takes good care of him. Her motherly love is shown in the chapter where Roo falls into the stream. Kanga is extremely proud that Roo is washing his face by himself. When poor Roo falls into the stream Kanga lets out "a loud cry of alarm" (WP 189). When Roo is finally saved from this ordeal (although Roo quite enjoys the whole adventure), Kanga does what many mothers would do and "scolded him and rubbed him down" (WP 192). Milne is able to capture the essence of motherhood, which is shown in the fact that she takes care of her baby by trying to get heat into his body again while at the same time she is scolding him for falling in the stream.

Roo is young and very joyful. He and Tigger are best of friends. He really wants to be better than Tigger at something. However Tigger can do anything so it seems that poor Roo has no chance. Kanga and Roo have been given a more

significant role in the movie. Kanga is very sweet and nurturing, even more so than in the book. Roo has been given stronger and more prominent personality in the movie.

Tigger is the last character to be introduced in Milne's story. When Pooh wakes up one morning he is surprised to hear a bouncing noise. The bouncing comes from a strange animal whose name is Tigger. Tigger is extremely active. He bounces all the time though he claims that Tiggers only bounce until they have eaten breakfast. Pooh and his friends try to find something good for Tigger to eat and finally they discover that Tiggers like Extract of Malt which is Roo's medicine.

Which explains why he always lived at Kanga's house afterwards, and had Extract of Malt for breakfast, dinner and tea.

(HPC 305)

Although Tigger is bouncy and joyful in Milne's book, the movie takes his bouncy happiness to a whole new level through dramatic exaggeration. In the Disney version Tigger has also been given more prominent role at the cost of Piglet.

Milne's colorful characters from the Pooh books have been studied over the years by children, students, critics, poets and most recently by doctors. A team of Canadian Doctors read the Winnie-the-Pooh stories and came to the decision that something must be terribly wrong in 100 Aker Wood. "Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: a neurodevelopmental perspective on A. A. Milne" is the name of an article by Sarah E. Shea, published in a magazine called *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, about Canadian doctors who suggested that all the animals in 100 Aker Wood are in desperate need of psychiatric help. After reading the Pooh books the Canadian doctors came to the conclusion that all the animals in the forest need a medical check up. They supposedly all suffer from various mental problems.

Pooh, according to the Canadian doctors has a symptom of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

We begin with Pooh. This unfortunate bear embodies the concept of comorbidity. Most striking is his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), inattentive subtype. As clinicians, we had some debate about whether Pooh might also demonstrate significant impulsivity, as witnessed, for example, by his poorly thought out attempt to get honey by disguising himself as a rain cloud. We concluded, however, that this reflected more on his comorbid cognitive impairment, further aggravated by an obsessive fixation on honey.

(Shea)

In *Family Practice* magazine Joanne M. Berger writes an article titled “Now We Are Sick” which summarizes the findings of the same doctors. In this article a couple of other medical problems Pooh suffers from are mentioned; his attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and his cognitive impairment. Perhaps some evidence to support these claims can be found in the text, for instance when he forgets that he has eaten his honey and suspects that a Hefflump has eaten it. However interesting these articles may be it seems to me to be rather farfetched to psycho-analyse a storybook character such as Winnie-the-Pooh.

The other characters do not escape the Canadian doctors’ diagnosis. For example Piglet has an anxiety disorder which the doctors think is a result of a heffalump trauma and their prescription to his condition would be a nerve-relaxant. Unsurprisingly, the doctors diagnose Eeyore with a mild depression and the doctors advise antidepressants.

Furthermore, Owl is dyslexic, Rabbit has control issues and Tigger is hyperactive and prone to risk-taking behavior. The good doctors also mention possibility that Christopher Robin himself might also have some problems to deal with: “And E. H. Shepard's illustrations of Christopher Robin, who spends his time talking to animals, “suggest possible future gender identity issues for this child” (Berger). The study of the Canadian doctors was conducted decades after the books

were written. At the time when the books were written some of the medical concepts the doctors mention did not even exist. What was a charming quirk of a character has been turned into a major psychological problem that I highly doubt was what Milne was thinking about when he wrote the books. Though the doctors' studies are very thorough and professional, it seems that perhaps their time would have been better spent on actual living humans.

To sum things up about 100 Aker Wood and its inhabitants it has to be noted that although Christopher Robin does not live in the actual wood he still has an important standing amongst his friends and has his own place there. All the stories evolve around him. Sometimes he seems to be away from the forest and when that is the case he is missed by his friends. All the others love him and he loves all of them back. He saves them when they get in trouble and they go to him for advice, almost like he is an adult. He is a lovely boy, kind and caring.

In Disney, however, Christopher Robin is no longer the focal point of the stories. He partakes in the adventures with the other characters but he is no longer the hero and Winnie the Pooh now plays the central role.

All the characters have certain qualities and each plays a particular role in the stories, e.g. Piglet is the fearful one, Pooh is the trusted friend, Rabbit and Owl represent the adults in the forest and Christopher Robin is the hero that always saves the day. By making Christopher Robin the brave hero of the stories, Milne probably wanted to increase his son's confidence and give him a strong role model to live up to.

Conclusion

Winnie-the-Pooh has become a household name all over the world, the cuddly bear is welcome everywhere. The sad thing is that even though Winnie-the-Pooh is widely enjoyed and known, few people know about his origin. The Disney version is the one that comes to people's minds when the name Winnie the Pooh is mentioned and Milne's and Shepard's Pooh is lost in all that. Walt Disney was able to introduce the stories to the world, but despite good intentions the simplicity and purity of them was lost for the plain sake of marketability. Much is lost along the way from the personal and loving bedtime story Milne started out with to the multi-million dollar industry Winnie the Pooh has now become.

The wonderful language and the special tone of the stories somehow disappears in the Disney movie. Milne's poems that are such an important part of the Pooh stories are replaced by sing-a-long showtunes. In the books the prose and rhyme play perfectly together but in the movies this is downgraded to a musical series of funny incidents meant to produce laughter rather than anything else. The Disney team's explanation for the songs was that the songs would help the storyline along the way and connect the many little scenes into one whole. The way Milne introduces the reader to each character is magical: very slowly the reader learns about the quirks and trades of each character, one by one. Disney has not only given the characters new appearance and personalities, the intimacy the reader experiences when reading Winnie-the-Pooh is lost. Perhaps this is because characters reach the audience differently through films rather than books, but it may be that the "Disneyfication" of Pooh did not quite manage to capture the magical essence of Milne's original stories.

Even so, it seems to me that some of Milne's magic must have poured into the Disney creation because the fact of the matter is that through Disney, Winnie the

Pooh continues to charm and entertain people throughout the world. I think it is safe to assume that without Disney's involvement, Winnie-the-Pooh would not have become as famous as he is today. Nevertheless, I would still prefer that more people knew about his true origin and the rich story behind it, even if only for further enjoyment.

In the final chapter of *The House at Pooh Corner* Christopher Robin says goodbye to Pooh and all of his other friends from 100 Aker Wood because now he has to go to school and grow up. We learn that now it is time for Christopher Robin to focus on his numbers which he, despite his young age is quite good at. The book was a child's play, fun while it lasted and not permanent.

Milne said: "Goodbye to all that in 70,000 words", the approximate length of the four children's books that he had written; he had no intention of producing a copy of a copy, given that one of the sources of inspiration, his son, was growing older ("A. A. Milne" Wikipedia, 2004). True to his word Milne did not write more books for children and furthermore nothing that he wrote after Winnie-the-Pooh was as successful as the stories of the bear and his friends.

At one point in his life Milne even resented ever having written the stories about Winnie-the-Pooh. The story of Pooh had brought tension on his relationship with his own son because Christopher felt that his father had used him for his own achievement and that this achievement lead to it being impossible for him to enjoy a normal childhood. When I read the book I felt the love Milne had for his young son. I was quite saddened when I realized that real-life Christopher Robin had actually stopped talking to his father for a couple of years on account of the books. In his autobiography *Enchanted Places*, Christopher explains that for him it was a hard life always being known as Pooh's best friend and constantly having to live up to the boy

in the books while I felt that the books were actually a huge testament of the love and adoration A. A. Milne must have felt for his only child.

Furthermore, in his own mind Milne did not view himself as a children's writer and he did not want to be known simply for his children's books. He had written a number of plays and books for adults and he thought that that would be his legacy. In the end he was able to come to terms with his masterpiece and be content with it as an important part of his life's work.

After having read about Winnie-the-Pooh, for instance the magazine articles and other secondary sources, it is my firm belief that the books are what the author intended them to be. A story for a son about a world full of wonderful adventures where a young boy is allowed to be the hero. Furthermore it is my opinion that critics have the tendency to over-analyze a book so the simple pleasure of it – and sometimes the whole point of the book is forgotten. To me, the main point of the book is the pure enjoyment of being able to escape to an enchanted place where everything is good and beautiful and where the biggest problem is how on earth do you catch a heffalump!

Interestingly people of all ages, nationalities, races and both genders seem to be able to relate with Winnie-the-Pooh and the other characters in the stories. A well known professor Pausch, at Carnegie Mellon University wrote in a book titled *The*

Last Lecture:

I came to a realization about this very early in my life. As I see it, there's a decision we all have to make, and it seems perfectly captured in the Winnie-the-Pooh characters created by A. A. Milne. Each of us must decide: Am I a fun-loving Tigger or am I a sad-sack Eeyore? Pick a camp. I think it's clear where I stand on the great Tigger/Eeyore debate.

(Pausch 180)

I think that this statement would have pleased Milne. Also, this statement is in a way

a realization of many of the things discussed above. By his words, Pausch implies that Milne's books show you different philosophies of life to follow. This fits perfectly with what Hoff and Williams talk about in their books. The idea that the books can have this meaning for people is appealing to me because it tells me that we can find wisdom and understanding in the unlikeliest and simplest of places. Regardless of everything I have learned and whatever one may read into the Pooh stories, to me they will always be stories of a beautiful friendship between a boy and a bear that will last forever in the legacy left in Milne's books and their readers.

“So they went off together. But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the Forest a little boy and his Bear will always be playing” (*HPC* 508).

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