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Dualities and Complexities: Winnie-the-Pooh on Page and Screen

Master's thesis in English Literature
Supervisor: Eli Løfaldli
May 2021

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Abstract

Children's literature and film is commonly assumed to be simplistic and therefore, deemed by some, unworthy of examination. Texts and films that are categorised children's entertainment are expected to not be as complex as literature and film aimed at adults because their presumed audience is children, who are typically believed to not understand subjects and narrative structures that are considered to be too complicated. Children's texts and films are, however, more complex than they seem. There is a notable duality within children's texts and films that can speak to their complexity. Dualism means that two concepts or aspects are contrasted, in this case within children's stories. In this thesis, the complex duality within children's literature and film is examined in Alan Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *The House at Pooh Corner*, and Marc Forster's life-action animation film *Christopher Robin*. They are chosen because of their popularity and their firmly held position within the category of children's entertainment. The objective of this study is to explore in what ways these texts and the film challenge the assumptions held about them as simplistic. The seeming simplicity is actually complex due to dual aspects that are opposed and contrasted. These contrasting aspects include characters who seem simple, but are not; toy characters who differ in function and meaning; opposing concepts of childhood and adulthood; structures and techniques that address both children and adults; and, the dual aspect of genres and modes which are significant in conveying meaning, and that also demonstrate setting as a metaphorical and symbolical device. Together these dualities reveal an inherent complexity in the chosen material and they suggest that the most pivotal duality is the contrasting aspects of childhood and adulthood.

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Chapter One: The Character of Winnie-the-Pooh 5
Chapter Two: Exposing Adults and Adulthood.. 20
Chapter Three: The Meaning of Toys and Toy Characters... 47
Chapter Four: The Importance of Genre, Mode and Setting... 62
Conclusion 77
Bibliography 82

Introduction

Children's literature is often deemed as too simplistic and is not considered to be worth the same critical and analytical evaluation as other types of literature. Books classified as children's literature have been marginalised, with the dominating view being that because it is written for children, it is not 'real' literature. Texts ostensibly written for children are assumed to lack complexity and depth. As Peter Hunt argues, 'children's books are thought to have certain appropriate characteristics (such as simplicity of language, limited viewpoint, or perfunctory characterization)'.[1] They are, therefore, assumed to be overly simplistic in their form and content.

Children's literature is, however, rather complex. It is written and created by a different group than the group to which it is addressed, namely – children. In this regard, children's books are more complex than literature written for adults. Children's literature consists of two different 'systems of codes, one addressed to the child, another addressed, often unconsciously, to the adult or behind the child', according to Maria Nikolajeva.[2] Moreover, underlying presumptions about whom children's literature is written for and whom it implicates raise significant questions of adult presence in the texts and adult influence in the production of children's stories. It is ultimately adults who decide what is appropriate for their children and purchase books based on these beliefs. Creators of children's literature must therefore 'make judgements about what to produce based not on what they believe will appeal to children but rather on what they believe the adult consumers believe they know will appeal to children (or perhaps, what should appeal to them, or what they need to be taught)', as Perry Nodelman insists.[3] The assumption that the audience of children's literature is indeed only children has been challenged by literary scholars and has led several critics to suggest that children's literature is more complex than is commonly assumed.

Because of its complexity, children's literature can be argued to contain dual qualities. Duality has been intricately woven in children's literature since books for children were acknowledged as separate from adult literature. It has, according to Maria Nikolajeva, developed from being predominantly created to promote good behaviour and ideological values, to an educational tool with strong ties to didacticism, to being considered as a separate literary system than that of adult literature, to result in the establishment of children' literature

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[1] Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 4.
[2] Maria Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), p. 57.
[3] Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult,* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 5.

as its own 'literary system with its different genres and modes', purely for entertainment purposes.[4] She also suggest, however, that children's literature still has a 'clear social and pedagogical function'.[5] It seems, then, to have a dual purpose: it is supposed to be educational as well as entertaining.

The complexities within children's texts reveal several such dualities: in their address, portrayal of characters and the use of elements from multiple genres and modes. Additionally, children's books combine visual and verbal text, and incorporate dense symbolism and metaphors to disclose themes and meaning. They give rise to the problematic issue of duality in children's literature. These dualities that are found in children's literature can also be uncovered in film and cinema for children. Similarly to children's literature not being considered as 'real' literature, children's cinema 'was not at first perceived by critics to be a serious art form'.[6] Adapting children's literature to the cinematic medium, therefore, brings its own set of challenges. Just as children's literature is viewed as inferior to adult literature, adaptations and appropriations are considered inferior to their source text. Films considered to be addressed specifically to children and that have been adapted from an original literary text, can possess dualities similar to those of children's literature. This thesis will therefore examine ways in which complex dualities reveal themselves in children's literature and children's cinema. The texts that will be used to address these dualities are Alan Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), in addition to the film *Christopher Robin* (2018) directed by Marc Forster.[7]

The *Pooh* stories revolve around the central characters of Winnie-the-Pooh, Christopher Robin, and their friends who inhabit the Hundred Acre Wood. These highly anthropomorphic tales are stories of friends going on different adventures in and around their home and it is illustrated by E. H. Shepard. Ultimately, they are stories that seem to be simultaneously about nothing and everything. Milne's *Pooh* books are highly popular children's stories that have survived culturally for nearly one hundred years. Walt Disney purchased the rights to Milne's characters in 1961 and since then, the characters have been associated mostly with the Disney domain as they have produced a wide variety of Winnie-the-Pooh products, cartoons, TV series and merchandise.[8] Having the rights to the characters

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[4] Nikolajeva, *New Aesthetic*, p. 67.
[5] Peter Hunt p. 56.
[6] Nikolajeva, *New Aesthetic* p. 207.
[7] Alan Milne, *The Complete Winnie-the-Pooh: Containing Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner* (London: Dean, 1991).
[8] Bruce Orwall, 'Disney Agrees to Purchase Rights To Winnie-the-Pooh Characters', *The Wall Street Journal*, [online] https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB983762318200582286 [accessed 9 May 2021] (para 2 of 6)

meant that Disney could use the characters to create new stories for them, but not to recreate the stories from Milne's *Pooh* books. His narratives would indeed be problematic to adapt, especially to the cinematic medium, due to its episodic narrative and lack of visibly climactic series of events.

The story of *Christopher Robin* follows Christopher Robin, a family man living in 1920s London. He works as the efficiency manager of Winslow Luggage, where his conflicting relationship with his boss and his responsibility of the company's survival strains his family life. Christopher receives a surprise visit from Winnie-the-Pooh, his childhood friend that he has forgotten all about. Christopher Robin helps Pooh to locate his friends Piglet, Eeyore, Tigger, Rabbit, Owl, Kenga and Roo back in the Hundred Acre Wood, and together they help Christopher rediscover the joys of life.

Forster's *Christopher Robin* can be considered to be a sequel to Milne's *Pooh* stories. It is a continuation of the story after the ending provided in *The House at Pooh Corner* and depicts Christopher's life as adult, after his childhood. It is not a film that simply adapts the story from text to screen or updates the 'original' so that it can be understood by the audience of the time of production. Due to its qualities, the film can be considered an appropriation, which is a process that takes a more radical approach to the 'original' text(s). Julie Sanders explains that, in comparison to an adaptation, an 'appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain'.[9] *Christopher Robin* does not adapt the episodically structured plot of Milne's *Pooh* books, but it rather extracts the characters and recontextualises them. It is the characters and the themes of Milne's stories that are adapted and the plot that is appropriated. The film is a sequel because it does not follow the plot of the *Pooh* books and because it focuses on characters and themes. The focus will thus be how these characters and themes are expressed in different ways in the original stories and in the film.

The aspects of Milne's *Pooh* books and Marc Forster's film *Christopher Robin* that will be examined are their duality in address, generic and modal dualities, their dualities in settings, themes and characters, in addition to their dual view of commonly held concepts about childhood and adulthood. Chapter One examines the duality of the character of Winnie-the-Pooh, both the original character of Milne's *Pooh* books, but also his transformation in the film *Christopher Robin*. The assumption that Pooh is a simplistic, one dimensional character will be explored and challenged, and there will be an appeal to the idea of Pooh as a three-

[9] Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 26.

dimensional and complex character. Chapter Two explores the dual aspect of the role of the adult in the texts and film. The opposing juxtaposition between adulthood and childhood that the books and film portray is problematised. It will consider the idea that there is a duality in the books and the film's address – they speak to and appeal to two audiences: adults and children. The discussion will consider how and in what ways adults and signs of adulthood infiltrate these narratives and their characters. The opposition of concepts of childhood and adulthood will be a central aspect. Chapter Three will consider the duality of the toy characters in Milne's *Pooh* stories and Forster's film. Similarly to the character of Winnie-the-Pooh, their assumed simplicity will be challenged. Additionally, their functions and representations within Milne's books will be the main focus. Their altered significance in *Christopher Robin* will be significant for the discussion. The dual purpose of these toys makes them important to the stories and reveal their inherent complexity. The final section, Chapter Four, will assess the inherent generic and modal dualities in the *Pooh* stories and *Christopher Robin*. Elements of fantasy, domestic fantasy, adventure and magical realism will be addressed. Fantasy will be the main concern of this chapter, and as will be discussed, its elements of fantasy are enhanced by the setting – which has great metaphoric and symbolic significance for the texts' and film's generic components.

Chapter One: The Character of Winnie-the-Pooh

Out of all the stuffed animals in Milne's *Pooh* stories, 'Pooh is the favourite, of course, there's no denying it' (Milne, p. 14). Winnie-the-Pooh, Pooh Bear, Edward Bear and 'Silly old Bear' are all names that connote the well-known stuffed bear residing in the Hundred Acre Wood (27). They all indicate that he is, indeed, a bear of some sort. *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* were stories that had instantaneous success in both England and the United States, and they were seen as the origin point of the characters of Winnie-the-Pooh and Christopher Robin. As a literary figure recognised within the realm of children's literature, Winnie-the-Pooh has persisted as a lovable, familiar and recognisable character within many cultures for nearly a century. Influential Winnie-the-Pooh critic Paula Connolly states in her study *Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia* that Pooh has become 'part of our cultural literacy'.[1] Pooh's cultural significance may have been the reason for the rapid increase in the production of Winnie-the-Pooh products worldwide the past decades. The products include Pooh cookbooks, kitchenware, clothing, many TV animation series produced by the Walt Disney Company, and feature length films. The persistent interest in Pooh, both from the reading public and academic scholars, increased the commercialisation of the books and their characters. Winnie-the-Pooh's popularity amplified even further with numerous *Pooh* productions and adaptations created by the Disney Company. The most recent of Disney's *Pooh* productions is Marc Forster's film *Christopher Robin*. It has both kept and added to some of Milne's original features of the character of Winnie-the-Pooh. In exploring this transition, from books to film, this chapter will, firstly, introduce Winnie-the-Pooh's origin and development as a literary character. Secondly, it will explore and challenge common assumptions about Winnie-the-Pooh as a simplistic one-dimensional figure in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, whilst also offering critical insight into a more complex reading of his character. Thirdly, the discussion will continue into an investigation of how Winnie-the-Pooh is reimagined on screen in Forster's appropriation through detailed animation and incorporation of features and qualities consistent with Milne's original character. Both Milne's original Winnie-the-Pooh character and the reincarnation of him that is offered by Forster establish him as a complex character.

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[1] Paula T. Connolly, *Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia*. (New York: Twayne's Masterwork Studies, 1995), p. 8.

Origins of Winnie-the-Pooh

The name Pooh first appeared in Milne's preface to his children's verse book *When We Were Very Young* from 1924, where Milne explained how his son Christopher Robin gave a swan the name Pooh which would later become the name of the beloved bear in his stories. The work also featured the character Edward Bear, a figure with a strong resemblance to the drawings of Pooh that would appear a few years later. In 1925, the name Winnie-the-Pooh was introduced to the public in a Christmas story in the *Evening News*. A possible explanation for the name was given a year later when *Winnie-the-Pooh* was published. The story clarified that because Pooh, as a character in the story, had been holding on to a balloon for some time with his arms in the air, his hands would not come down again. Consequently, 'whenever a fly came and settled on his nose he had to blow it off' which sounded like "pooh" (Milne, p. 30).

Winnie-the-Pooh, Piglet, Tigger, Kenga, Roo and Eeyore were originally all stuffed animals that Milne's son, Christopher Milne, was given by his parents before Milne created a story that was inspired by, and based on, these stuffed toys. In his book *The Enchanted Places*, Christopher Milne states that there were many bears to choose from in the toyshop, but his parents chose a particular one because it had 'a specially endearing expression'.[2] This endearing look may indicate that the bear inspires affection and love, which are two of the qualities the bear's character embodies in the stories. Further, Christopher Milne describes how Pooh, for him, came alive:

> The bear took its place in the nursery and gradually began to come to life. It started in the nursery; it started with me. It could really start nowhere else, for the toys lived in the nursery and they were mine and I played with them. And as I played with them and talked to them and gave them voices to answer with, so they began to breathe (4).

Christopher Milne continued to keep his stuffed animals alive by attributing them individual personalities and traits, which Milne would later develop into literary characters. Prior to the introductory chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, there is a drawing of Christopher Robin, as a little boy, dragging his stuffed toy bear by the arm down the stairs. E. H. Shepard's illustrations strengthen Milne's textual descriptions of Pooh. Together they simultaneously reveal the inanimate quality of the bear and hints at his ability to think and feel:

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[2] Christopher Milne, 'The Enchanted Places', *Children's Literature Review*, 26 (1992), 1-6 (p. 4). Gale Literature Resource Center.

> 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 down stairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it (15).

Winnie-the-Pooh, or as he is called here, Edward Bear, is immediately established as a child's toy. He is also attributed ability to think and feel, which counteract the tendency of the inanimate descriptions suggested by Shepard's illustration.

Winnie-the-Pooh: A 'Bear of Very Little Brain'?

Because there is a focus on Pooh's inability to think efficiently without distractions, it emphasises the idea that he is a 'Bear of Very Little Brain', as he calls himself (56). Because Pooh considers himself as a bear with little brain he contributes to the creation of particular assumptions about his character that reduces him down to being an unintelligent, simple-minded, one-dimensional and not very clever character – a character that only cares about his honey. Pooh is of the opinion that 'the only reason for making honey is so as [he] can eat it', which makes him appear self-important (18). Therefore, when Pooh one day is out foraging for honey he needs to come up with a way to acquire his honey. He sits at the bottom of a tree with a beehive 'and beg[ins] to think' (18). His slow thinking supports his own opinion of himself as a bear with little brain. Pooh is not bothered about his own lack of brain capacity, yet, at the end of *The House at Pooh Corner*, he doubts his own ability to think independently, without the help of his child companion Christopher Robin: 'Then he began to think of all the things Christopher Robin would want to tell him when he came back from wherever he was going to, and how muddling it would be for a Bear of Very Little Brain to try and get them right in his mind' (314). Due to his lack of intellectual capacity and his self-consciousness about his own capabilities Pooh struggles to trust himself and his brain without Christopher Robin's presence.

Pooh's display of insecurity leads Connolly to assert that 'in his lack of intellectual ability and his frequent and humble acknowledgement of his limitations, Pooh serves as Christopher Robin's alter ego'.[3] Her suggestion implies that Pooh represents comfort and that he 'reifies the boy's sense of self'.[4] Christopher Robin, on the other hand, needs to feel like he

[3] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 79
[4] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 79.

is intellectually superior to Pooh, his toy friend. And, therefore, Pooh is a comfort to Christopher Robin because Christopher believes that he is more clever than Pooh. In *The House at Pooh Corner* Pooh becomes Christopher Robin's alter ego in a different manner. This is because the whole atmosphere of the story changes due to Christopher Robin's decreasing appearance, both as a character and as the listening child in the frame story. In this story then, Pooh comes to represent the childhood Christopher Robin leaves behind when he goes to school which is the reason why he is not present as much – he is growing up. Pooh, therefore, is Christopher Robin' embodied desire for innocence and childhood imagination.

Another quality of Pooh's character that supports the view of him as being a bear of very little brain is his silliness. His silliness is apparent every time he lands himself in sticky situations, which is quite frequently. For instance, one morning he visits his friend Rabbit who lives in a spacious hole in the ground as illustrated by Shepard. Pooh enters Rabbit's house, but on the way back out he naturally gets stuck there because of his body size. Christopher Robin arrives and he suggests that they wait to pull him out until he is thinner, at which point Pooh voices his concerns about meals. In this case, Pooh is silly because his biggest worry is food when he is stuck in Rabbit's doorway. The comical effect that mishaps like these create leads Niall Nance-Carroll to propose that 'the nearly one-dimensional nature of the Pooh characters also places them firmly into the category of comedy'.[5] Moreover, Christopher Robin calls Pooh 'Silly old Bear', which inscribes him as both silly and old (39). Pooh is silly because his obsession with honey has gotten him into this situation. Christopher is so used to Pooh getting himself into these inconvenient situations that he believes that it is part of Pooh's personality.

Pooh's silly behaviour is also reflected through his creative solutions to acquire his meals, namely, honey. He believes that he can trick the bees into believing that he is not a bear in order to obtain their honey. He reveals to Christopher Robin that his plan is to camouflage himself in mud and float up in the air holding a balloon to look like a black cloud – a plan that seems illogical and far-fetched. He does not think about how to get down from mid-air, which naturally lands him in an awkward situation that any readers may find comical. According to Connolly, Pooh here displays not only an obsession with honey and egocentric tendencies, but his creative ability and imagination to devise an unusual plan is also illustrated.[6] Pooh's

[5] Niall Nance-Carroll, 'Not only, But also: Entwined Modes and the Fantastic in A. A. Milne's Pooh Stories', *The Lion and the unicorn* 39.1 (2015), 63-81 (p. 68).
[6] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 81.

creativity and silly plans, therefore, work to inscribe him as a simplistic character due to, in this particular case, his lack of logical reason.

Pooh as More Than a 'Bear of Very Little Brain' in the *Pooh* Stories

The initial assumption that Winnie-the-Pooh is a bear of little brain, as described previously, is challenged by other parts of Pooh's personality. For while he can be viewed to possess character traits perceived as simplistic or incompetent that are over-represented, Pooh is not a one-dimensional character.

His creativity can also be seen as one of his strengths and not only as a contributing factor to his image as a bear of little brain. For example, when Piglet needs to be rescued from the forest flood in *The House at Pooh Corner*, 'Pooh himself – [says] something so clever that Christopher Robin could only look at him with mouth open and eyes staring, wondering if this was really the Bear of Very Little Brain whom he had known and loved so long. "We might go in your umbrella," said Pooh' (139). Pooh's crafty suggestion to use an umbrella for a boat was so successful and resolving that they end up naming the boat 'Brain of Pooh'. Yet, it is Christopher Robin who is named captain of the boat and Pooh the '1st Mate' which reduces Pooh to a position as the helping hand, whilst Christopher, as the captain of the boat and adventure, is considered the hero (140). Here, Pooh's creativity is rewarded to a certain extent, only to be deemed the second hand helper by Christopher because he wants to be the hero.

Another way in which Pooh as a character challenges the assumption about him as one-dimensional and simplistic is his cleverness. Although he is quick to be dismissed as a bear of very little brain, it is ultimately he who ends up solving troubles or issues in the forest, either directly or indirectly. For instance, he is the one who discovers the 'north pole', rescues Roo from drowning by using a stick, and suggests that they should build Eeyore a new house. Pooh is also the one to find Eeyore's missing tail that Owl mistakenly believes to be his 'Handsome bell-rope' (59). By resolving this issue Pooh demonstrates that he is capable of figuring things out on his own. In addition, he showcases his understanding of Eeyore, who Pooh believes would be saddened by the loss of his tail. Pooh's compassion towards his friend also illustrates thoughtfulness and the ability to care for others. It suggests that he does have brains, at least enough to care for his friends, and his big heart and compassionate nature establish him lovable as a character. The reader may believe it is Christopher Robin who resolves all the issues in the forest, but it is actually Pooh who is the hero. Pooh does not take credit for his discoveries

or solutions and may therefore confuse the reader about who the hero actually is. Pooh nevertheless displays his cleverness through his ability to solve problems that some his other friends are incapable of.

A suggested above, Pooh is also a caring character, but he gets distracted by his own desires. For instance, one day it is Eeyore's birthday and Pooh wishes to give him a birthday present that he will enjoy. Pooh concludes to selflessly give him a pot of honey because he cares about his friend and wants him to be happy. However, on the way to present Eeyore with the gift, Pooh forgets that the honeypot is actually for Eeyore and he consumes the honey: '"Now let me see," he thought, as he took his last lick of the inside of the jar, "where was I going? Ah, yes, Eeyore." He got up slowly. And then, suddenly, he remembered. He had eaten Eeyore's birthday present' (83). Pooh's initial intention of giving Eeyore a birthday present is good, but when he is distracted and eats the honey it reveals indirectly that Pooh is an absent-minded and inattentive character. Nikolajeva suggests that the 'characters' actions present them in a more indirect way'.[7] Pooh's actions, then, reveals an egocentric and aloof side of him that contradicts his seemingly caring nature.

Winnie-the-Pooh as More Than a One-dimensional Bear in *Christopher Robin*

Similarly to Milne's original creation, Forster's film *Christopher Robin* depicts Winnie-the-Pooh as more than a one-dimensional character or a bear with little brain. Pooh displays his ability for unconditional love. His affection for his friends is very clear in the film and it reveals his close relationship to them. For instance, after having discovered that Christopher has left his important work papers in the Hundred Acre Wood, Pooh, Tigger, Eeyore and Piglet decide to travel to London to give him his important papers back. Pooh comforts and encourages timid Piglet and Pooh convinces him to accompany them on their journey through the tunnel passage in the tree where Christopher was known to appear as a child. Having gone through the passage himself, Pooh reassures Piglet that they will be alright. Moreover, Pooh's unconditional love for Christopher Robin is showcased through the shift in their relationship from the book to the film. This is mainly due to Christopher's change of age. For example, the prologue of the film visualises Christopher's coming of age and ends with an adult Christopher who has forgotten about his childhood companions. Pooh on the other hand, still considers Christopher to be his

[7] Maria Nikolajeva, 'Beyond the Grammar Story', *Children's Literature Quarterly*, 28.1 (2003), 5-16 (p. 9).

closest friend. At Christopher's house in London, Pooh reveals to Christopher that they 'think about [him] every day' (00:32:44). It exposes a change in the dynamics of their relationship; Pooh's relationship with Christopher Robin has not changed, but Christopher's relationship with Pooh is quite different to when he last saw him and his childhood toy friends. Even though Christopher rejects Pooh's offer of rekindling their connection, Pooh is incredibly dedicated to Christopher Robin.

Pooh's relationship with Christopher Robin, therefore, reveals a change in the function Pooh plays in Christopher's life. Christopher is an adult and does not need the same companionship as he did when he was a child. This means that Pooh progresses from being a figure of comfort for a child growing up in the *Pooh* books, to a nostalgic reminder of joy, imagination and playfulness in Forster's film. The shift and development that Pooh represents echo Benjamin Lefebvre's suggestion that adaptations perform 'recontextualization of familiar characters'.[8] Pooh is a familiar character both from the original *Pooh* stories and from the Disney universe. In comparing the *Pooh* books to Forster's appropriation, Milne's original Winnie-the-Pooh character is taken from an almost completely isolated forest where Christopher Robin plays as a child, to a story with a 1920s setting where Christopher Robin is an adult. Pooh is a nostalgic interference in Christopher's life – a reminder that is there to help Christopher Robin rediscover what is important in life. In the scene where Pooh and Christopher are sat at Galleon's lap, a spot at the end of the forest, Christopher apologises for his outburst of rage when they got disoriented in the forest trying to locate the rest of their friends. Christopher admits, 'I am lost', to which Pooh responds: 'But I found you'. Here, Pooh has moved from being a comforter for Christopher Robin as a child, to reassuring the adult Christopher. Thus, Pooh's recontextualised function as comforter has shifted from the books to the film because the setting and context have changed. Time has passed for Christopher Robin who is now an adult, which has inevitably changed his view of his childhood friend Pooh.

However, even though Pooh is displayed as a caring and compassionate character in the film, Pooh's reputation as a bear of little brain is emphasised. His character is visually more clumsy in Forster's appropriation than in the *Pooh* books, which supports the portrayal of him as a simple-minded character who lacks brain capacity. In an article concerning Disney's marketing of Romantic childhood ideals, Connolly suggests that 'Pooh's head becomes

[8] Benjamin Lefebvre, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Textual Transformations in Children's Literature', in *Textual Transformations in Children's Literature: Adaptations, Translations, Reconsiderations*, ed. by Benjamin Lefebvre (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-6 (p. 2).

decidedly more filled with fluff in the Disney versions of these stories'.[9] The fluff Connolly refers to derives from Pooh being prone to accidents and his subsequent indifferent attitude to these mishaps. This is exemplified when Pooh first arrives in London and visits Christopher Robin's house. Christopher Robin serves him a plate of honey, which Pooh manages to get stuck on his paws. Christopher asks how Pooh recognised him and with his paw full of honey he touches, and spreads honey across Christopher's eyes (00:31:29).[10] Whilst controlling his apparent annoyance with Pooh's mess and interference in his busy life, Christopher gets up to clean the honey off his face, but it is not long before Pooh manages to get honey all over his fur and paws which leads to him sliding down on a chair onto the floor. 'Your floor is very sticky', Pooh says, oblivious to the fact that it is the honey under his paws that causes the stickiness (00:31:50). He is in unfamiliar territory, yet he is indifferent to being stuck to Christopher's carpet. Drawn to the music from the gramophone, Pooh gently touches the hand crank that disconnects the sound horn which falls onto and gets stuck on his head. While Pooh staggers around disoriented, Christopher utters a large sigh clearly thinking Pooh a nuisance. The mess does not stop there – the next morning Christopher is awakened by a loud crash. Pooh has attempted to climb one of the kitchen shelves thinking that it is a ladder. 'Your ladder is broken', Pooh says. When Christopher tells Pooh that it is in fact a shelf and not a ladder, Pooh says: 'that explains why it's not good for climbing', as if it did not matter that the shelf broke (00:34:02-00:34:08). Pooh's attitude echoes his 'Oh, bother' attitude which will be explained in a later section, where he appears indifferent towards situations he lands in, even situations that are clearly not in his favour.

The portrayal of Pooh as a simple-minded bear with little brain may have been based in what has been popular with the viewing audience hitherto. Linda Seger explores the idea that adaptors need to be 'making cautious decisions by assessing what has drawn audiences in the past'.[11] Arguably, what has drawn audiences in the past is Pooh's personality, which incorporates both dominant and passive traits: silliness, simple-mindedness, clumsiness, cleverness, creativity, care and compassion. Because Pooh possesses all of these qualities, he is established as a lovable and unique character that inspires diversity.

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[9] Paula Connolly, 'The Marketing of Romantic Childhood: Milne, Disney, and a Very Popular Stuffed Bear', in *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations,* ed. by James Holt McGavran (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 1999), pp.188-207 (p. 200).
[10] *Christopher Robin*, dir. by Marc Forster (Walt Disney Pictures, 2018).
[11] Linda Seger, *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction Into Film* (New York: Henry Holt, 1992), p. 4.

Winnie-the-Pooh's Journey Into Disney

Pooh's journey from Milne's original creation to being associated with Disney's brand can be attributed largely to the industry of commercialisation of consumer products which has affected the Disney treatment of Winnie-the-Pooh. It has lead Connelly to explain the phenomenon of 'pseudo-Pooh'.[12]

> The development of new characters, settings, and more dramatic story lines, have been so thorough that although the core of Pooh's personality at times remains, the stories by Milne seems to have faded behind the glare of the myriad versions now offered to young audiences.[13]

Even though the character of Winnie-the-pooh is owned by the Disney company, he is viewed as an eminent figure in the public domain which reveals how influential the original character has been. Further, Connelly argues that adaptations and appropriations that aim to transform Winnie-the-Pooh to the cinematic medium digress from Milne's creations and the audience only get the superficial traits of the character.

Whilst Milne's original book titles include the name Winnie-the-Pooh, which reveals his central role in the plots as protagonist, Marc Forster's *Christopher Robin* forefronts adult Christopher Robin as main character, leaving Winnie-the-Pooh as merely a secondary character. However, this is not to say that the film would have worked without Pooh's presence because his centrality is revealed to be extremely significant for the plot and for Christopher Robin. Winnie-the Pooh has undergone changes through the transition from this original incarnation to those offered by Walt Disney and Forster's *Christopher Robin*.

***Christopher Robin*'s Winnie-the-Pooh**

Winnie-the-Pooh as presented by Forster in *Christopher Robin* is based on Milne's original creation and Pooh's mantras in film derived from of Milne's original Winnie-the-Pooh's way of viewing life. For instance, in the recreation of *The House at Pooh Corner's* last scene in the prologue of the film, Pooh says goodbye to his friend Christopher Robin who is going to boarding school. Pooh wisely declares that 'doing nothing, often leads to the very best of something', relaying his inherent wisdom to Christopher Robin (00:06:06). This mantra

[12] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 11.
[13] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 11.

originates in Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh's philosophy of nothingness. It is not Winnie-the-Pooh, however, who has come to understand nothingness. It is, in fact, Christopher Robin who explains to Pooh what it means:

> 'I like that too,' said Christopher Robin, 'but what I like doing best is Nothing.'
> 'How do you do Nothing?' asked Pooh, after he had wondered for a long time.
> 'Well, it's when people call out at you just as you're going off to do it "What are you going to do, Christopher Robin?" and you say "Oh, nothing," and then you go and do it.'
> 'Oh, I see,' said Pooh.
> 'This is a nothing sort of thing that we're doing now.'
> 'Oh, I see,' said Pooh again.
> 'It means just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering' (309).

Even though it is clearly Christopher Robin's socialization outside of the forest and his education that has led him to this conclusion, Forster's Winnie-the-Pooh has adopted this idea of 'nothing' and it becomes the epitome of Pooh's inherent wisdom. In *Christopher Robin*, When Christopher expresses his concern about the impossible task he faces at work, Pooh says to him, 'People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day' (00:34:17). Pooh interprets Christopher's 'impossible' distress and frustration in a very literal way and not as a figure of speech. The idea of nothingness is embedded within the thematical issues of the film and it enhances the moral value of the story: focus on the important things in life and what makes you happy. Forster has put Pooh's profound understanding of 'nothing' as proof of his innate wisdom about life.

Another Pooh mantra that is repeated frequently in the books and that is brought to the screen in *Christopher Robin* is the phrase 'Oh, bother'. It signifies that something has gone wrong, yet it exposes Pooh's indifference towards an outcome, situation or obstacle. For example, in a scene after the prologue, Pooh stumbles down his staircase to find some honey. When he looks into the jar there is none. He says surprisingly, 'oh bother, somebody seems to have eaten all the honey', not recognising that it is probably himself who has eaten it (00:24:40). He is seemingly careless that there is nothing left and he does not dwell on it. The missing honey is an obstacle he needs to overcome and one may expect someone in his position to be concerned about his next meal, but instead, he goes out for the day to find something to do, having lost his interest in the matter.

Forster himself states that 'these simple sayings touches on an emotional level, on a humorous level and have wisdom to it, and it is ultimately childish but they have incredible depth'.[14] The depth Forster refers to is revealed through Pooh's seemingly inherent wisdom and philosophic ability. This is expressed through his mantras and behaviour when faced with obstacles. Pooh's mantras may seem simplistic because he considers them in a literal way and he is consequently reduced to a character that is simpleminded.

Pooh's seemingly inherent wisdom can echo Benjamin Hoff's idea that Pooh's personality reflects the principles of the Chinese religion of Taoism. In his book *The Tao of Pooh*, Hoff explains the principles of Taoism by using Pooh's philosophies of life. Although Hoff primarily concerns himself with Milne's original works, his ideas can also be applied to Forster's film. Hoff writes, 'You might say that happy serenity is the most noticeable characteristic of the Taoist personality'.[15] Pooh is indeed the character with most serene qualities because he is most of the time untroubled by incidents that would trouble others, for example having no honey or wrecking a friends kitchen shelf. Pooh reacts to these incidents with repeating phrases and mantras that make him appear indifferent to the situations. Yet, these phrases have become what the Disney version of Pooh is known and loved for, and are what Forster has added to his version of Winnie-the-Pooh.

Milne's original character Winnie-the-Pooh, then, has been transformed to meet the moral standards and values of the Walt Disney Company. As a character, Pooh reinforces values and themes coherent with the Classic Disney tropes, such as individualism and optimism, suggested by Janet Wasko.[16] Pooh inspires individualism in the sense that he lives by himself, is able to provide himself with food, and he does not rely on his friends to take care of him except when he is in a sticky situation. Pooh is an individualist also in the sense that he takes the disappearance of his friends into his own hands.

However, another way to view Pooh's representation of Disney's values of individualism and optimism is that he only meet these to a certain extent. He takes matters into his own hands to go look for his friends, but in the end he believes that it is only Christopher who can help him to find his friends. Pooh never doubts that he will find his friends because with Christopher Robin's help, he optimistically believes that it will all be alright in the end.

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[14] Film Is Now Movie Bloopers & Extras, *CHRISTOPHER ROBIN: Marc Forster talks about his experience making the movie* [online video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoHs9frah2Q [accessed 28 September 2020].

[15] Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh*: *The Principles of Taoism demonstrated by Winnie-the-Pooh* (London: Egmont UK Limited, 2019), p. 5.

[16] Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc.: 2001), p. 117.

Furthermore, it is Pooh who takes the initiative to bring Christopher his important papers. However, as Pooh, Piglet, Tigger and Eeyore stumble upon Christopher's daughter Madelyn by their cabin near the forest, it is Madelyn who takes control of their expedition to London. Pooh and the other toys are reduced to secondary helpers. It is Madelyn, not Pooh, who suggests a way to get to Christopher's work at Winslow Luggage in London, thereby making Pooh a passive character. Pooh, therefore, only partly serves as a representation of Disney's values of individualism and optimism.

Winnie-the-Pooh 'Coming Alive': Animation and Physical Features of Forster's Pooh

Another technique available to Forster in the process of constructing Disney's reimagining of Pooh is animation. The filmmakers have clearly taken inspiration from Shepard's illustrations because they are very similar to the original depictions in Milne's stories. For example, Winnie-the-Pooh and Piglet's eyes are different to that of the other stuffed toys and animals because they look like button-eyes one would have on a stuffed bear, but the other characters have pupils which makes them seem more animate. The endearing look discussed previously manifests itself in Pooh's button eyes and makes him appear cuter and more lovable. The central feature of the button eyes is taken from Shepard's illustrations and modernised too look more like a cuddly stuffed toy bear with rough fur.

There are some details and features, however, that deviate from Milne's original depiction of the characters. These are expressed through the advantage that comes with the usage of animation techniques, which is in this case, Computer Generated animation (CGI). Paul Wells explains that animation 'means to 'give life to', and within the context of the animated film, this largely means the artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms'.[17] It produces an easier way to bring life to inanimate objects and anthropomorphism is therefore possible and highly available. For example, the way that Pooh's joints are animated clearly tells the spectators that he is indeed a teddy bear. It is especially noticeable because he walks wobbly and stiffly, with no limber joints that one would expect from a real bear. Forster evidently exploits the idea of the toy coming alive. Wells further states that animation 'does not use the camera to 'record' reality but artificially creates and records

[17] Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 10.

its own'.[18] This type of animation seeks to mirror the type of realism presented by the live-action film. Computer generated animation, also referred to 3D animation, may use posing models to build animated frame-by-frame shots in the animating process. Behind the scenes footage of *Christopher Robin* reveals that they use 3D figures of all the stuffed toys and animals, which looks almost identical to the end result.[19] These animation techniques, then, aim to make animated figures appear more realistic. Pooh's appearance in *Christopher Robin* conveys that he is a well-used and well-loved teddy bear. He seems worn and a little less colourful than in previous Disney animations which takes form of cartoons with clear cut lines that creates a lesser real-life impression. His fur is more ragged and untidy, which heightens a sense of cuteness and nostalgia toward the original drawings of Shepard. Due to his physical appearance, enhanced by animation techniques, Pooh can be viewed as a more realistic version of a teddy bear and the bear of Shepard's drawings.

Another feature of Forster's Winnie-the-Pooh that deviates from the original creation of Milne is his clothing. Except for chapter three in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and one wintery scene in *The House at Pooh Corner* where Pooh wears a shirt of some sort, Shepard's illustrations mostly feature a naked bear with no clothing. Forster's Pooh, on the other hand, sleeps in a nightgown and hat, and wears a red t-shirt daily. The red t-shirt is a permanent feature that Disney added to Pooh's character after their purchase of rights in 1961. Forster explains how 'Pooh's sweater was always sort of a metaphor, symbolism for the heart and the love'.[20] The colour choice aids the significance and portrayal of love and joy. The addition of the red shirt creates a more visually significant expression of Pooh's representation of joy and unconditional love.

Another origin for the Disney's addition of the red sweater can be found in Milne's verse book *When We Were Very Young.* The poem "Teddy Bear" is about Edward Bear, the precursor to Winnie-the Pooh, and similarly to the *Pooh* stories it is illustrated by Shepard.[21] His drawings seem to be almost identical to the illustrations made for the *Pooh* collection. Because Shepard drew both bears and because Edward Bear is described as one of Winnie-the-Pooh's names in the *Pooh* stories, it is natural to draw the connection between the two. Furthermore, in the poem, Edward Bear wears a buttoned jacket. Although it is not coloured,

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[18] Wells, p. 25.

[19] Film Is Now Movie Bloopers & Extras, *CHRISTOPHER ROBIN (2018) | Behind the Scenes of Disney Live-Action Movie* [online video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubKVcVeEzvk [accessed 8 April 2021].

[20] MovieGuide, *CHRISTOPHER ROBIN Interview: Director, Marc Forster* [online video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJsty92uBnI [accessed 28 September 2020].

[21] Alan Alexander Milne, *When We Were Very Young* (London: Dutton & Company, 1924), p. 85.

it can be viewed to resemble the red shirt that would become standard attire for Pooh in Disney's productions. Winnie-the-Pooh's red shirt in the film *Christopher Robin*, therefore, has been filled with significant symbolism to support the thematic ideas such as friendship and unconditional love, but it conveys a strong connection to the standard Disney's reimagining of Pooh that they have operated with since the 1960s.

Because the characters have been Disney's property since the sixties, the public is largely familiarised with Disney's version of Winnie-the-Pooh. Arguably, children want to read and watch stories of the Winnie-the-Pooh that they are familiar with, and if the audience is of a younger generation, they expect to see the same Pooh that appear in the most recent animations. Deborah Cartmell suggests that 'Children, unlike adults, love to re-read their favourite stories; and, correspondingly, in adapting these texts, there will be higher demands on fidelity'.[22] The adults of older generations, then, expect so see the Pooh that they grew up with. Forster has created an amalgamation of these in a modernised and realistic way to appeal to a wider audience. Pooh can also generate familiarity on screen through his behaviour that mirrors, or is based on, previous versions and stories about the character. The familiar feeling Pooh evokes could potentially originate from the voice that is used to convey the character. Voice actor Jim Cummings has been the voice of Pooh since the first Disney TV series *The New Adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh* that aired in 1988.[23] It is an easily recognisable voice and it may make spectators feel more at ease. As Forster states, 'there's nostalgia and this blanket of comfort' about his voice that feels homely.[24] Cummings presents the voice of the tranquil and serene character Pooh and expresses his personality with clearness and comfort. He is familiar to the viewers of Disney's Pooh who is, thus, a continuation of Pooh as presented by Disney.

Conclusion: Winnie-the-Pooh – Challenging Assumptions

Considering the multitude of points made about the figure of Winnie-the-Pooh, it is clear that he is not merely a simplistic one-dimensional character, neither in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *The House at Pooh Corner*, or in the cinematic appropriation *Christopher Robin*. Although he is depicted

[22] Deborah Cartmell 'Adapting Children's Literature', in the *Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 166-180 (p. 168).
[23] IMDB 'Jim Cummings', IMDB [online] https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0191906/ [accessed 8 April 2021].
[24] MovieGuide, *CHRISTOPHER ROBIN Interview: Director, Marc Forster* [online video] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJsty92uBnI [accessed 28 September 2020].

as a silly, incompetent and slow thinking figure in Milne's original stories, there is more to his character and personality than his seemingly egocentric obsession with honey. His complex character includes creativity and a care for others, and he is subtly featured as the clever thinker and solver of issues in the Hundred Acre Wood, even if he is sometimes overshadowed by Christopher Robin. Thus, Pooh is more than just a 'Bear of Very Little Brain'. In *Christopher Robin*, Forster has amplified the notion of Pooh as 'A Bear of Little Brain' and portrays him as more clumsy and silly. As Connolly puts it, Pooh is 'lovable precisely because he is often so silly'.[25] Moreover, Pooh's indifferent attitude towards obstacles is emphasised, for instance when Pooh breaks Christopher Robin's kitchen shelf. Pooh's response to such incidents is grounded in his literal interpretation and inability to understand figures of speech. His literal interpretations make him appear philosophical. Forster has extracted an idea of nothingness from *The House at Pooh Corner* and Pooh's understanding of nothingness is frequently repeated for emphasis in the film. Due to technological developments in 3D animation, Pooh comes alive through visualising realistic physical features of, for example, his fur and body movement. Another feature that is new compared to Milne's original creation, but an addition and continuation of the Disney treatment of Winnie-the Pooh, is his red shirt that associates him with the Disney productions. The shirt represents many things that Pooh himself signifies, such as unconditional love, joy, and happiness. The multitude of aspects discussed in ways to view Winnie-the-Pooh, both as Milne's original creation and as a figure in Forster's appropriation, supports the claim that he is a highly complex character.

[25] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 49.

Chapter Two: Exposing Adults and Adulthood

Just as Winnie-the-Pooh is deemed as a one-dimensional and simple-minded character, children's literature is often dismissed as excessively simplistic. Within children's literature, however, there are different literary modes at work that complicate the assumption that the genre is too basic to consider remotely worthy of examination or analysis. Even when critics find complexities within children's stories, they are 'often viewed either as proof that the books are not *really* for children', 'or else as a stylistic flaw – a failure to properly address the child audience', according to Niall Nance-Carroll.[1] The *Pooh* stories have also been scrutinised by this debate in a search for a universally recognised conclusion as to whether they are stories for children or adults. A part of this literary complexity lies indeed in the issue of address and the involvement of adult structures and influences texts that are assumed to be only for children. A common assumption about children's literature, therefore, is that it only implicates children. This creates a problematic relationship between textual elements that juxtapose themes relating to childhood and adulthood. Adults are often a forgotten aspect of children's literature because they are not considered to be the target audience. They still invade all sections of children's literature: they may be producers, authors, consumers, facilitators, and characters within the texts. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* are texts where adult presence, or the lack thereof, is revealed through narrative techniques, characterisation and appeals to different audiences. Forster's *Christopher Robin* also includes adults and adult structures in these respects, but rather differently because of the change in medium.

This chapter will explore what role the adult plays in and outside of these texts. The role of the adult is particularly evident and complex when it is put in contrast to child figures and childhood as a period of life that is assumed to be separate from adulthood. Firstly, there will be a discussion about how these chosen texts appeal to more than one audience. It will challenge the assumptions about children's literature and film as appealing to children only. Secondly, Christopher Robin will be, in relation to Milne's *Pooh* stories, explored as a character that has adult-like characteristics, but also as a child who is about to grow up and leave his childhood behind. There will also be a discussion of how Christopher Robin is presented as an adult character in Forster's appropriation. Here, Christopher's relationship to Pooh whose child-like and adult-like qualities enhance their dynamic relationship, will expose

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[1] Niall Nance-Carroll, 'Not only, But also: Entwined Modes and the Fantastic in A. A. Milne's Pooh Stories', *The Lion and the unicorn* 39.1 (2015), 63-81 (p. 63).

significant differences between children and adults as portrayed by Forster. Thirdly, the narrative structure of the film will be considered as a way to juxtapose childhood and adulthood. Subsequently, there will be an examination of role of the adult narrator of the *Pooh* stories, who controls the embedded narrative from the frame story. Lastly, the role of the camera functions as a way to juxtapose children and adults will be discussed in relation to Forster's film *Christopher Robin*.

Childhood, Adulthood and Their Place in Literature

In order to fully understand the role of adults in children's literature, the construction of childhood needs to be addressed. Childhood and adulthood are often believed to be two separate spheres that are isolated from one another – one cannot be child and adult simultaneously. From a semiological perspective children and adults can be considered as parts of a social organisation that has been structured through a code system of signifier and signified. Consequently, the spheres of childhood and adulthood have thus become culturally separate and viewed as binary opposites. Constructions of childhood and adulthood have thus been prone to values and ideas that have been associated with each of them that separates the two even further. Due to these conceptual differences, children's literature has become stratified through signs of juxtaposed spheres for children and adults. In children's literature, the 'senders and recipients always belong to two different human communities, each with its own experience, previous knowledge and expectations', according to Maria Nikolajeva.[2] Further, she notes that children's books contain 'the presence of a double code system consisting of a '"children's code" and an "adult code"'.[3] Linguistically, then, children's books operate with two separate systems of codes, one that addresses the child and the other that addresses the adult. Children's literature thus participates in two different literary systems, the one of the adult and the one of the child. Adults are inclined, therefore, to look upon childhood with nostalgia, as a place of innocence and freedom – as a state they can escape back to from adulthood. Due to this segregation, there is a general assumption that children need a different type of literature than adults. Perry Nodelman claims that 'children's literature is written by adults and that it is what it is because of how it addresses its audience, because of what adults

[2] Maria Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), p. 56-57.
[3] Nikolajeva, p. 61.

believe children are – adult constructions of childhood'.[4] Authors, therefore, need to appeal to the adults that purchase children's books as much as they need to appeal to the children they are assumed to be written for.

Appealing to More than One Audience: Address, Simultaneous Emotions and Mature References

Children's literature, then, may address both child and adult audiences in different ways. Barbara Wall establishes that there are different narrative addressees within the genre of children's literature; single, dual and double address. She operates with these definitions:

> Using single address:
>
> narrators will address child narratees, overt or covert, straightforwardly, showing no consciousness that adult too might read the work. Concern for children's interest dominates their stories.
>
> Using double address:
>
> narrators will address child narratees overtly and self-consciously, and will also address adults […] either overtly […] or covertly, as the narrator deliberately exploits the ignorance of the implied child reader by making jokes which are funny primarily because children will not understand them.
>
> Using dual address:
>
> narrators address child narratees, usually covertly….either using the same 'tone of seriousness' which would be used to address adult narrates, or confidentially sharing the story in a way that allows adult narrator and child narrate a conjunction of interest.[5]

This is a valuable categorisation and all three methods of address reveal themselves in different parts of Milne's *Pooh* stories. Although 'single address' is used for the majority of the stories, (primarily addressing the implied child reader and Christopher Robin, the child who listens to these stories within the book), there are times where the narrator addresses the adult. In *Winnie-the-Pooh* 'double address' is sometimes used. For instance, in the beginning of the story, the narrator explains that Pooh lives 'under the name of Sanders' (Milne, p. 16). In the narrative

[4] Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 151.
[5] Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991), p. 35.

frame of the story, Christopher Robin genuinely wonders what to live 'under the name' means and the narrator says it means that Pooh 'had the name over the door in gold letters and lived under it' (17). Here, he overtly addresses Christopher Robin, a child; yet, the joke of the meaning of the phrase is addressed to the adult reader because they will know that someone had probably hung the sign on the tree and it has become a name of which Pooh lives under, even though it is not his name. It is not just a coincidence that the sign is there. The joke is amusing to the adult because there is an exploitation of the ignorance of the child narratee (Christopher Robin) and the implied child reader, who do not understand it. Another notable example is when Christopher Robin of the embedded narrative leads his stuffed animal friends on an expedition to the 'north pole' (111). In preparation Christopher puts his 'Big Boots' on (110). Christopher's big boots will most likely be understood by the child narratee and the implied child reader as just a pair of boots. To an adult mediator and addressee, however, Christopher becomes a satisfying parody of an adult explorer who will undertake dangerous tasks to explore the wilderness. Milne comes closer to 'dual address' towards the end of *The House at Pooh Corner* because he, as Wall asserts, shares 'the story in a way that allows adult narrator and child narrate a conjunction of interest'.[6] Milne places contrasting emotions within the same scene that each address their respective addressees and sparks both of their interests at once.

Simultaneous expression of contrasting emotions is also another way that children's literature appeals to child *and* adult audiences. Children's literature scholar Michael Cadden focuses on entwining modes of emotion in his study of children's literature and emphasises different emotions directed at an adult reader/mediator versus a child reader. He explains that the success of children's literature might, with simultaneous and multiple expressions of emotion, be the reason for its 'appeal to both children and adults'.[7] The simultaneity of modes aids the assumption that the literary complexity of children's stories is viewed as evidence that the stories are not only for children, but also for adults. Moreover, Cadden implies that a children's story 'entwine[s] contrasting modes [to] ensure that there is an emotional offering that will be available to any reader, despite age, and depending on his or her mood or need'.[8]

The simultaneous entwining of opposing emotions can be found at the end of *The House at Pooh Corner*, for instance, where two contrasting emotions appeal to different audiences.

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[6] Wall, p. 35.
[7] Mike Cadden, 'Simultaneous Emotions: Entwining Modes in Children's books', *Children's Literature in Education,* 36.3 (2005), 285-298 (p. 286).
[8] Cadden, p. 295.

Christopher is leaving the Hundred Acre Wood, seemingly forever, but Pooh does not really know why. In good faith, Pooh believes that Christopher will still visit now and again, but Christopher knows that this is not the case – their time of fun and play is coming to an end. Here, emotions of contentment and comfort are aimed at the child reader because Christopher Robin promises to not forget Pooh. His promise conveys a sense that Pooh will not be left behind all alone, which may have a soothing effect on a child reader. Sadness and melancholy are emotions that an adult reader is more inclined to take away from the scene because they know that Christopher is actually leaving; that he is growing up and that he will most likely forget Pooh. These contrasting modes of emotions connect Cadden's entwining emotions to Wall's definition of the dual address. Dual address and entwining modes of emotions both fulfil their functions to child and adult readers simultaneously. Operating with entwining modes does not, however, mean that separate readers are separated, but rather, that the *Pooh* stories address both children and adult audiences regardless of who reads. In other words, if a child reads the stories, the appeal to adults is still present within the text, but the child's ignorance will limit their understanding.

Although differently than Milne's *Pooh* stories, Forster's film *Christopher Robin* also addresses child *and* adult spectators. That is to say, the film appeals to a wider audience than one consisting exclusively of children. Th it possesses qualities consistent with what is categorised as 'family' films. Peter Hunt declares that

> the vast majority of contemporary films (live-action or animated) ostensibly produced for a child audience in commercial cinema are more accurately "family" films. That is to say, children are only a part of the audience, and so a complex double address is in operation.[9]

Christopher Robin incorporates scenes that will appeal to the adult spectator because the child viewer will not understand the underlying meaning. Therefore, it can be considered as a film that operates with double address. Some scenes address an implied child spectator whilst also hinting, winking to and/or addressing the adult viewer. For instance, in the scene where Madelyn, Pooh, Eeyore, Tigger and Piglet sit in a taxi on their way to Winslow luggage to deliver Christopher his important papers, the taxi driver comes to the realisation that the stuffed animals can talk. In his mortified state, the taxi driver crashes into a stand of newspapers and tries to explain to the newspaper salesman how he saw Madelyn's teddies talking and moving

[9] Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p. 267.

by themselves and that that was the reason for the crash. A policeman arrives on scene who clearly believes the taxi driver to be insane. 'Are you on a lemonade, mate?', he asks the taxi driver (01:19:23). The reference to insanity and alcohol is aimed at more mature audiences, and the child spectators are predisposed to see it as absurdity and silliness. The reference to alcohol and insanity amuses the adult spectator because child viewers do not understand it. Thus, the scene conforms to Wall's description of the double address and meets Hunt's principles of the 'family' film.

Christopher as an Adult Figure in the *Pooh* Stories

A character of Milne's *Pooh* stories that can be considered as an adult-like figure is Christopher Robin. Although Christopher Robin is a child in the stories, he is a character that possesses adult-like qualities and characteristics. He is, for instance, the authoritative protector whom Pooh and their friends look up to. In *The House at Pooh Corner*, when Pooh meets Tigger for the first time, Pooh asks 'Does Christopher Robin know about you?' (Milne, p. 181). This suggests that Pooh believes that Christopher needs full control over any strangers and new arrivals to the forest community. By emphasising that it is important that Christopher is aware of Tigger's arrival, Pooh considers Christopher as the leader of the forest. Due to his position in the forest community, Paula Connolly labels Christopher as the 'ostensible protector of the Forest'.[10] As their leader and protector, the inhabitants of the forest also often believe that Christopher has all the solutions and answers to their problems. For example, when Tigger and Roo are stuck in a tree and cannot get down, Pooh and Piglet try to find a way for them to return safely to the ground. When they notice that Christopher Robin and Eeyore walk towards them, Piglet exclaims, '"Christopher Robin!"', '"*He'll* know what to do."' (Milne, p. 221). The strong emphasis on Christopher Robin as a rescuer who knows what to do in all situations reiterates the importance of his function as leader and authoritative protector.

Even in Christopher's absence, the characters turn to Christopher as the all-knowing figure. His absence is emphasised through the other characters' frequent references to him and they often wonder what Christopher thinks about different matters and what he would do in their situations. For example, when Rabbit plots to 'unbounce' Tigger because he finds Tigger's behaviour a nuisance, he reassures Piglet that they are doing a good deed (259). Piglet

[10] Paula T. Connolly, *Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia*. (New York: Twayne's Masterwork Studies, 1995), p. 80.

asks whether Christopher Robin would think that it is a good deed, and his question highlights Christopher Robin's moral authority, even in his absence. At other times when Christopher is absent, the forest inhabitants try to fill the void of Christopher's reassuring presence. For instance, Piglet attempts to plant 'haycorns' that will grow into an oak-tree 'because Christopher says it will' (213). Piglet believes that if Christopher Robin says they will turn into oak-trees, that is what will happen. Everything Christopher says must be true in Piglet's mind. Even though, in this instance, Christopher is right, Connolly asserts that 'his decisions and opinions, regardless of how erroneous they may appear to the [adult or child] reader, are accepted without question in the Forest'.[11] Piglet and the other forest inhabitants' belief in Christopher, even in his absence, reinforces the power he has as the adult figure of the Hundred Acre Wood community.

Christopher can also be viewed as adult-like because the forest habitants differentiate him from themselves and others. They treat him differently than each other and he is therefore positioned like an adult within their community. The forest inhabitants look up to him as the only person who can help them in sticky situations. As the largest character in the forest, Christopher is viewed to be the strongest and thus the best at helping out in challenging conditions. The forest inhabitants believe that Christopher is of higher morals than the others and the one who cares the most. Eeyore, for instance, is quick to separate Christopher from the other forest inhabitants in this way. When Eeyore knocks on Christopher's door to ask if he has seen his house, Christopher offers to help him. Eeyore contemplates why no one in the forest would care that he will be cold without a house and Christopher reveals that he feels guilty. 'I don't mean you Christopher Robin. You're different', Eeyore says (Milne, p. 172). Eeyore separates Christopher from the others by labelling him as more empathic and helpful, even though it is Piglet and Pooh who, in the end, go out of their way to find him a house. By saying that Christopher is different, Eeyore immediately separates him from the others and puts him on a pedestal. Christopher therefore, becomes separated from the other forest inhabitants and obtains the highest position in the hierarchy of their community. In this way he can be viewed to have adult-like characteristics.

Another notable reason for Christopher being considered as the ultimate source of knowledge is his education. Christopher is less present as a character in *The House at Pooh Corner* than in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Throughout *Pooh Corner*, the characters of the Hundred Acre Wood wonder where Christopher disappears to all of the time because he is almost never with

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[11] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 103.

them anymore. Piglet and Rabbit question what Christopher does in the mornings, and Eeyore tells them that ‘He learns. He becomes Educated’ (239). A clear sign of Christopher’s literacy is his writing. He leaves a note on his door saying ‘Gon out Backson. Bisy Backson.’ (229). Although not grammatically correct, his writing is a sign that he is developing, growing up and coming of age. His developing literary abilities also reveal a temporal aspect of Christopher’s growing up. Here, childhood is temporally determined and it is not an eternal state. As Paul Wake asserts, ‘literary competence is specifically connected with narrating time’.[12] Christopher’s writing thus reveals the passing of time. His developing knowledge becomes a signifier for coming of age and Christopher is therefore viewed as the most educated in the forest.

Juxtaposing Childhood and Adulthood: Christopher’s Growing Up

Christopher Robin’s less present role in *The House at Pooh Corner* eventually leads to strong implications that he is going off to school and will later be entering the adult world. The shift in narration and frame from the *Winnie-the-Pooh* to *The House at Pooh Corner*, strongly emphasises that a change has occurred, both in the storytelling and in Christopher as a character and as the child who listens to these stories. Christopher is slowly transitioning out of childhood.

The idyllic childhood experiences portrayed in *Winnie-the-Pooh* are contrasted with the inevitably gloomy departure of Christopher Robin at the end of *The House at Pooh Corner*. The shift in narration, Christopher’s absence, chaotic events and natural disasters contribute to foreshadowing the final scenes of *The House at Pooh Corner.* Indeed, the last chapter of the story begins in a melancholy tone, which confirms these changes.

> Christopher was going away. Nobody knew why he was going; nobody knew where he was going; indeed, nobody even knew why he knew that Christopher Robin was going away. But somehow or other everybody in the Forest felt that it was happening at last (Milne, p. 300).

This beginning creates a sense of anticipation and foreshadows the mood of the final scene – there is a sense in which a conclusion is approaching. The phrase ‘everybody in the Forest felt that it was happening at last’ foreshadows the ending of the story and Christopher’s departure

[12] Paul Wake, ‘Waiting in the Hundred Acre Wood: Childhood, Narrative and Time in A. A. Milne’s Works for Children’, *Lion and the Unicorn*, 33.1 (2009), 26-43 (p. 39).

from childhood. Just as Christopher 'knows that this leave-taking is irrevocable', his forest friends are also aware of this fact, but they do not put it into words, which, again, aids to express the melancholy atmosphere.[13] Pooh and his friends give Christopher Robin a goodbye letter that they call a 'rissolution', which is essentially a poem with their names signed at the bottom (Milne, p. 301). Christopher admits that 'it's a comforting thing to have' (308). The letter has a consoling and reassuring function that makes Christopher want to confide in Pooh about his fears of leaving him. The letter reflects Christopher's departure from childhood and into reality where he will grow up. His coming of age echoes Nance-Carroll's statement that 'childhood can exist only in transition; it is not a stable state'.[14] This assertion could mean, then, that childhood is a developmental stage and not a permanent stage. It is therefore inevitable that Christopher will grow out of the state of childhood. The inevitability of Christopher's coming of age and the feeling of loss that accompanies, is mirrored in the gloomy and melancholy atmosphere of *The House at Pooh Corner*.

After their delivery of the 'rissolution', Pooh and Christopher walk over to Galleon's Lap, a place in the outskirts of the forest. At this point, 'Cristopher Robin recognizes that he is growing beyond the Hundred Acre Wood and so attempts to discuss his departure with Pooh, who cannot understand, especially when Christopher Robin has difficulty articulating his question', according to Nance-Carroll.[15] Christopher Robin attempts to express his worries about leaving, but when Pooh is inclined to interpret things literally and not see the meaning behind it, it becomes difficult. Christopher then hints to where he is going by the use of the pronoun 'they':

> 'I'm not going to do Nothing any more.'
> 'Never again?'
> 'Well, not so much. They don't let you.' (Milne, p. 314)

'They' are the grown up adults of the outside world who are sending him off to boarding school to be educated into a grown man. This alters the view of the forest scene as embedded in eternity, the temporal insulation of the forest is thus punctured, as will be discussed below. Connelly also sees this as an 'intrusion of the outside world – of the inevitability of time's effect and demands on Christopher Robin – that changes the forest scene in *The House at Pooh*

[13] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 191.
[14] Nance-Carroll, p. 66.
[15] Nance-Carroll, p. 78.

Corner'.[16] The outside world waits for Christopher Robin to leave his imagination and play, and succumb to the social obligations of society. Christopher is not allowed to be a child anymore and to do 'nothing' with Pooh. The joys of his childhood are now substituted with the responsibilities of growing up. After their interaction, Christopher says

> 'Come on!'
> 'Where?' said Pooh.
> 'Anywhere,' said Christopher Robin.
> 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 (Milne, p. 315-216).

This final scene eternalises Christopher as a child. He will forever be the little boy who plays with his bear, despite the strong indications that he will indeed do the opposite: he will inevitably grow up. The simultaneous eternalisation of Christopher Robin as a child and his predestined future of having to grow up, produce an ambivalent tone to the last scene of *The House at Pooh Corner.* There are books that are of no use to us once we know the ending, but books that entwine contrasting modes make the ending richer and less "knowable" even if they are "closed" endings'.[17] It brings a child joy and conclusion, whilst an adult might find the tone melancholic or ironic. In this way, the ending speaks to both children and winks over their heads to the adult. It serves the reader with optimism *and* sadness, which may be directed to different types of readers, respectively children and adults. Optimism because Christopher and Pooh will always have each other and keep on playing – it evokes a sense of eternity and exposes a static temporality; and sadness, because Christopher will go into the world leaving Pooh and his other forest friends behind. The recurring signs of gloomy disasters and Christopher's growing up contrasts the idyllic childhood he has had with what is waiting for him in the future. The joys of his playful childhood are, therefore, contrasted with the forceful phrase 'they don't let you' and his gloomy future growing up and entering the adult world. His childhood is now being gradually substituted with responsibilities, obligation and an expectation to conform to the norms of an adult world.

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[16] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 67.
[17] Cadden, p. 296.

Christopher Robin as Adult in *Christopher Robin* and His Dynamic Relationship with Pooh

Forster's *Christopher Robin* concerns itself with Christopher Robin's life as an adult working father in the 1920's London. By changing the age of one of Milne's characters, the context in which the characters are situated also changes. The prologue sequence in the beginning of the film contrasts Christopher's happy childhood days playing in the Hundred Acre Wood with the tedious and demanding responsibilities of his job as the efficiency manager at Winslow Luggage, where his boss, Mr. Winslow makes Christopher's work life insufferable. Christopher is tasked with cutting costs to save the company and if he does not figure out a manageable solution, his colleagues will lose their jobs. Therefore, by changing the age of one of Milne's characters, the context in which the characters are situated also changes.

Christopher's life as an adult is mostly put in contrast with shots that portray a visual separation of him and Pooh. At the beginning of the film, Winnie-the-Pooh and Christopher Robin are portrayed as opposites. Christopher's responsibility at his job makes him neglect his family, whilst Pooh lives moment for moment blissfully unaware of what the adult world requires. 'At his best, Pooh is both the inside and outside of childhood – especially in contrast with the vicissitudes of adulthood', according to Peter Hunt.[18] To emphasise the change in Christopher's relationship with Pooh, Forster presents them as polarised characters. This is visualised in the beginning of the film where Pooh's presence is in the way of Christopher's plan to save Winslow Luggage. Christopher's resentment to Pooh's sudden involvement in his life demonstrates Christopher's belief that Pooh does not acknowledge the reasons why he prioritises his work over his family. The scene illustrates how Pooh is constantly put in opposition to Christopher's world.

Christopher and his adult life and responsibilities are contrasted with the character of Winnie-the-Pooh, who is in Milne's *Pooh* stories and Forster's *Christopher Robin*, presented as child-like. Peter Hunt too, believes that 'Pooh is both mystic and guizer; he wins by innocence and child-like qualities both adult and child reader can sympathise and empathise' with.[19] These qualities have been transferred to the character of Winnie-the-Pooh in *Christopher Robin* and his child-like qualities become the ultimate representation of childhood.

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[18] Peter Hunt, 'Winnie the pooh and Domestic fantasy', in *Stories and Society: Children's Literature in in its Social Context*, ed. by Dennis Butts (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1992), 112-124 (p. 117).
[19] Hunt, *Domestic Fantasy*, p. 117.

A scene that exemplifies Pooh's child-like qualities is the train scene, in which Pooh and Christopher are on their way to the Hundred Acre Wood. It gives the impression of a typical father/child moment where Pooh displays his more distinct child characteristics. Christopher Robin tries to get some work done on the train journey home, but Pooh continually, and naively, like a child, asks Christopher Robin questions about his briefcase and whether it is more important than a balloon. Christopher looks bothered by those questions because he finds them completely absurd. What Christopher does not realise is the subtle metaphorical meaning that has been ascribed to the balloon, which is imagination and love. As Pooh keeps asking questions about his briefcase and its purpose, Christopher finally speaks up: 'Pooh, do you think you might be able to amuse yourself for a while?' (00:39:20). He is obviously an annoyance to Christopher who tries to focus on his work. Pooh takes this request from Christopher very seriously and decides to play a game by himself called "say what you see". In an attempt to be civil, Christopher asks whether Pooh can play his game more quietly. Pooh interprets Christopher's question literally and resumes his game in a loud whisper. He misunderstands what Christopher means by silent, which may resemble how a child may interpret situations like these. The moment may resonate strongly with adults and perhaps parents in particular.

Contrastingly, Pooh is often assumed to be an adult character because of his wisdom. The simplicity of his cognitive abilities, exemplified by the train scene, emphasises the profound quality of his wisdom. In fact, he is so wise that he becomes the hero of the story. Alison Lurie declares Pooh a 'big cultural hero', and while she points to the figure of Pooh as a hero in the sense that he has survived as a cultural icon for so many decades, the heroic aspect of his character is made evident in Forster's appropriation.[20] After all, it is he who saves Christopher Robin from himself and a life of seriousness and stress. Through his wisdom Pooh helps Christopher to realise what is of actual importance and what has value in his life. Pooh's supposedly innate wisdom makes him the hero of the story and appear adult-like.

The child-like/adult-like classification of Pooh is further emphasised by the ambiguity of Pooh's age. Pooh appears worn and it is clear that he has been well-used, perhaps for a longer period of time. However, Pooh is a teddy bear which hinders his physical and mental development. He cannot grow old in the same way Christopher does. Because of Pooh's personality and the fact that he has not undergone any internal or major external development from book to film, it is perhaps easier for Forster to present him as a child. Particularly in

[20] Alison Lurie, 'Back to Pooh Corner', *Children's Literature*, 2.1 (1973), 11-17 (p. 11).

comparison to Christopher, because Pooh is supposed to draw him back to his childhood joys. Here, Pooh's age becomes a question – technically he is one year younger than Christopher Robin, but Christopher grows physically and mentally, and Pooh does not. Although this exposes the inanimate and static quality of Pooh as a teddy bear, it does reveal that his age is also static. As a character, he does not develop at all and is therefore put as the biggest contrast to Christopher Robin's dynamic character. Because Pooh has undergone some physical changes, but not developed much as a character, his age still remains ambiguous.

In contrast, Milne's *Pooh* stories presents Christopher and Pooh as essentially the same age because the gap between them is smaller than in *Christopher Robin*. However, as mentioned, in *The House at Pooh Corner,* the reader is presented with a melancholy atmosphere that foreshadows Christopher's coming of age. Christopher is more absent which signals that he is growing up and moving on to other playthings that are, perhaps, more suitable for his age. The age gap between Christopher and Pooh will inevitably increase because of Pooh's status as a stuffed teddy bear.

Returning to the idea of Pooh and Christopher Robin as opposite characters, a part of the film that portrays Pooh and Christopher as polarised characters is the scene where they arrive back in the Hundred Acre Wood to look for Pooh's friends. Christopher is already frustrated with Pooh's inability to understand his life and responsibilities. Oblivious to Christopher's obvious frustration, Pooh relentlessly asks a lot of questions which increases Christopher's irritability. Pooh is slowing them down and hindering Christopher in doing his work. Tension builds as the friction between them increases and Pooh still does not realise how Christopher feels. Christopher loses his composure and shouts 'I am not a child anymore, I am an adult, with adult responsibilities'. 'But you are Christopher Robin' says Pooh with sincere faith in his friend (00:45:23). This is an example of how Pooh's view of Christopher Robin remains unchanged. Christopher is an adult in the story, which he tries to convey to Pooh. Yet he is *too* adult because he has forgotten how to be imaginative and playful, like a child. Christopher's seriousness and his lack of ability to play affects his daughter Madelyn, who questions what it means to play and be creative. Christopher's adult behaviour and his frustrations about Pooh's unwillingness to understand his responsibilities become polarised with Pooh's ignorance of this aspect of Christopher's life.

Pooh's refusal to realise that Christopher has a different life as an adult than when he was a little boy exemplifies that Pooh treats Christopher as if he was still a child and not as the adult he has become. In other words, Pooh views Christopher as the child he once was. In this way, there is still a connection to Milne's passage at the end of *The House at Pooh Corner,*

where Christopher is eternalised as the child that will 'always be playing' with his teddy bear (Milne, p. 314). Pooh believes that Christopher will not change and that they will be there for each other as long as they live and even though they had to say goodbye, Pooh believes that their connection will be just as strong in a hundred years. Pooh's insistence on waiting for Christopher shows his devoted loyalty. Their relationship seems immortal and everlasting. In *Christopher Robin*, however, the prologue sequence visualises Christopher's growing up and that he forgets about Pooh and their friendship. This is where problems appear because as Christopher grows up, their relationship changes. Their relationship can therefore be viewed as a dynamic entity that changes with time and context. Pooh's relationship to Christopher has not changed, but Christopher's relationship to Pooh seemingly has. Pooh still believes Christopher to be the same young Christopher he played with in the Hundred Acre Wood. 'Pooh, however did you recognise me?' Christopher asks and Pooh responds by wiping his honey-covered paws over Christopher's eyes (00:31:19). It is obvious to Christopher that he has grown and changed, but to Pooh he is just the same. The same occurs when the two arrive back in the Hundred Acre Wood and Christopher gets stuck in the little doorway in the tree. Pooh does not realise at first that Christopher has indeed become an adult and grown both in size and mind, and naively asks whether Christopher has eaten too much honey, as if that is the reason for his growth. Pooh demonstrates that he does not acknowledge that Christopher Robin has grown up.

In addition to pointing out Christopher's size, this particular scene is an imitation of the part in *Winnie-the-Pooh* where Pooh gets stuck in Rabbit's doorway. Benjamin Lefebvre claims that 'children enjoy repetition and predictability' which coincides with Linda Hutcheon's approach to adaptation studies.[21] She stresses that part of the pleasure with adaptations and appropriations 'comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise'.[22] Forster repeats the incident without replicating it, which, according to Hutcheon and Lefebvre's methods make the story more enjoyable, both for children and audiences that recognise its status as an appropriation. The passage is a reference to *Winnie-the-Pooh* and it demonstrates how Pooh treats adult Christopher the same way he did when Christopher was a child.

The fact that Pooh treats Christopher Robin as if he is still a child's size, only that he had eaten too much honey, is a prime example of the unconditional love Pooh has for

[21] Benjamin Lefebvre, 'Introduction', in Textual Transformations *in Children's: Adaptations, Translations, Reconsiderations,* ed. by Benjamin Lefebvre (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1-6 (p. 5).
[22] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

Christopher. Despite Christopher's internal conflicts as an adult, which makes him behave distant, Pooh still treats him the same because of his unconditional love for him. When Pooh first arrives at Christopher's house in the beginning of the film, Christopher clarifies that his love for Pooh was conditional, that he would love Pooh as long as he did not grow up. Pooh belonged to Christopher's childhood, which is clear by his attempted rejection of Pooh. Christopher has an internal conflict because there exist two contradicting desires in his mind – he is being torn between his responsibilities at work, which may lead to severe consequences for his colleagues, and his family's happiness. His internal conflict is not clear until the end of the film because the change in his character happens gradually, with the recurring presence of Pooh in his life. Christopher's internal conflict parallels the understanding of childhood as a period of joy and happiness, and a conception of adulthood as a period where obligations are parts of everyday life.

Christopher's internal conflict mirrors Peter Hunt's suggestion that 'the most satisfactory generalization [of childhood] is that childhood is the period of life which the immediate culture thinks of as being free of responsibility and susceptible to education'.[23] If the generalisation of adulthood is the inevitability of obligations and responsibilities, the assumptions that childhood and adulthood are separate can seem more or less correct. The sphere of childhood appears separate from adulthood, but as one matures, the experiences during childhood will be saved as memories. Christopher seems to view childhood as a period in his life where he was free of responsibilities, but he has grown up now. The forest scene, where Pooh and Christopher are contrasted, exemplifies that Christopher opposes the idea that as an adult he can enjoy the same things as a child would. He believes that because he is an adult with adult responsibilities he can therefore not experience life like a child.

However, Pooh's presence in Christopher Robin's life slowly, but surely, changes Christopher's perception of how he can live his life. Pooh's presence reminds Christopher of the joys he experienced in his childhood, but he stresses that he cannot simply abandon his adult responsibilities. Scholar Jaqueline Rose asserts that 'childhood is something in which we continue to be implicated and which is never simply left behind'.[24] The conclusion to draw from this statement is that the events that take place during our childhood are significant for our development into adults. What Forster emphasises in his film however, is that one can actually be adult, with obligations and responsibilities, yet also have time for family and friends

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[23] Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 5

[24] Jaqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillian Press Ltd, 1984), p. 12.

who are, in the film, viewed as the key to happiness. Pooh treating Christopher as if was still a child, is his way of bringing Christopher to realise that he can indeed be a grown up and still experience the pleasures that are associated with childhood, such as happiness, imagination and freedom. Pooh is a representation of Christopher's joyous childhood, and considering Rose's assertion, Pooh becomes the part of Christopher's childhood that is left behind temporarily, but that reappear at the moments when Christopher needs a reminder of how to enjoy his life.

Juxtaposing Children and Adults Through Plot, Narrative Structure, and Theme

The narrative structure and plot of *Christopher Robin* are built to support juxtaposing themes of childhood and adulthood. In the film, themes such as freedom, play, imagination and joy represent childhood. Opposing themes like tediousness, obligation and responsibility, in addition to strong connotations of limited fun and happiness, all represent adulthood. The three-act structure of the film is constructed to juxtapose these themes and values in all parts of the narrative. It includes an introduction of characters and potential thematic issues. It is followed by a raise in action and suspension where the stakes are higher, which will eventually lead to a climax before it dials down to a resolution.

Being a Disney production, the film also adheres to this narrative structure because it is considered to be the standard way of organising a story in film. Deborah Cartmell states that 'in terms of story, Disney films rely very much on the three-act classic Hollywood structure, "build/establish/resolve"'[25]. *Christopher Robin* has a clear narrative structure of beginning, middle and end. This structure supports thematic issues of growing up which helps to separate concepts of childhood and adulthood. *Christopher Robin* has a clear narrative structure of beginning, middle and end that supports the thematic issues of growing up. Therefore, the ideas about childhood and adulthood that accompany coming of age inevitably lead to an opposition of children and adults in the film.

The-three act structure of *Christopher Robin* begins with a prologue sequence where the spectator is presented with pivotal scenes that show Christopher's development from an innocent and imaginative little boy to a grown adult who prioritises his job over his family.

[25] Deborah Cartmell 'Adapting Children's Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. by Deborah cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 166-180 (p. 170).

The idyllic opening scenes of the film show Christopher's friends in the Hundred Acre Wood throwing him a farewell party. The tone and atmosphere changes to sad and dramatic midway through this sequence to emphasise that Christopher is forced to leave his beloved friends in the Hundred Acre Wood to grow up and become an adult. The contrast from the beginning to the end of the sequence makes the separation of growing up from child to adult explicit. Matthias Brutsch proposes that 'the first act is supposed to present all necessary information about the story world and the main character as well as setting up the dramatic premise and raising the question of whether the protagonist will achieve his main goal'.[26] The prologue has set up the dramatic premise of the film because it contrasts the sides of Christopher's life he is torn between: his family and his job.

None of the characters' goals are directly related to changing Christopher's views on his life, but simply the presence of Pooh makes Christopher visibly happier. It is not Pooh's objective to change Christopher, but he indirectly influences him to see reason. Pooh's goal in the beginning of the film is, first and foremost, to find his friends. It is not until Christopher has safely reunited the inhabitants of the Hundred Acre Wood and travelled back to London, that getting Christopher's important work papers back to him becomes the goal. Christopher Robin's goal in the film, however, is to save the luggage company from going under, but mainly to prevent his colleagues do not losing their jobs.

These are the goals that drive the action of the story, but the thematic objectives are the underlying message of the film. As a consequence of these actions, the thematic goals of the story becomes evident: it is to make Christopher realise that he can let go, play and have fun, even as an adult. The question becomes: will Pooh be enough to remind Christopher of the joy of play and the happiness created by spending time with his family and friends? The beginning of the film thus builds character and develops thematic tension that is hinted to be resolved at the end. The conflicts that dominate Christopher's life are now set up to be dealt with and they are challenged in the second part of the narrative structure.

The first act of the narrative structure, then, is followed by the second part of the three-act structure. In this second part, the story develops and complicates the action where characters come into conflict with 'antagonistic forces and obstacles', according to Brutsch.[27] The scenes after the prologue show Christopher at his job at Winslow Luggage. It is Christopher's boss, Mr. Winslow who is the antagonistic force because he puts the responsibility of the company's

[26] Matthias Brutsch, 'The Three-Act Structure: Myth or Magical Formula?', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 6.3 (2015), 301-326 (p. 302).
[27] Brutsch, p. 302.

survival and the dismissal of his employees on Christopher's shoulders. Christopher's goal, as mentioned previously, becomes to save the company and his colleagues. Christopher is antagonised by Mr. Winslow who wants to do no work, but still takes credit for Christopher's solutions. Mr. Winslow also hinders Christopher in spending time with his wife and daughter, who are suffering because of Christopher's late work days. In this way, the antagonistic force that is Mr. Winslow makes it impossible for Christopher to prioritise his family who represent imagination, freedom and happiness, similarly to that of childhood. In other words, Mr. Winslow stands in the way of Christopher's happiness and ability to prioritise his family.

The obstacles Brutsch points to, need not necessarily be antagonistic, but they are complications that hinder Christopher in reaching his goal. The first obstacle is the interference of Winnie-the-Pooh in his life. Christopher's wife Evelyn and his daughter Madelyn have travelled to a cottage in Sussex for the weekend whilst Christopher stays in London to focus on his work. Pooh appears in a part outside Christopher's house, having travelled through a tunnel in a tree that had taken him from the Hundred Acre Wood to this park. Coincidentally, in trying to hide from his chatty neighbour, Christopher hides in the park, where he finds Pooh sitting on a bench. Now that Pooh is there, Christopher has no other choice than to help him, mainly because that will give him some peace and quiet to continue his work. Christopher has no time to help Pooh find his friends, which is why Pooh is there in the first place. Pooh's interruption of Christopher's work weekend is an obstacle that complicates the action of the story. The story further complicates when Christopher has to escort Pooh back to the Hundred Acre Wood without being caught by his wife and daughter who are staying at a cabin close to the forest. Christopher attempts to keep these two worlds, that of his family and the world where Pooh exists, separate from each other. In other words, Christopher tries to keep Pooh away from both his annoyingly clingy neighbour, his family and his job. This juxtaposes the already emphasised separation between the world of adults and children because he keeps Pooh away from all the parts of his life that are considered to be adult. The tension created by these intricate situations damages Christopher's relationships with his daughter and wife, which in turn leads to a greater division between his obligation to his work and his family life.

By having to grow up and be away from his childhood friends and his family, Christopher's work and responsibility has taken away the things he once experienced in his childhood – freedom, fun and play. It has also taken away the arenas for which these experiences can occur, such as the family home, because he cannot spend enough time there with the people he loves. The conception of childhood as fun and free is juxtaposed with the world of the adult where they are taken away. Christopher's refusal to see that he needs to

make a change increases the divide between children and adults. The ideas of childhood as a place of freedom, fun and play are resurfaced in the third and final part of the three-act-structure, the resolution, where Christopher's internal struggle of work versus family are solved and he has chosen to prioritise the aspects of his life that are the most important to him, namely, his family and friends.

Reflecting Themes and Values of Disney Through Depictions of Children and Adults

As a production by the Walt Disney Company, *Christopher Robin* adheres to and reflects dominant themes that are consistent with the values of Disney. In their mission statement, Disney declares that the company seeks to 'entertain, inform and inspire people around the globe through the power of unparalleled storytelling, reflecting iconic brands' and creativity.[28] This statement does not divulge any information about what needs to be included in their films for it to be uniquely Disney, but it does reveal that values of the Disney company need to be reflected in their products and entertainment. They also state that they have 'the responsibility to create authentic, unforgettable stories, experiences and products that capture the imagination of generations of people around the world. [They] are committed to doing that in a way that counts everybody in'.[29] This may be why Disney is considered by many to be aimed at a family audience, where their products can reach a wider audience.

A theme in the film that particularly enhances the opposition between children and adults is good versus evil. This theme is often associated with Disney films because it is an element that is frequently incorporated and emphasised in Disney productions. It does not have to be included, but it is nonetheless a typical feature of Disney films. In *Christopher Robin*, the characters that can be considered evil, or bad, are adults. Mr. Winslow, for instance, is the antagonistic force of the plot. He is not necessarily a character that would typically be considered evil, but he is portrayed in a way that places him in that category. He acts horribly towards Christopher Robin and the other employees, and he decides to play golf for an entire weekend whilst leaving Christopher with the sole responsibility to save the company. In the end he even attempts to take credit for Christopher's work. He might not be traditionally evil

[28] The Walt Disney Company, 'About the Walt Disney Company: About Our Mission', *The Walt Disney Company*, [online] https://thewaltdisneycompany.com , [accessed 26 April 2021].
[29]The Walt Disney Company, 'Diversity and Inclusion: Our Commitment', *The Walt Disney Company*, [online] https://thewaltdisneycompany.com/diversity-inclusion/, [accessed 26 April 2021].

like many other wicked figures in other genres, but he is evil in a more subtle manner. Janet Wasko suggests that 'The moralism [in Disney films] is clear and overt. Good is rewarded, evil is punished'.[30] Good always triumphs evil, which is also the case in *Christopher Robin*, only in more realist terms than other genres that portray good versus evil. It is the good characters that achieve their goal in the end, reuniting Christopher with his family and making Christopher enjoy life again, leaving Mr. Winslow to be ridiculed by his father in front of all of their high standing colleagues. There are very few ambiguities as to who of the characters are good and which ones are villainous. Madelyn and the toys, the latter of whom will be discussed further in Chapter Three, are portrayed as the good characters because they are children and child-like characters. The theme of evil versus good is explored through these characters and it creates and supports the entertainment value and the unparalleled storytelling that the Walt Disney Company seeks to achieve. The tug between good and evil characters, then, juxtaposes children and adults in the film.

The theme of evil vs good also reflects Disney's view on childhood because the child-like and child characters are always portrayed as the good characters. The child characters in the film are conveyed as innocent figures that is not yet corrupted by the adult world. They therefore possess character traits that are typically associated with childhood, such as innocence, imagination and fantasy. Wasko claims that Disney's reputation is typically associated with 'the notion of fantasy and imagination'.[31] The Disney Company, itself, has written that they wish to produce stories that 'capture the imagination of generations of people around the world'. They do not say imagination as in relation to children specifically, but the company is, nevertheless, associated closely with notions of childhood. Disney productions are typically a part of every child's life, in one way or another, and therefore, 'they are intimately and strongly associated with childhood and retain a special place in people's memories of childhood', according to Wasko.[32] Being often associated with fantasy, imagination and innocence, all of which are terms typically linked with childhood, Disney's view of childhood can remind of the notion of the 'Romantic child' that is characterised by 'innocence, imagination, nature and primitivism' according to Ann Wierda Rowland. This view of the child and childhood is reflected in *Christopher Robin* through the themes that focus on the relationship between children and adults and the emphasis that is put on the process of growing

[30] Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 119.
[31] Wasko, p. 223.
[32] Wasko, p. 222.

up and coming of age, as demonstrated previously. The potential issues that growing up may bring are portrayed by the character of Christopher Robin.

The Adult Father-Narrator in *Winnie-the-Pooh*

A way that adults infiltrate children's literature is through techniques of narration. The most prominent and obvious invasion of adults in Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* is the presence of the adult narrator. The narrator that the reader meets in the beginning of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, makes his presence known immediately in the introduction and the first chapter. Told in first-person narration Christopher Robin descends the stairs with his teddy bear pleading his father (the narrator) to read him a story. Rather reluctantly the father gives in and becomes what can be called the father-narrator of the story.

> Sometimes Winnie-the-Pooh likes a game of some sort when he comes downstairs, and sometimes he likes to sit quietly in front of the fire and listen to a story. This evening –
> 'What about a story?' said Christopher Robin.
> '*What* about a story?' I said.
> 'Could you very sweetly tell Winnie-the-Pooh one?'
> 'I suppose I could,' I said. 'What sort of stories does he like?'
> 'About himself. Because he is *that* sort of Bear.'
> 'Oh, I see.'
> 'So could you very sweetly?'
> 'I'll try,' I said.
> So I tried (Milne, p. 16).

Here, the use of the first-person narration reveals a frame narrative that is separate from the story that is being told by the storyteller, Christopher Robin's father. Simultaneously, it also exposes how powerless Christopher Robin is as the child who listens to the storytelling and that has no control over the story, characters or events. During the first chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, there is a shift from this first-person narration to second-person narration. This shift signals that Christopher, the child listening to his father's tale, becomes a character in the story being told to him. In other words, the father-narrator goes from addressing his son, to implementing him as a character in the story he tells. '"Good morning, Winnie-*ther*-Pooh," said you' (21). The character of Christopher Robin that is created is not, however, the same as the father-narrator's son who is listening to the story. For Christopher, the child listening to his father's story, it is himself who becomes the character of Christopher Robin in the stories, but

he believes that because of his imagination. As the story continues, there is a shift to third person narration that signals that the storytelling enters back into the embedded story.

The father-narrator in *Winnie-the-Pooh* is a narrator of a metadiegetic narrative, which according to Gerald Prince is ‘a narrative embedded within a narrative’.[33] The adventures of the Pooh and his friends are the stories being told from the frame story in which the father tells his son these bedtime stories. In the beginning of the stories Christopher Robin frequently interferes with his father’s storytelling. For instance, Pooh needs help to capture the honey in a beehive and Pooh thinks Christopher can help him. Christopher Robin, who is listening to his father’s storytelling, interrupts: *‘“Was that me?” said Christopher Robin in an awed voice, hardly daring to believe it. “That was you.” Christopher Robin said nothing, but his eyes got larger and larger, and his face got pinker and pinker*’ (Milne, p. 21). By the use of italics it is clear that there has now been a transition from the narrative of Pooh and his friends, to ‘the frame in which the father is telling his son bedtime stories’, in Maria Nikolajeva’s words.[34] The narrative from which the father-narrator operates is not the primary focus of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, yet the metadiegetic narrative that he functions from is the pivotal element that frames his control over the embedded story.

The metadiegetic father-narrator, then, has immense control over the embedded story and how it is presented to his son. Christopher Robin, who is listening to his father’s story needs confirmation that the Christopher in the tale is in fact himself as well as a reassurance that the Christopher in the story meets his own expectations and self-image. His wish to be included in the story reveals that he is ‘relying on the father-narrator to validate his sense of self’, according to Paula Connolly.[35] This strong need for validation, too, illustrates how much control the father has over the story. ‘I didn’t hurt him when I shot him, did I?’ Christopher asks his father who reassuringly replies ‘not a bit’ (Milne, p. 31). It is clear that the father-narrator works as the wise figure of authority who is there to reassure his child and according to Paula Connolly, Christopher Robin is ‘ultimately protected – and created by – the father-storyteller of the narrative frame’.[36] Christopher, who listens to his father’s story is protected by his father’s creation of the character of Christopher Robin, who functions as a figure that meets his personal beliefs about himself. These beliefs are therefore influenced and partially controlled by the father-narrator.

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[33] Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), p. 50.
[34] Maria Nikolakeva, *Aesthetic Approaches to Children’s Literature: an Introduction* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press Inc, 2005), p. 183.
[35] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 73.
[36] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 102.

The Father-Narrator in *The House at Pooh Corner*

Although the father narrator is a lot less present in *The House at Pooh Corner* than in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, he still asserts his control. The story does not begin with the frame narrative of the father reading his son a bedtime story and the embedded narrative is not interrupted by Christopher Robin who listens to the story. The only point to which noticeably reveals him is the placement of the contradiction – a reminder that he is still there to control and manipulate the story, even though it seems as if he is less present in the book. However, he shows his presence in subtle ways of narration through listening to Christopher Robin's need for reassurance. For instance, after an attempt to 'uncounce' Tigger in the woods, Pooh, Piglet and Rabbit get lost on their way home (Milne, p. 259). Tigger eventually arrives at Kang and Roo's house where Christopher Robin also learns that Tigger has not seen the others. Christopher and Tigger go to look for them and finally they find their friends: '"Oh, there you are", said Christopher Robin carelessly, trying to pretend that he hadn't been Anxious' (269-270). Here, it is the father-narrator that dictates and reveals how the character of Christopher Robin feels. He indirectly reassures his son Christopher Robin who is listening to the story that he is a person that cares about his friends. Christopher's expectation of his own self is therefore met through the father-narrator's indirect descriptions of Christopher Robin's emotions in the embedded narrative.

The reassuring function of the father-narrator coincides with Nikolajeva's explanation that 'the adult narrator of the frame-story is there to guide the reader, provide explanations and draw conclusions'.[37] By providing explanations as to why Christopher Robin of the embedded narrative felt anxious, the father-narrator fulfils his function, according to Nikolajeva's characterisation of the narrator of the frame-story. The father-narrator eliminates the potential threat of losing friends and whilst doing so, refocuses on providing reassurance to the listening Christopher, but also to the reader who may identify with Christopher Robin. Stephen Canham argues that 'Reassurance is one of the key values of [Pooh's] world, [and it is] one of the central, operating principles of the fiction'.[38] Through the embedded narrative of Pooh's world, the father-narrator provides his son, who listens to his story, with a reassuring space. Thus, the father-narrator's reassuring function is not present through direct communication as seen in

[37] Nikolajeva, *Toward a New Aesthetic*, p. 102.
[38] Stephen Canham, 'Reassuring Readers: Winnie-the-Pooh', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 5.3 (1980), 25-27 (p. 24).

Winnie-the-Pooh, but provides reassurance through characterisation and events within the embedded narrative.

Narration in *Christopher Robin*: The Camera as Point of View

The reassuring function of the adult narrator that dominates much of Milne's *Pooh* stories disappears when the story is appropriated to the cinematic medium. The narrator in *Christopher Robin* is not an invading adult presence, as in Milne's *Pooh* stories; rather, it is the camera that functions as the narrator. Although it is not an adult presence, the camera provides point of view shots that juxtapose the world of adults and children. If, as suggested previously, Disney films are associated closely with childhood, and their imaginative approach to their productions is reflected in their dominant themes that are typically included in their films, then *Christopher Robin* can also, as a Disney production, be viewed to convey the story from a child's perspective. In some scenes in the film, the camera is used to convey a child's point of view through the character of Pooh.

As mentioned, Pooh represents both child-like qualities and adult characteristics. In the film however, his point of view is used to convey the scenes from a child's point of view. For instance, in the scene where Christopher and Pooh are at the train station on their way to Essex, Pooh wanders away from Christopher. Christopher looks frantically for him with only minutes until their train is due for departure. He eventually discovers Pooh sitting in a pram with a little boy. The camera frames Pooh and the little boy, in what John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes describe as a 'straight-on angle', but at a low position above the ground to emphasise that they are on a child's level.[39] In other words, the height of the point of view shot is from a child's height. The low hanging shot frames only the little boy and Pooh surrounded by adult legs which increases the gap between child and adult even further. As soon as Christopher finds him, the camera moves back to a shot from adult height. Christopher takes a hold of Pooh in a way that makes him hang upside down in Christopher's arms. The camera turns upside down to mimic Pooh's point of view and the following shot, again, displays countless adult legs running around. The use of the camera as first-person narration is frequent in films, and allows the spectators to see what the character sees. If the filmmakers try to imitate a characters' point of view by replicating their "eyes". As Bill Nichols points out, 'the camera's perspective

[39] John M. Desmond and Peter Hawkes, *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006), p. 27-28.

matches the character's. By getting us to share a character's visual perspective, such shots frequently increase our emotional identification with the character'.[40] The shot reinforces a sense of separation between children and adults. Thus, by providing the spectator with Pooh's point of view through the use of first-person camera shots, the juxtaposition between adults and children is strengthened.

As suggested, the height of the point of view shots works not only to visually separate children from adults, but it also serves to force the audience to identify with Pooh's child-like perspective. In this relation, Sarah Hatchuel suggests that 'the viewers identify with the camera's gaze'.[41] Therefore, by placing the camera on the height of a child, it forces the audience to identify with Pooh's child-like perspective. Similarly, Nichols explains that 'Filmmakers often make considerable use of the identificatory possibilities of cinema to draw the viewer into the world of the characters and into the filmmaker's or a character's perspective on this world'.[42] The identificatory possibilities of cinema Nichols refers to, applies to the use of camera angles and heights. The camera height, then, is used to draw the audience into the world of the story through Pooh's perspective.

The camera is also used to juxtapose adult and child characters and to convey points of view in the film without a first-person camera angle. If the camera is the narrator and is the point of view from which the story is told, the viewer becomes a pseudo third-person narrator. This point of view is conveyed by placing the camera over a character's shoulder whilst showing parts of their upper body in the frame. For instance, in the scene in Christopher's house when Pooh eats a plate of honey from on top of the kitchen table, Christopher asks Pooh how he recognised him and this is what the scene conveys: The unbreakable bond between Christopher and Pooh. The height of the camera mirrors Pooh's height as a small stuffed toy sitting on top of a table, and the scene can thus be viewed to convey Pooh's perspective. Additionally, The scene is considered as a close-up where only the head and shoulders, or less, are shown in great detail. It illustrates the strong emotions in the scene and it may emotionally influence the viewer. Bluestone advocates for 'the power of the close-up to convey emotion'.[43] It aids the emotional impact the scene has on the viewers. Pooh's emotional connection with and devotion to Christopher is made clear through the close-up because it emphasises the change Christopher has gone through from a child to an adult. The interchanging shots from

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[40] Bill Nichols, *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), p. 42.
[41] Sarah Hatchuel, *Shakespeare, From Stage to Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 108.
[42] Nichols, p. 68.
[43] George Bluestone, *Novels Into Film* (Berkley: California University Press, 1957), p. 26.

over Christopher and Pooh's shoulders conveys the scene from a third-person perspective whilst also communicating the emotion that is present. As Hatchuel suggests, 'the viewers identify with the camera's gaze'.[44] Pooh's perspective, as a child-like figure, is presented through the height of the camera and thus separates Pooh's world from Christopher's adult world. Pooh is juxtaposed with Christopher and along with the emotional significance of the scene, a complex juxtaposition between child and adult perspectives is created.

Conclusion: Adulthood and Adults are Exposed

In this discussion of the role of the adult in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *The House at Pooh Corner* and *Christopher Robin*, it has been demonstrated the multiple ways to read and expose adult characters, adulthood and adult structures in these texts. The use of the camera to promote points of view does not present the audience with the same narrator intimacy as in the book *Winnie-the-Pooh,* but it does aid the polarisation of adults and children, especially through the height of the camera where Pooh's child's perspective is emphasised. Adult figures and structures pervade *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* through the narrative frame. This is the element with the most explicit adult presence, namely that of the father-narrator. The depictions of child characters as good and adult characters as bad in *Christopher Robin* reflect themes and values that are typically associated with the Walt Disney Company. Therefore, they expose another way in which adults infiltrate children's entertainment and how they are represented in the film. Adulthood is revealed in the film through its opposition to childhood. The themes of growing up, coming of age and the loss of childhood are explicitly demonstrated in the first act of the film and they are challenged when Pooh and the rest of the forest inhabitants appear in Christopher's adult life. Christopher's internal struggle has exposed yet another way that the notions of childhood and adulthood come into conflict when childhood is presented as the innocent, free and imaginative phase of life as opposed to adulthood, where responsibilities and obligations are quick to consume Christopher's mind. Christopher is in the *Pooh* stories a child, but the character demonstrates adult-like qualities that are particularly explicit in comparison with Pooh's child-like qualities. But even Pooh possesses adult-like characteristics that are apparent both in the books and in the film. Based on the use of address both in Milne's books and in Forster's film, adults are also apparent readers and audiences of children's literature and film. To simultaneously address a child *and* an adult audience has

[44] Hatchuel, p. 108.

suggested the possibility that children's literature and film do not exclude readers and spectators of other ages. Rather, it implies that authors of children's literature and producers of children's entertainment appeal to two audiences, that of children *and* adults. As established, the roles of the adult in the *Pooh* stories and in *Christopher Robin* are many, and their roles in these texts have been exposed as narrators, characters, readers, spectators, and they are represented through themes that juxtapose and problematise notions of childhood and adulthood.

Chapter Three: The Meaning of Toys and Toy Characters

Children's literature typically features toys and animals in some form or other. As characters of children's stories they play important roles in interactions with other toy characters, but most importantly, with human characters that are most often children. Historically, toys originate from objects that were used in rituals and ceremonial practices. They developed culturally and societally into educational tools, collectable items, therapeutic instruments, mercantile models, and, last but not least, they were, and still are, used in play. Toys have been made from various materials that have been available, such as wood, metal and plastic. When coloured fabrics became available, rag dolls were created which later developed into what we today call stuffed animals. In children's literature and film, toys often become anthropomorphised, which in James Derby's words mean that they are 'inanimate objects' that have been given 'life or life-like characteristics'.[1] Because stuffed animals are items designed to be perceived as animals, the use of anthropomorphism is more subtle. It is widely believed that anthropomorphic animals and toys are suitable characters in children's literature because of the commonly held view of children as 'imaginative and primitive', according to Tess Cosslett.[2] They are seen as primitive because they are assumed to have a closer connection to the natural world than, for example, adults.

Milne's *Pooh* stories are built on, and largely consist of, anthropomorphised stuffed animal toys. They are all important characters in the stories and as toys, and each of them plays a particular role in Christopher Robin's life. This chapter will address the several functions that the toys fulfil in *Winnie-the-Pooh, The House at Pooh Corner* and *Christopher Robin*. Firstly, there will be a discussion of the toy characters as individual characters of the *Pooh* stories and *Christopher Robin*. The next section will address how they, as toy characters, collectively represent individual characteristics of Christopher Robin as a character, but also Christopher Robin as a 'general child', in Milne's books. The second section will consider how Pooh, as a toy character, represents the functions of a transitional object for Christopher Robin of the frame story. The third and last section will explore how the stuffed toys in *Christopher Robin*, particularly Pooh, have different functions than in the *Pooh* stories – they are there to support Christopher through the transitions in his life.

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[1] James Derby, 'Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature or "Mom, my Doll's Talking Again"', *Elementary English*, 47.2 (1970), 190-192 (p, 190).

[2] Tess Cosslett, *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786-1914* (Hampshire: Ashgate publishing limited 2006), p. 1.

Theories of Toys

Zoe Jaques suggests that 'toys trouble the boundaries of being […] the toy becomes imbued with "life" via the imagination [and they] are frequently […] imagined as possessing a different kind of life, in which they are "real" beings'.[3] For Roland Barthes, the difficulty of toys comes down to their purpose, which he believes to be to socialise children and prefigure the functions of the adult world. He insists that 'toys always mean something' in all contexts, both in play and in literature.[4]

In many instances, children attribute traits to toys that are generally considered to be human traits. By doing so, 'the child gives imaginative agency to the stuffed' toy, according to Jaques.[5] The child and its toys therefore become connected through what Donna Haraway calls 'significant otherness' – both the toy and the child relate to each other in being the 'other'.[6] The child recognises itself as an independent agent separate from the toy, but also as someone who is connected to the surrounding world through it. The child identifies with the toy as an 'other' whilst simultaneously seeing itself as part of something bigger than itself. In 'The Function of Toys in Relation to Child Development', Ethel Kawin explains how 'play materials serve specific functions in child development' – it gives them an object to project their emotions onto, they work as ultimate playmates, places to go for comfort and consolation without risking judgement and scolding.[7] Brian Sutton-Smith argues that soft toys developed as a consolation due to loneliness, because the toy was seen as a way to occupy the child's time – a way for the child to play independently in its room without having the need to involve the parents. The toy as a gift brings solitariness, which can develop into loneliness. He establishes the soft toy as a 'crutch' for this loneliness.[8] As a result of this loneliness, the child develops imaginary relationships with the toys.

The crutch in which Sutton-Smith refers to, bears similarities to what Donald Winnicott calls the *transitional object*. Winnicott defines the *transitional object* as an item that the child uses as a soother. Winnicott explains how an infant's first-in-mouth pattern eventually leads to

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[3] Zoe Jaques, *Children's Literature and the Posthuman: Animal, Environment, Cyborg* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 213.
[4] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Granada Publishing, 1972), p. 53.
[5] Jaques, p. 210.
[6] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), p. 16.
[7] Ethel Kawin, 'The Function of Toys in Relation to Child Development', *Childhood Education*, 11.3 (1934), 122-132, (p. 122).
[8] Brian Sutton-Smith, *Toys as Culture* (New York: Gardner Press: 1986), p. 47.

an attachment to, often, a soft toy. It is the first object after the mother's breast to which an infant becomes attached, and it soothes the child when it experiences stress or anxiety. 'It is not the object of course, that is transitional. The object represents the infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate'.[9] The object is used by the infant in this transition of becoming more aware of the outside world and the child's capacity to comprehend the item as 'not me' is the first step towards its recognition of the world as not part of itself. The sedative effect of the transitional object speaks to its importance in the child's life and the strong emotional relationship between the child and the object, especially when the mother is not there to provide sufficient soothing.

Adult-Like and Child-Like Toy Characters and Their Relationship with Christopher Robin

Continuing the thematic issue addressed in Chapter Two, the toy characters in the *Pooh* stories, can be viewed to have clear characteristics that represent child-like and adult-like traits. These characteristics are shown through their behaviours and mannerisms, which in Peter Hunt's view causes 'an interesting tension' between these kinds of opposing characters.[10] This tension may not be evident for all readers, but mature and experienced readers may notice that it is Owl, Rabbit, Eeyore and Kenga who possess adult-like characteristics, and Pooh, Piglet, Tigger and Roo that possess child-like traits. Rabbit can be viewed as adult-like due to his orderliness and the fact that he does not make time for play or silliness; Eeyore because he displays a pessimistic attitude towards everyone and everything; Owl with his pretentiousness and false intellect; and Kenga due to her strong maternal concerns that defines her relationship with the other forest inhabitants. Kenga is also the only female in the Hundred Acre Wood, which sets her apart from other characters due to the seemingly significant representation of family values through her family ties with Roo.

Even though the characters can be divided into an adult-like/child-like categorisation, they are all inferior to the character of Christopher Robin. In the fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood Christopher Robin is not in rivalry with any of his toy companions, no matter their characteristics. As established in the previous chapter, Christopher Robin is the ruler of the

[9] Donald Woods Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock publications, 1964), p. 14-15.
[10] Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (London, Blackwell Publishing, 200), p. 101.

land. Interestingly, Milne reverses the assumed parental authority and makes Christopher, the young child, appear to have the power of authority in the forest. As Alison Lurie claims, 'He is the responsible adult, while those around him are merely animals or his old toys'.[11] The toys are reduced to be merely toy companions that are considered to be subordinate to Christopher Robin. This is mirrored in the illustrations, where Christopher Robin towers over his toy companions, making body size a clear indicator of power, thus putting adult/child (toys representing children and adults) proportions in opposing positions. The toys are very different characters in the stories, but they all accept their differences. Each of them represents one personality trait, not because that is all that they are, but because that is the part of their personality that is portrayed as most dominant in the stories.

Piglet and the Power of Body Size

The character of Piglet is often seen in the light of his dominant trait of being timid and small. He is nervous and scared that things will go wrong and that something bad will happen either to him or to his friends. Concerned about his small size, he attempts to mask his fear as to not appear cowardly. Piglet's main concern is his small size and he believes that because he is such a small animal that he will not be useful for anything. For example, Piglet fears Kenga and Roo when they first arrive in the forest because they are strangers that are larger than him. Rabbit recruits Pooh and Piglet to help him to spook Kenga and Roo to leave the forest. Rabbit expects Piglet to execute the plan that he made, but Piglet is afraid: 'It is hard to be brave…when you're only a Very Small Animal', Piglet says (Milne, p. 95). Rabbit reassures Piglet: 'it is because you are a very small animal that you will be Useful in the adventure before us' (95). Here, Rabbit boosts Piglet's confidence whilst simultaneously accepting Piglet for who he is – a small animal. Piglet is so excited about 'the idea of being Useful that he [forgets] to be frightened' (95). However, towards the end of the *Pooh* stories, Piglet becomes braver and with the encouragement of his friends when Owl's house is torn down by the wind, he realises that his small size becomes an advantage.

In *Christopher Robin*, Piglet is presented as a less developed character. The film focuses on conveying Piglet's timidity and does not include his usefulness as portrayed towards the endings of Milne's books. For example, Piglet's fear of being a helpless small animal

[11] Alison Lurie, *Don't Tell The Grown Ups: the Subversive Power of Children's Literature* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998), p. 145.

persists through the scene where he first meets adult Christopher. He does not recognise Christopher Robin and thinks that he is a Heffalump: 'His legs are so long', Piglet says stricken by terror (00:56:27). This scene exemplifies how Piglet does not develop as a character during the film and therefore, he may be assumed to be a static one-dimensional character.

The interaction between Piglet and Christopher Robin also highlights the thematic issue of the power of size that frequently occurs in the film and the *Pooh* books. The theme of size can be closely linked with the child/adult dichotomy that is presented throughout *Christopher Robin* and that has been transferred from Milne's stories. Lurie explains how 'the universal appeal of the Pooh books is due to the pleasure any child must feel in imagining himself or herself larger, wiser, and more powerful than the surrounding adults'.[12] In the books, Christopher is significantly larger than his toy companions. In addition, the fact that there are no human adults of significantly larger size present, can suggest that the dynamic between Christopher Robin and his smaller toys supports the development of his ego. The adult-like characters look up to Christopher Robin, who is a child (but who also represents an adult figure), and it makes Christopher appear more powerful, and thus it supports Christopher's ego. In *Christopher Robin*, Christopher is the size of a fully grown adult, which highlights the theme of size even more than in the *Pooh* stories because the physical distance between Christopher and the toys becomes larger. Lois Kuznets explores the theory that children 'surely sense the politics of size even more than adults do'.[13] If this is the case, it could be argued that since Christopher Robin is much larger in the film than he is in the books, and because he is indeed, an adult, the power of size is naturally more emphasised in the film. In the scene with Christopher and Piglet, Christopher knows that he is not a Heffalump and size is not a pivotal issue in his life. But for Piglet, it is clear that he feels threatened by Christopher's size and he believes that because whoever it is that is following him has long legs, he will not manage to outrun him. Piglet appears to be inferior because of his size. Now that Christopher Robin is grown up he looks even bigger in comparison to little Piglet, which emphasises Piglet's supposed fragility and inferiority due to his size. Therefore, in this case, toy characters may feel smaller and more powerless than bigger characters.

However, there is one scene in the film that depicts Piglet as a developing character similar to that of Milne's Piglet. When Tigger, Eeyore and Pooh decide to go to London to give Christopher back his important papers, Piglet is hesitant to go. His body language reveals his

[12] Lurie, *Don't Tell*, p. 145.
[13] Lois Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive: Narrative of Animation, Metamorphosis and Development* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 145.

nervousness – his back is hunched forwards and he holds is hands close to his chest. With the encouragement from Pooh, Piglet agrees to overcome his fear of the unknown and go with them to London. 'You need me?' he asks Pooh, desperately wanting to feel helpful and needed (01:10:59). Piglet thus attempts to overcome his self-image as being defined only by his small statue and timidity.

Rabbit, Eeyore, Tigger, Kenga, Roo and Owl as Characters

Another small inhabitant of the Hundred Acre Wood is Rabbit, whose body size is not a concern. Although Rabbit was an invented character and not based on an actual stuffed toy, he will be considered equally important as the other characters because he is still significant for the stories.[14] Rabbit's most dominant trait is his obsession with control and order. In *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, Rabbit's obsessions place him in the category of adult-like characters. According to Connolly, Rabbit is 'a master at organization' and she explains that 'to maintain such orderliness and authority, [Rabbit] sets up a clear hierarchy, aligning himself with important characters, speaking for Christopher Robin, and distancing himself from others'.[15] Rabbit's desire for order and structure increases his feeling of self-importance. For instance, Rabbit believes that Kanga and Roo's arrival disrupts the order of the forest that he strives to sustain and protect. Rabbit is in Peter Hunt's words, 'against change' because he views them as intruders.[16] Another interruption of Rabbit's order of the forest is his Tigger, his opposite. He is a bundle of energy and is by Connolly described as 'a child figure', that brings 'childlike energy' to the story.[17] Tigger's lack of orderliness, in addition to his bouncing, annoys Rabbit. Rabbit believes that he is of a higher position in their community than Tigger is because he values orderliness and control; all traits of which Tigger fails to live up to. Just like Kenga and Roo, Tigger is a threat to Rabbit's control of and order in the forest. It is also Rabbit, who, with his desire for control, is the most eager to uncover the whereabouts of Christopher's in *The House at Pooh Corner.* Rabbit needs to be in control of the locations of everyone and everything in the forest, and he is obsessed with any threats that can challenge

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[14] Christopher Milne, *The Enchanted Places* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974).
[15] Paula T. Connolly, *Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia*. (New York: Twayne's Masterwork Studies, 1995), p. 85.
[16] Peter Hunt, 'Winnie the pooh and Domestic fantasy', in *Stories and Society: Children's Literature in in its Social Context*, ed. by Dennis Butts (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1992), 112-124 (p. 119-120).
[17] Connolly, *Arcadia*, p. 88.

his desire for orderliness. It is important for Rabbit that the structure of the forest community is stable and in order.

The same traces of orderliness and self-importance are found in Forster's Rabbit character. For instance, when Rabbit and his friends in the forest realise that the creature they think is a Heffalump is actually Christopher Robin, who informs them that he lost Pooh on the way, Rabbit immediately suggests that they 'concentrate, [and] work together', attempting to claim the position of authority (01:00:38). What sets Rabbit and Owl apart from Kenga in the film is the fact that they are the only two characters that are depicted as actual animals and not toys. As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, Computer Generated animation (CGI) is a useful 3D tool that can make animated characters more realistic. The visual reality presented in films is according to Lev Manovich, a 'simulated reality' that is 'related to the existing world'.[18] In footage of the creation of *Christopher Robin*, it is revealed that they used toy models as 'optically-based representations' of the animals and toy characters.[19] This further aids the visual representation of realistic animated characters. CGI tools can, therefore, differentiate in details between real animal characters and stuffed animal characters. For instance, Owl has actual feathers and Rabbit's fur looks like it is made out of real rabbit hair. The other characters have an exterior that is visibly made of fabric and that one would expect to see on a stuffed animal. This separation of animals versus stuffed animals makes their appearance more realistic.

Another prominent inhabitant of the Hundred Acre Wood is Eeyore. He is depicted as the least child-like character because of his lack of energy and pessimistic view about the world and himself. Barbara Wall states that 'Eeyore is in fact the character who presents the most firmly sustained adult viewpoint', and that Eeyore's use of irony and sarcasm will keep adults interested.[20] This is not to say that adults are pessimists, but rather, that they typically have a more realistic view of the world than children do. In both Milne's stories and Forster's film, Eeyore is depicted as a sceptic and a pessimist. He believes that nobody likes him or cares enough to help him and his sceptic attitude towards the intensions of others is borderline cynical. Hunt goes as far as to characterise him as 'the depressive egocentric' adult of the group.[21] Even though he lives an isolated life, Eeyore still desires to be sociable and included

[18] Lev Manovich, '"Reality" Effects in Computer Animation', in *A Reader in Animation*, ed. by Jayne Pilling (Sydney: John Libbey & Compnay Pty Ltd, 1997), p. 6.
[19] Manovich, p. 11.
[20] Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1991), p. 185.
[21] Peter Hunt, *Domestic Fantasy*, p. 118.

in community activities. Eeyore is very concerned about how others treat him, and as a result, he reacts with sarcasm when he feels that he is not included by the others.

Eeyore is the total opposite of characters such as Tigger and Roo, who both represent children. Tigger is enthusiastically energetic and represents childlike egocentrism which is exposed when he rules his experiences as the same for all Tiggers. Roo is, in Hunts words 'a self-aware five-year-old'.[22] He is seen as the baby of the group who is constantly restrained by Kenga, the overprotective mother. One would expect, when the toy characters are so different, in addition to being divided into categories such as child-like and adult-like, that there would be some kind of clash or disagreement between them in the stories, but they all live in harmony.

The Toy Characters as the Collective Character of Christopher Robin

Another way to view these toy characters is not as individual characters, but rather as individual representations of different parts of Christopher Robin's psyche. They each represent one part of what Maria Nikolajeva calls the 'collective character' or 'collective protagonist', which, in this case, is the character of Christopher Robin.[23] She further states that 'Even viewing [Christopher Robin] as a passive narratee, we have reason to suspect that the adult narrator, the father, invents the characters to suit the narratee's psychological needs'.[24] Her explanations of the collective character, then, are not in relation to Christopher Robin, the character of the embedded narrative nor Christopher Robin, Milne's real son. Rather, it concerns Christopher Robin of the frame story (the child who is listening to his father's story). The father narrator, then, creates the toy characters with individual traits that he has chosen so that they will fit Christopher's psychological needs. Here, Christopher Robin can also be viewed to represent a 'general child'. Pooh, for instance, is Christopher's alter ego, an alternate persona, free from parental control and he represents the imaginative part of a child. Piglet illustrates the primal fears of the child and when he conquers his anxieties, he becomes empowered. The sceptical and pessimistic part of Christopher Robin is Eeyore, who not only wants to be included, but also desires to be the centre of attention. Tigger and Roo reflect the most childish parts of the child: Tigger through his innocent energetic enthusiasm, and Roo, through his desperate

[22] Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature*, p. 101.
[23] Maria Nikolajeva, *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003), p. 67.
[24] Nikolajeva, *Rhetoric of Character*, p. 82.

longing for freedom away from his mother. Rabbit embodies the rational and sensible, yet stubborn, part of the child, who fears change and who thrives with routine and continuity. Owl's concealment of is poor and faulty intellect reflects 'the child's hidden shame', according to Nikolajeva.[25] He embodies the part of the child, and the part of Christopher Robin, that feels ashamed by their own insufficient literacy. In this way, the toy characters are 'projections of the child' in Nikolajeva's words.[26] They represent various traits of the individual character of Christopher Robin.

The toy characters become points of identification for child readers and Christopher Robin as the child of the frame story. The reader and/or listener is able to identify with either one or more characters. Nikolajeva's explanation of the 'identification fallacy' suggests that children 'can identify with the cowardly Piglet in *Winnie-the-Pooh* because they recognize traits they possess themselves'.[27] She simultaneously states that 'anthropomorphic animals and animated toys in symbiosis with a human child have excellent premises for undermining identification. In the company of toys and animals, the child can feel strong, clever, and protective'.[28] Christopher Robin, who listens to his father's stories, may therefore identify with the toy characters whilst simultaneously feel empowered by their company.

In *Christopher Robin*, on the other hand, the toy characters fulfil a different function than the collective character: they become more or less separate from Christopher Robin as character because he is an adult now, which means that they do not have the same value and importance in his life. They are not representations of his psyche like in the *Pooh* stories. Instead, they work as nostalgic reminders that indirectly draws him back to his childhood memories and awakens the child in him.

***Christopher Robin*: The Toys Come Alive**

Both in the books and the film, the toys linger between the animate and the inanimate. In the storybooks the story is limited to that of the nursery, in the home of the frame of the story. As Kuznets puts it, 'the frames set limits on the toy's coming alive'.[29] The toys come alive in the story, and are depicted as inanimate in the frame story. The toys are, however, visibly more

[25] Nikolajeva, *Rhetoric of character*, p. 82.
[26] Nikolajeva, *Rhetoric of Character*, p. 83.
[27] Maria Nikolajeva, 'Identification Fallacy: Perspective and Subjectivity in Children's Literature', in *Telling Children's Stories: Narrative Theory and Children's Literature*, ed. by Michael Cadden (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 187-208 (p. 193).
[28] Nikolajeva, *Identification Fallacy*, p. 197.
[29] Kuznets, p. 50.

animate in *Christopher Robin*. The context changes and the toys come alive in other spaces, which means that their coming to life is not limited by walls in a house or the imagination. The toys are depicted as sentient beings that can walk and talk, just like humans. The toys are not toy characters anymore, they are actual stuffed animal toys that have come alive. Simultaneously as he presents the toys as stuffed animals that have come alive, Forster mocks the idea that they are live beings. For example, when Christopher first encounters Pooh in the park outside his house, Christopher believes that Pooh is merely an hallucination because he has igone mad due to the stress at his work. He lightly touches Pooh to confirm that he really is there, which also exposed Pooh's status as a toy – a toy that lingers between animate and inanimate. An example of Pooh's life-like presence can be found in the scene where Christopher and Pooh are on their way to the train station and Pooh decides to greet a man. The man is so startled by the sight of a talking teddy bear that he walks into a pole. Christopher tells Pooh that he cannot say hello to people because they cannot realise that he moves or talks. '[He is] different, and people don't like things that are different' (00:35:23). Christopher urges Pooh to play nap time because he tries to hide Pooh from everyone around him: his neighbours, his family, and other Londoners. In these scenes where there are possible interactions between Pooh and people unaware of his animate state, Pooh needs to pretend to be inanimate so that the surrounding world will not think that Christopher has gone mad. By pretending to be inanimate Pooh embodies his assumed function to the 'real' world – namely, that of the inanimate stuffed animal toy. However, the focus on Pooh and the other toys as live beings suggests that they are, indeed, treated as animate toys.

The blurring of lines between live-action and animation is very subtle because of technological equipment that is better suited to melt the distance between live-action characters and animated characters. Even though Forster exposes Pooh and the other toy characters as toys, there is a suspension of disbelief he exploits on behalf of the character Christopher Robin and the spectators that says to accept it for the sake of enjoyment. Therefore, as explained previously, due to the use of 3D tools, the toy characters can be perceived as more real because it closes the gap between real life characters and animate figures that are ordinarily inanimate.

Winnie-the-Pooh as a Transitional Object

It can be argued that the toy characters can represent functions of real stuffed animal toys. Although Winnicott's term *transitional object* mainly refers to an infant's relationship with a 'not-me' possession in the stage between thumb in mouth and the teddy bear, his term can also

be used productively in an analysis of Milne's books about Pooh. It is particularly relevant to the relationship between Pooh and Christopher Robin in the literary texts. Even though Christopher also loves his other stuffed-animal companions, they are not transitional objects because, as Winnicott's theory clarifies, the transitional object is only one item and it is usually the one that the child has the closest attachment to. In Christopher Robin's case this is, undeniably, Pooh. Christopher Robin's devotion to Pooh is clear by the sheer affection he shows him in the stories. Even the Christopher Robin of the frame story is concerned about the character of Pooh because he believes that the teddy bear he is holding onto whilst listening to his father's storytelling, is in fact the Winnie-the-Pooh in the story: 'I didn't hurt him when I shot him, did I?', Christopher Robin asks his father (31). Christopher's anxiousness reveals his close attachment to his stuffed bear that he believes to be the Pooh character of the stories. Furthermore, Tanya Jones argues that 'the transitional object, for all intents and purposes, is a hero to his or her child'.[30] It is a companion to the child and it is cuddled with all the affection and love the child has to give. The close affectionate connection Christopher expresses towards Pooh, makes Pooh the hero of Christopher's life and as a favourite, he, therefore, becomes the special transitional object.

The transitional objects Winnicott refers to are often attributed life by their child owners. In their 2015 study 'Children Attribute Mental Lives to Toys When They Are Emotionally Attached to Them', Nathalia Gjersoe, Emily Hall and Bruce Hood assert that based on their research, they could see no evidence that children attribute mental lives and states to their toys. What they did found, however, was that 'children do exhibit this tendency with toys that are also their attachment objects'.[31] In *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Christopher Robin of the frame story treats his teddy bear as if he is a sentient object and by doing so 'the toy becomes imbued with "life" via the imagination' in Jaques' words.[32] Additionally, 'toys are frequently imagined as possessing a different kind of life, in which they are "real" beings'.[33] Because Pooh is Christopher's attachment object, he is attributed, by Christopher, a real (but imaginary) life.

In the *Pooh* books, the character of Winnie-the-Pooh represents the function of a transitional object. The Christopher Robin of the embedded story is, as addressed in Chapter

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[30] Tanya Jones, *Toy Stories: The Toy as Hero in Literature, Comics and Film* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2017), p. 2

[31] Nathalia L. Gjersoe , Emily L. Hall, Bruce Hood, 'Children Attribute Mental Lives to Toys When They Are Emotionally Attached to Them', *Cognitive Development*, 34 (28-38), p. 28.

[32] Jaques, p. 213.

[33] Jaques, p. 213.

Two, less present in *The House at Pooh Corner*. Although it is not stated, it is evident throughout the book that he is going off to boarding school to become educated. Pooh is there to help with the transition. It is calming for Christopher to know that he can always rely on Pooh if he needs soothing. The last sentence of the book actively demonstrates Pooh as a soothing figure because Milne immortalises him and gives Christopher Robin, and the reader, the impression that Pooh will 'always be playing' with Christopher, 'no matter where they go, and whatever happens to them on the way' (Milne, p. 316). Pooh will still be the same whilst Christopher grows up. Winnicott asserts that the transitional object 'must never change, unless changed by the infant'.[34] The immortalisation of Pooh, then, establishes his function as a transitional object.

In *Christopher Robin*, Christopher needs Pooh to make a transition in his life. But Pooh is not a transitional object in the traditional sense like seen in the *Pooh* stories. He is not a transitional object in the film because Christopher does not have the same emotional attachment to him as when he was a boy. This is visualised by the prologue sequence in the beginning of the film. It shows Christopher at boarding school, which is contrasted with the idyllic opening scenes set in the Hundred Acre Wood (that represents his childhood). The transition from being a little child free to do as he pleases, to a life in boarding school, is presented as a big change for Christopher. Now that he has left Pooh behind in the Hundred Acre Wood he does not get to utilise his stuffed animal to soothe himself through this transition. Christopher is forced to grow up without the soothing function of his teddy bear. Already, there is a separation of Christopher and Pooh, but as the story progresses, it is clear that their attachment to each other is never broken, but just forgotten over time. Roger Sale suggests that, 'Milne's view of schoolboy and adult life [is] limited, empty, formalistic', which is in Forster's film an added subplot and extended theme.[35] The societal pressures of growing up, fighting in the World War, working endless hours to provide for his family are just some of the implications of becoming an adult. Through this thematic idea, Pooh is separated from Christopher. To regain what was prior to his school years, Christopher needs Pooh to remind him of his childhood. Pooh becomes a part of the bigger developmental process that takes place in Christopher's adult life.

Adult Christopher, therefore, needs help from Pooh, not with transitions of coming of age, but rather, with the transition from obligation to freedom. The term *transitional*

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[34] Winnicott, p. 4.

[35] Roger Sale, 'Child Reading and Man Reading: Oz, Babar and Pooh', *Children's Literature*, 1 (1972), 162-172 (p. 169).

phenomena was used by Winnicott to chart the development of the self, in itself and its in relation to the outer world. The 'transition' implies a transition from one kind of experience to another. The phenomenon occurs at times of anxiety, which in the film is experienced by Christopher as an increasing amount of pressure at his work and tension in the family home, both of which influence each other. They occur in Christopher's attempt to balance his work and personal life, and in his process of trying to find the man he wants to be. He transitions from the man his adult life has turned him into, to the person he once was – a happier more joyful man who adores to spend time with his family and who enjoys imaginative play. He still manages to save the company, so the moral value of his transition becomes that one can succeed in all aspects of life simultaneously, as long as a balance is achieved. Christopher would not have developed if it was not for the reappearing presence of Pooh in his life.

Christopher's Search for the Self: the Toys as Influence

As established, Christopher's inner struggle is to prioritise between work and family. The discovery of his true self occurs through his interactions and play with the stuffed animal toys. Winnicott states that 'it is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self'.[36] Christopher has not been able to be his true self due to the pressures of his workplace and his continuously feeling like he disappoints his wife and daughter. When he plays the part of the Heffalump-killer to prove to Tigger, Owl, Rabbit, Kanga and Roo that he is in fact Christopher Robin and not a Heffalump, he allows himself to be his true happier self, much like himself as a child. This is coincidentally the first scene in the film in which Christopher genuinely smiles of joy. Whilst Christopher tricks everyone with his act, Eeyore comes to the realisation that it is indeed the Christopher Robin they all know and love: 'Christopher Robin, it's you, playing again' (00:59:02). This is not to imply that Christopher's true self is his identity as a child, but rather, that he can access some of the experiences and joys of his childhood through play. To take Winnicott's assertion into account, Christopher seems to be on the right path in discovering his self by using his entire personality, including the inner child of the self that is able to play imaginatively – a part of his self that has been hidden for quite some time. Essentially it was Pooh who brought Christopher Robin back there, simply by being Pooh. The reunification with his old toy friends in the forest clearly

[36] Winnicott, p, 54.

influences him, because on his way back to London he begins to realise that his job is not the most important thing in life. He begins to play Pooh's 'say what you see' game on the train, in which he is immediately embarrassed because a man in the same carriage looks oddly at him for not behaving as one may expect an adult man to. A sincere look of tranquillity and innocence comes upon Christopher's face and he begins the game again, this time more confidently. This scene implies that there is a small change occurring in Christopher's mind and that he is slowly developing into his more true self.

Conclusion: The Many Functions and Representations of the Toys

Christopher Robin demonstrates Winnicott's transitional phenomena at other stages of life than those that occur in transitions in childhood. Christopher finds his true self through interactions with his old toy friends. It is Pooh's deep emotional connection to Christopher that is rekindled, not his function as his transitional object. In *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, on the other hand, Pooh represents the functions of a transitional object because he soothes Christopher, the character of the embedded story, as he leaves the Hundred Acre Wood, whilst also reassuring Christopher Robin of the frame story with his support. From the *Pooh* stories to *Christopher Robin*, Winnie-the-Pooh is transformed from being Christopher's closest companion in childhood – the one who soothes him in times of anxiety or stress – to being a character of guidance to the discovery of his true self. In the film, Pooh is not presented as that cuddly item that the child cannot part with because of their emotional attachment. He is, rather, presented as an emotional support figure that rekindles his connection with Christopher Robin whilst also helping him to rediscover the joys of life. The toys are in Forster's film presented as companions that bring creativity and joy to the story as well as enriching Christopher's adult life. As Kuznet argues, 'stuffed toys representing animals are the forces of good'.[37] Even though it emphasises that the characters are in fact toys, the film does not depict them as merely toys – they are given life on the same level as the human characters. The toys are forced into the roles of animate anthropomorphic stuffed animals that are assigned an equated amount of life as human beings.

The characters have also been viewed is as individual parts of Christopher Robin, the character of the frame story, who also, in this case, can represent a general child. Therefore,

[37] Kuznets, p. 158.

they all serve different functions in the stories. Even though it is Pooh that is, undoubtedly, the character that is favoured, the other stuffed toys are not to be either neglected or deemed as less important in the stories. In the books, they are all given more or less equal attention in the story, yet it is Pooh who appears the most often overall. The toys have proven to be significant characters in Milne's stories and Forster's film, and it has been illustrated that they assume various different roles and are represented in a multitude of ways.

Chapter Four: The Importance of Genre, Mode and Setting

Winnie-the-Pooh, *The House at Pooh Corner* and *Christopher Robin* are all stories that combine elements from different genres and modes. Genres and generic components also support the claim of complexity within these works and they do not exclusively belong to one genre. For even though they are works of children's literature and film, it will be wrong to categorise them through a simplistic understanding of children's literature and film. The interaction between different generic elements demonstrates that the works are more complex than first perceived. Tzvetan Todorov explains that genre is 'a principle operative in a number of texts, rather than what is specific about each of them'.[1] The *Pooh* stories and *Christopher Robin* all have, for example, elements of fantasy in common, such as the secondary world and 'anthropomorphic animals'.[2] This chapter will challenge the assumptions that children's literature is a genre of itself and that it therefore does not adhere to any other genres that adult literature is defined by; and, that children's literature does not include tropes and elements of genres that are analysed in other types of literature. The connection between children's literature and generic analysis will be established early in this discussion. Further, the chapter will consider the generic components of Milne's stories and Forster's film. The main generic focus of the analysis is fantasy, but traits from genres like domestic fantasy, adventure, the 'family' film, and the mode of magical realism will also be considered. In the exploration of fantasy elements, the secondary world of the Hundred Acre Wood will be emphasised through the importance of setting. The portal-quest type of fantasy story will be addressed in relation to *Christopher Robin,* where Christopher's inner journey is central. In conveying the fantasy worlds in both Milne's *Pooh* stories and in Forster's film, setting is of significant importance.

Children's Literature and Genre

Children's literature in itself is by many widely assumed to be one genre. This assumption shows the inherent ideology that accepts adults and children as innately different and that literature is targeted accordingly. However, a closer look reveals subtle generic elements in texts written for children – generic elements that may be dismissed due to the assumption that

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[1] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Itchita: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 3.

[2] Maria Nikolajeva, 'The Development of Children's Fantasy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature,* ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 50-61 (p. 55).

children's literature does not adhere to the same generic structures that are found in literature written for adults. If we are to treat literature for adults differently from that for children, one would assume children's fantasy stories to be different from those written for adults. In his book *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*, Peter Hunt suggests that difficult subjects, such as violence and sexuality, are removed from narratives of fantasy for children, and substituted, respectively, with 'discussion [and] friendship'.[3] He further argues that 'if some things are left out of children's literature because they are not relevant to children […], and these are much the same things as are left out of adult genre fantasy, then it is not surprising that there has been a confusion'.[4]

As a genre, fantasy is criticised for being too childish because it has been placed outside the realm of high culture, just like children's literature. The argument that children have a stronger need for alternative worlds than adults may relate to the assumption that children and fantasy have a natural connection to each other because children cannot distinguish between reality and imagination. However, as Hunt argues, 'it is far more likely […] that it is adult writers who are interested in, or have a need for such alternatives'.[5] His statement emphasises the author's need to escape into another world or capture nostalgia for their past. Paul Bloom presents a similar view and claims that '[f]rom an early age we know the difference between reality and make-believe […] but that doesn't stop us from retreating to fantasy throughout our lives'.[6] We take part in experiences that we know are not real – experiences that are created through our imagination, such as books, films, television and video games. We enjoy to pretend and escape to worlds that are different to our own. Hunt's suggestion that it is adults (particularly the adult writer) who are much more in need of escape, supports Bloom's assertion that imagination is not lost when one comes of age.

Fantasy

The term fantasy is connected to words such as to 'imagine' and to 'fantasise', which imply that there is a correlation to representations of the unreal. Fantasy introduces a variety of elements that are considered to be impossible in the real world. It is, according to Sheila Egoff,

[3] Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), p. 6.
[4] Hunt and Lenz, p. 6.
[5] Hunt and Lenz, p. 6.
[6] Paul Bloom, 'Pleasures of the Imagination', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 56.37 (2010), [no pagenumber available], http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ [accessed 6 May 2021].

'the discovery of the real within the unreal, the credible within the incredible, the believable within the unbelievable'.[7] In Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn's words, 'fantasy is about the construction of the impossible', compared to that of its sibling, science fiction, where events are based on what is scientifically probable.[8] Elements that can appear in texts considered to belong to the genre of fantasy are fantastic and supernatural creatures, and Jaqueline Furby claims that 'magic' is at the heart of fantasy.[9] Other common elements of fantasy include '"escaping" [of] the human condition' through the construction of 'alternate, "secondary" worlds'.[10] The stories often concern themselves with themes such as good versus evil and external and internal journeys of the hero symbolically represented through setting and situations that prompts the characters to make moral choices.

Fantasy is commonly associated with the 'fantastic'. Many of the elements that presumably belong to the realm of fantasy can sometimes, but not always, be presented as unexplained and mysterious. For Todorov, the fantastic incorporates an element of hesitation and uncertainty: 'there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of the same familiar world', and it is '*the reader's* [and/or a character's] *hesitation*', between natural causes and supernatural causes that constitutes the fantastic, he argues.[11] In other words, there must be present a hesitation between what is real and what is unreal for the story to be categorised as fantastic.

Fantasy Elements in Milne's Books and Forster's Film

Neither *Winnie-the-Pooh* nor *The House at Pooh Corner* create this hesitation that Todorov considers vital to the fantastic, mainly because of the naivety of Christopher Robin in the frame story, but also due to the verisimilitude that is created by the authority of the adult narrator. Forster's *Christopher Robin,* on the other hand, thematises the impossibility of the anthropomorphised toys being live creatures. When the toys and Madelyn enter London to give Christopher Robin his important papers back, there are several instances where there is a hesitation of the apparent fact that the toys are alive and an uncertainty of the cause of their animated state – whether they are real living creatures or not. A policeman, taxi driver and a

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[7] Sheila Egoff, *Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1981), p. 80.
[8] Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 1.
[9] Jaqueline Furby, *Fantasy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 2.
[10] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 2.
[11] Todorov, p. 25, 31.

newspaper salesman all question the nature of the talking toys, thinking that they have gone mad. Moreover, racing by car to find Madelyn, Evelyn finds it impossible that 'a talking donkey' can actually be communicating with her (01:25:18). In the moment before, Christopher Robin was reluctant to tell Evelyn about his forest friends because he appeared to possess an inner hesitation of belief that made him momentarily question his own sanity. It is, however, never explained how these toys and animals have come to talk and understand the human language, but the mystery of this cause is only questioned by the main human characters and they do not go out of their way to seek an answer; it is, rather, accepted by many of the central human characters. This issue increases the hesitancy if the existence of these live toys.

The toy characters of Milne's *Pooh* books, however, exist only in their insulated fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood. They do not interact with people outside of the forest and therefore, there is less hesitation about their existence. In other words, they can be live toys because they only exist within the fantasy world of the forest. According to Maria Nikolajeva, 'the objective of the toys is often to come alive or at least become independent'.[12] This is not the ambition of any of the characters in the *Pooh* books. Their existence is fully accepted and their liveliness is not even questioned.

The toy characters contribute to the subtlety of the fantasy elements in the stories because they are the most obvious elements of fantasy. Their centrality to the stories makes them subtle expressions of fantasy. Peter Hunt declares that because the large extravagance of the fantasy story has been reduced down to toys, 'Milne preserved the power of fantasy and made it accessible to children'.[13] Within the genre of fantasy impossible things become possible and laws of the everyday do not apply. In the fantasy space 'impossible things regularly occur', according to Jaqueline Furby.[14] For instance, in the fantasy space of Hundred Acre Wood, the animals and toys talk both to each other and to Christopher Robin, but they do not have any other supernatural abilities. Another notable example from *Winnie-the-Pooh*, is when Pooh is held up in the air by a balloon. A flying bear seems quite an impossible thing and since this is not a work of science fiction there need not be a scientific reason or possible reason as to how this is physically possible. It belongs to the genre of fantasy, which means there needs to be a suspension of disbelief at work for the readers to enjoy the silliness of these

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[12] Maria Nikolajeva, 'The Development of Children's Fantasy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature,* ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50-61 (p. 56).

[13] Peter Hunt, 'Winnie the Pooh and Domestic Fantasy', in *Stories and Society: Children's Literature in its Social Context*, ed. by Dennis Butts (Basingstoke: MacMillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1992), 112-114 (p. 113).

[14] Furby, p. 14.

events. No one questions the toys' abilities to speak or their language skills. In fact, some of them try to be skilful in language, Owl in particular, whose pretence of language skills goes undetected by his companions. And this is yet another element that can be said to anchor it to the fantasy genre.

The Forest as Secondary World in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*

As secondary worlds are typical elements in the genre of fantasy, they are prone to scrutinization of literary critics. In his examination of alternative worlds, Hunt suggests that 'the invented worlds cannot be "merely" places of wonder of delight, they must mean something else (morally, rather than inevitably) if they are to be interesting or valuable'.[15] Much of the literary criticism on *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* resist the idea that the setting is simply just a setting without a deeper meaning. Critics have paid much attention to the biographical significance of the world of the Hundred Acre wood, especially in relation to Milne, more specifically his desire to escape from his own life or back to his childhood by creating a setting of nostalgic idyll. In *The Enchanted Places*, Christopher Milne describes what he believes is his father's depiction of the forest in the stories:

> Only those who could walk to the Forest went there. This meant that when we got there we had the Forest almost entirely to ourselves. And this, in turn, made us feel that it was *our* Forest and so made it possible for an imaginary world – Pooh's world – to be born within the real world.[16]

The stories of Pooh and his forest friends are set in the Hundred Acre Wood, a fantasy place, based on the real Ashdown forest located in Sussex. The forest in the *Pooh* books is portrayed as isolated from urban life. The isolated privacy serves to convey the rural and quiet location of the forest. In the beginning of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the readers are told that 'Winnie-the-Pooh live[s] in a forest all by himself' (Milne, p. 16). It can give the impression that Pooh lives undisturbed by others. Pooh and his friends seem like the only characters and creatures living there, seen apart from other animals, such as 'Rabbit's friends and relations', whose home is not disclosed to the reader (42). Even though the inside cover of the book provides a map of the Hundred Acre Wood, which creates a clear image of the forest in its entirety, the boundaries

[15] Hunt and Lenz, *Alternative Worlds*, p. 5.
[16] Christopher Milne, *The Enchanted Places* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974), p. 75.

of the forest are ambiguous. Based on Shepard's illustrations, the Hundred Acre Wood is depicted with some vegetation, yet it is not descried as the wilderness nor a garden. The description, 'in the middle of the forest' is used several times in the stories to portray the characters' surroundings (18). Although there are some subtle descriptions like these, it is the illustrations in the books that reveal the most about the forest itself. The park-like nature of the forest (excluding any humans), might explain the sense of home, comfort and security the forest gives. Although the story mostly focuses on the characters' daily activities and interactions with others, there is an underlying importance to the setting which will be addressed later as a technique of separation from the outside world.

In the world of the Hundred Acre Wood, the characters also never get hurt. For instance, Pooh falls from tall heights without being injured and Eeyore gets his tail nailed back on. The characters are never in any actual danger, not even in *The House at Pooh Corner* where they are continuously challenged by their natural surroundings. For example, when the strong winds tear down Owl's house, and Pooh , Piglet and Owl fall with it. None of them get a scratch even though the illustrations paint fairly chaotic pictures of the event. After landing on the ground inside Owl's house that is now in shambles, Pooh, Piglet and Owl behave as if the event has had no impact on them. They do however reflect on the tragedy of the fact that Owl has lost his house. The natural elements, therefore, can be considered a malicious, yet realistic force that rattles their community. As Tanya Jones argues, 'vague outside threats may shake a toy community from time to time – a new toy, a new puppy, a blustery day'.[17] The security and safety of the Hundred Acre Wood is threatened firstly, by the arrivals of Kanga, Roo and Tigger in the forest and, secondly, by floods and winds on 'blustery' days. They, nevertheless, live safely in the forest without getting badly hurt in any situations. In this way, the fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood protects them from harm.

Because the characters are not in any actual danger in the Hundred Acre Wood, the forest can be considered a domesticated space. It can be argued that it exhibits elements consistent with what Hunt calls *Domestic Fantasy*. This is not only because the Hundred Acre Wood represents a space ultimately separate from out outside world, the adult world, but also because it is similar to that of a home. The forest is a domestic fantasy space because it represents security, home, and familiar connections. Even though the toy characters go on adventures (such as to the 'North Pole' in *Winnie-the-Pooh)*, they never venture outside the

[17] Tanya Jones, *Toy Stories: The Toy as Hero in Literature, Comics and Film* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc.), p. 21.

boundaries of the forest. It is only Christopher Robin, the human child, who goes outside the forest and he can come and go as he likes. Hunt also believes that the forest is a domesticated place because it is used to highlight the 'double focus' of the text; the fantasy world is attempting to represent a meditation between the child world and the adult world.[18] The father-narrator, for instance, who represents the adult world, communicates with his son (who represents the child world of the Hundred Acre Wood), through the fantasy space of the forest. The fantasy world is a safe space, similarly to a home or a nursery. It represents a safe space for the child to play that is separate from the world of the adult, and, it simultaneously becomes a space of communication between the adult and the child. The forest is, thus, a domesticated place that represents safety, home and family, in addition to being a place where secure mediations between the adult world and the world of the child take place.

If the Hundred Acre Wood can represent a safe space for the child, the outside world separate from it can signify the world of the adults. Hunt suggests that the outside world represents 'what is for children the ultimate in alien races – the adults'.[19] As much as the Hundred Acre Wood is the obvious central setting of the story, the outside of the forest is just as vital to the books because it speaks to the opposition that is created in the stories of 'the other', the adult. There are no adults in the Hundred Acre Wood. Kenga is a possible exception, but she is resisted by several of the characters like Rabbit and Roo, and as an anthropomorphised stuffed animal she is not fully aligned with the adults outside of the forest. The intrusion of the adult narrator's voice from the outside story of the forest, is 'the element that *most* threatens the enchantment of the world of the Pooh books', according to Hunt.[20] As discussed in Chapter Two, the adult narrator possess a control over the fantasy world to such a degree that he has the ability to pull the reader out of the fantasy and back into the frame story in the normative 'real' world. The world separate from the Hundred Acre Wood can represent the world of the adults.

The seemingly vacuum sealed fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood is not only sustained by the setting, but it is also held together by the godlike presence of Christopher Robin: he is the ruler of the land. As Alison Lurie argues, *Winnie-the-Pooh* is 'the story of a peaceful animal kingdom ruled by a single benevolent human being'.[21] It is the fantasy of control being played out, a child's the desire for control. Even though it is the father-narrator

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[18] Hunt, *Domestic Fantasy*, p. 112.
[19] Hunt, *Domestic Fantasy*, p. 118.
[20] Hunt, *Domestic Fantasy*, p. 114.
[21] Alison Lurie, *Don't Tell the Grown Ups: Subversive Children's Literature* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998), p. 154.

who dictates the action, he moulds the story to Christopher Robin's psychological needs, as addressed in Chapter Three. Since Christopher Robin of the frame story believes that the Christopher of the embedded narrative is himself, the toy characters are, for him, the same characters as his stuffed animal toys. Since they are his toys he desires control of them. Even if Christopher Robin is the ruler of the forest, as Lurie suggests, he is not responsible for the toy and animal characters. As the god-like figure, Christopher Robin (alongside his forest companions) is free from adult responsibility in the forest.

The Forest as Secondary World in *Christopher Robin*

In *Christopher Robin*, Christopher does not have an control over the toys, nor is he responsible for them. The toys live completely separate and autonomous lives independently from any adults or any home where children live. This helps sustain the magic of the film, separating the magical enchantment of the Hundred Acre wood from the 'real' world. There is, however, a hesitation of the realness of the Hundred Acre Wood because it is, in the story, a concrete place that one can access by train, car or a magic passage in a tree. In other words, the film portrays the Hundred Acre Wood as a real place, but the way it can be accessed makes it ambiguous and mystical. The forest is, therefore, portrayed as accessible, but seemingly, only for the central characters.

Even though Christopher is not responsible for the toy characters, he is, however, responsible for saving the company he works at. He is temporarily liberated of these duties when he enters the forest. On the mission of escorting Pooh back to the Hundred Acre Wood, Christopher becomes separated from Pooh. Christopher meets the other forest inhabitants and when he begins to play the role of a Heffalump-killer to make them realise that he is in fact, Christopher Robin, he forgets his worries and anxieties. The serenity of the idyll of the forest has clearly brought back childhood memories and he even forgets his work and duties for a little, all the while up until he wakes the next morning and he suddenly remembers that he has to get back to London.

The Hundred Acre Wood in *Christopher Robin* thus takes on a different meaning than in Milne's *Pooh* stories. Not only because the medium has shifted but also due to the context of the story. In Milne's works, Christopher Robin grows up and therefore grows out of the forest and imaginative play with his friends. In the film, however, Christopher has met the expectations in which his society has set for him as a working father, but they still expect more from him in other aspects of his life. The forest becomes a symbol of his stress relief and a

pause from the busy everyday world. Closely related, it also signifies a return to imagination, joy and happiness, qualities commonly associated with childhood. Much of this can be linked to the way that the genre of fantasy can be seen to convey meaning – Christopher Robin is the pivotal character for which the travel between the forest and London signifies his psychological journey and development. As Furby states, fantasy stories often encompass 'a journey inward that changes the [protagonist's] sense of identity and self'.[22] The film conveys Christopher's emotional growth and development of the true self through its incorporation of fantasy elements: the Hundred Acre Wood as secondary world, the symbolical travel between the 'real' world of the story, and the fantasy setting of the Hundred Acre Wood.

***Christopher Robin* as a Portal-Quest Fantasy**

Christopher Robin exhibits clear characteristics of the quest fantasy. W.A. Senior states that 'quest fantasies conventionally start in a place of security and stability, and then a disruption from the outside world occurs'.[23] The film begins in the safe realm of the Hundred Acre Wood with Christopher as a little boy playing with his forest friends. This atmosphere is stable and secure. When Christopher leaves the forest to go to school and to grow up, the story immediately conveys a sense of instability. Christopher does not appear to be very happy from this point onwards – his childhood has been taken away from him too early. After the prologue sequence instability is revealed in Christopher's life through depictions of his family life and his job. Moreover, the pattern of instability continues when Pooh awakens in the Hundred Acre Wood and he cannot find any of his forest friends. On his search for his friends, Pooh visits Christopher Robin's house in the forest, which is a tree with a door in it. The door magically opens when Pooh is about to walk away, at which point he gets the idea that Christopher can come to his rescue. The tree is revealed as a magical tunnel through which Pooh believes he will find Christopher Robin.

The element of the tunnel, arguably, anchors the film in the category of portal-quest fantasy. James and Mendlesohn explain the portal-quest fantasy as a story in which 'the protagonist enters a new world' through some sort of portal or passage.[24] When Pooh walks through this tunnel his objective is to find Christopher Robin to get him to help him find his

[22] Furby, p. 40.
[23] W. A. Senior, 'Quest Fantasies', in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2012), pp. 190-199 (p. 190).
[24] James and Mendlesohn, p. 2.

friends. In this sense, there is still a godlike presence about Christopher, because it appears as if he is the only one who can solve all issues. Pooh goes through the tunnel and ends up entering a London park, which coincidentally happens to be located right outside Christopher Robin's house. The tunnel, then, works as a portal that takes him to a different place. Pooh does not understand where he is because the land is foreign to him. Simultaneously, in trying to avoid his annoyingly chatty neighbour, Christopher Robin walks into the park and seats himself on the bench opposite Pooh. When Christopher realises Pooh is right behind him he exclaims: 'NO! No, no, no, no, you…you can't be here', in total disbelief of what he is seeing, thinking that he has gone mad (00:28:51). After being a nuisance to Christopher, Pooh successfully convinces him to help him back to the Hundred Acre Wood. As mentioned, the forest works wonders for Christopher and he is able to be his most true self. On his way back to London there is already a noticeable change which reveals itself through the form of Christopher innocently playing Pooh's game of 'say what you see'.

The elements of portal and quest together, then, become a powerful signifier for psychological development both from adult to child and vice versa, but also from stress to freedom. Catherine Butler notes that children's fantasies 'usually ensure that encounters with the fantastic precipitate significant emotional growth, if not life-defining change, in their protagonists'.[25] Christopher Robin not only transforms as an adult, learning to value and prioritise what actually matters and what is important to him, but he also reacquaints himself with who he is as a person and who he wants to be. In fantasy stories 'even the ubiquitous battles of good against evil can be understood as a struggle to gain a mature adult control over the self', according to Furby.[26] Christopher's conflict with his boss can be seen as the evil force that tries to separate him even further from the life that he knows, deep down, he desires. The tension between who society wishes him to be and who he wants to be – a family man who prioritises his family – clash. He is torn in between these two worlds, but with help from Pooh Christopher realises what is right.

The climactic stand-off between Christopher and Winslow towards the end of the story corresponds with Senior's explanation of a common feature of the portal-quest fantasy where 'the final stage of the quest brings the hero into direct confrontation with the Dark Lord, whose defeat is a result of some action or decision by the hero'.[27] Christopher Robin rushes into the meeting that will decide the fate of the company and its workers. The extreme pressure he has

[25] Butler, p. 225.
[26] Furby, p. 40.
[27] Senior, p. 190.

been under is relieved when he proves that he can, in fact, save the company, despite Mr. Winslow's arrogance and laziness. The threat of Christopher losing his job is minimised when several other members of the company witness an enraged Mr. Winslow in a meeting. They subsequently question Mr. Winslow's behaviour and they proceed to take Christopher Robin's side. The wickedness of the character of Mr. Winslow is juxtaposed with the harmless and safe environment of the Hundred Acre Wood where things goes wrong, but rarely turn malicious and dangerous. This only emphasises the importance of the tunnel even further.

The access points to the tunnel confuse the location of the secondary fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood. For, as established, it is portrayed as a real forest in the story that is highly accessible. However, there seems to be more than one point of entry. For instance, when Pooh goes to London the tunnel takes him from Christopher's old treehouse to the London park outside of Christopher Robin's house in London. The second point of entry: when Christopher Robin escorts Pooh back to the forest, they take the train to the cottage in Sussex, walk into the forest, and go through a tunnel in a tree. They always come back into the Hundred Acre Wood through the green door in the tree in which the young Christopher appears through in the beginning of the film. At the end of the film Christopher Robin, Evelyn, Madelyn and all of their forest friends go together. It is unclear whether their entry point was from the tree in London or from the tree in Sussex. The fact that there are multiple entrance points to the tunnel, yet only one exit that leads into the Hundred Acre Wood (the door in the tree), makes the location of the forest more ambiguous, mystical and magical. Christopher and his family and friends having to go through the portal-tunnel makes it seem as though the fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood is in a hidden and secret place in the forest, yet within the boundaries of the actual forest portrayed as 'real' in the story.

The last time they all travel back through the tunnel, the journey signals a change in Christopher. His emotional journey has come to an end, but he is richer for it because he has his family and friends with him. The tunnel, in other words, signifies Christopher's journey from ignorance and wrongly prioritised life-choices, to returning to a world with joys and play. The story closes with a scene at Galleon's lap in the forest that reinforces a happy ending. The tunnel is a powerful signifier for the emotional growth and development of Christopher's true self.

Magical Realism in *Christopher Robin*

Magical realism can be considered as a sub-genre, a mode or a style of fantasy. Originally associated with Latin American literature after German art critic Franz Roh coined the term in 1923, magical realism is a somewhat vaguely defined term. Kenneth Reeds asserts that 'critics create their own definitions of magical realism [and] […] as a result, it [takes] on multiple meanings. Magical realism is by Yvonne Hammer understood as 'a narrative mode because it is a discourse style that infiltrates realistic genres with an associated capacity to redirect textual interpretation'.[28] Scott Simpkins, another magical realism critic, focuses on magical realism's existence as an attempt 'to "improve" upon the realistic text'.[29] The common denominator of texts classified as magical realist is that the relationship between magic and realism is intricately woven. The amalgamation of magic and realism is closely connected with the technique of 'defamiliarisation', which is by Simpkins considered to be a characterising feature of magical realism.[30] Here, the mimetic nature of realism is infiltrated by the unfamiliar to present the mundane in a new way.

Maggie Ann Bowers believes that it is important to separate terms that are closely related to magical realism. She stresses the difference between *magic realism*, *magical realism* and *marvellous realism*: 'in magic realism "magic" refers to the mystery of life: in the marvellous and magical realism "magic" refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science'.[31] The imitation of life becomes infiltrated by magic and these events go unexplained, and explanations are not sought either. This is the case in *Christopher Robin*: the human characters only question the live stuffed toys, but they do not go any further in seeking a reason or explanation for the phenomenon. For example, as mentioned, the live toys are questioned both by members of the public who are not central characters in the story. But as soon as Evelyn, Christopher's wife becomes aware of their liveliness – that they talk and walk – there is little that questions their existence. As Ian Rudge states, in magical realism, magical elements are introduced into the real world of the story and are 'accepted as part of the realist world'.[32] However, another way

[28] Yvonne Hammer, 'Defining Magical Realism in Children's Literature: Voices in Contemporary Fugue, Texts that Speak from the Margins', *Papers,* 16:2 (2006), 64-70 (p. 64).
[29] Scott Simpkins, 'Magical Strategies: the Supplement of Realism', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 34.2 (1988), 140-154 (p. 140).
[30] Simpkins, p. 141.
[31] Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 20.
[32] Ian Rudge, 'Magic Realism in Children's Literature: a Narratological Reading', *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 10.2 (2004), 127-140 (p. 129).

to view the toys' ability to move and talk is that they are only accepted as part of the realist world by the central characters of the story. The toys need to pretend to sleep to avoid scaring people that do not know about their abilities to move and talk. Their existence is, therefore, partly rejected by the real world. The film has magical realist features because the emotional journey that Christopher embarks on is the mimetic quality of the story and it is combined with anthropomorphic improbable elements.

The Adventure Story

In addition to magical realist features the film also makes use of the elements of the adventure story. The genre is composed by stories that are dominated by action and danger and that evoke excitement in the readers/spectators. As Brian Taves asserts, '[t]he usual definitions of adventure stress elements of the unusual, over-coming obstacles with narrow escapes, and vanquishing villains'.[33] In this sense, adventure becomes linked with action. 'But if the incidents of the story are too ordinary, they fail to excite, while if they are too extraordinary, they fail to be credible', as Dennis Butts notes in relation to the genre.[34] When adventure and fantasy elements are combined, the journey of the protagonist acquires an increased symbolic significance – they are changed by the adventure and their journey is paralleled with the physical obstacles and challenges they face.

Pooh and his friends do go to London to complete their goal of saving Christopher Robin from someone they believe to be dangerous. On their adventure they are met with obstacles and hazardous situations. For example when they hide in suitcases on the back of a truck and they escape by coincidence. In this way, the film adheres to the action element Taves considers to be central to the adventure story. The action in the film is carried by the emotions and needs of the characters in addition to themes such as love, friendship and morality. The film is action- and plot-driven, but the thematic significance which bears the emotional load of the story is given equal screen representation and is not weakened by the action-filled narrative.

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[33] Brian Taves, *The Romance of Adventure: The Genre of Historical Adventure Movies* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. 4–5.
[34] Butts, p. 70.

‘Family’ Film

Because *Christopher Robin* presents an action-driven story due to its inclusion of the adventure genre, it could in some ways be considered to adhere to features that belong to the ‘family’ film rather than entertainment that specifically addresses the youngest children. It is important to acknowledge the category of ‘family’ film because the cinematic audience may differ in age group compared to films deemed as children’s cinema. The latter would be rated as General Audiences (G) where all ages are acceptable.[35] *Christopher Robin* is by IMDB rated PG (Parental Guidance), which may indicate that the nature of the film and its content may be more appropriate for an age group more mature than the youngest children. Disney productions are already closely associated with family values and according to Noel Brown, the ‘family’ film emerged through a construction of ‘the “family audience” […] [as] an invention of the film industry […] rather than a tangible ethnographic entity’.[36] Films categorised as ‘family’ films are viewed as a ‘clean, broadly-suitable entertainment for all sections of the movie-going public’.[37] The family audience therefore came to symbolise ‘mass cultural acceptance’, in Brown’s words.[38] The ‘family’ film avoids themes and scenes that may cause offence, such as violence, cruelty, swearing and any situations of a sexual nature. The theme of cruelty in *Christopher Robin* emerges from Mr. Winslow and yet the cruelty he show is downplayed and softened up with comedy as to not seem off-putting to younger audience members.

Conclusion: Mixing Generic Elements

Winnie-the-Pooh and *The House at Pooh Corner* are texts that are built around the fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood. The stories mostly concern themselves with this secondary world and its anthropomorphic inhabitants. The Hundred Acre Wood is presented as the ultimate rural landscape, a domesticated place for safe adventures where things never get dangerous. It takes on a more hazardous role in *The House at Pooh Corner* when mother nature takes a turn for the worse and put their lives at stake, but they are all unaffected by the events

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[35] IMDB, ‘Christopher Robin’, *IMDB* [online][n.d] https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4575576/ [accessed 7 May 2021].
[36] Noel Brown, ‘“A New Movie-Going Public”: 1930s Hollywood and the Emergence of the “Family’ Film”’, in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 33.1 (2013), 1-23 (p. 14).
[37] Noel Brown, ‘The “Family” Film and the Tensions Between Popular and Academic Interpretations of Genre, *Trespassing Genre*, 2 (2013), 22-35 (p. 28).
[38] Brown, ‘Movie-Going Public’, p. 1.

in the end. The forest world's relationship with the outside world signifies the communication between the adult world and the world of the child, especially through the father-narrator and Christopher Robin (the child listening to the stories).

Although *Christopher Robin* stays within the realm of fantasy like the *Pooh* books, it is a highly hybrid film that makes use of elements from the genres of fantasy and adventure, whilst also deploying techniques associated with the mode of magical realism. As Todorov states, 'a work can, for example, manifest more than one category, more than one genre'.[39] Fantasy elements are conveyed through the use of anthropomorphic animals and toys, and the relationship between the real world in the story and the magical element of the toys' liveliness creates ambiguity of their seemingly human capabilities. The goal-oriented and action-filled plot reflects elements of adventure in the film. The fantasy element of the tunnel which provides access to the Hundred Acre Wood, makes the forest seem more isolated and creates uncertainty about its location and realness. Similarly to the books, there are only a few subtle hints of human objects in the forest. Furthermore, the tunnel has proved an important element of the portal-quest fantasy as it signifies Christopher's emotional journey and growth as an adult. The tunnel works as a separation device of the Hundred Acre wood, the fantasy world, and the 'real' world of London. Film genres, according to Bill Nichols, 'signal[…] [the creation of] a world from a particular perspective' and 'the viewer senses the filmmaker's attitude toward the story, its characters and world'.[40] The fantasy elements are, therefore, utilised metaphorically to convey the story in a particular way: one that emphasises the importance of the Hundred Acre Wood. The use of fantasy and its relation the setting reveal that the fantasy space of the Hundred Acre Wood is filled with symbolic meaning, especially in consideration to the 'real' world of the stories. The use of fantasy elements to convey the story in a particular way, then, are great ways to create metaphors that are connected to the protagonist's journey. In other words, the journey through the tunnel represents, and parallels, Christopher Robin's inner journey. This chapter has established the importance of generic analysis within Milne's *Pooh* stories and Forster's film where different generic elements are combined through metaphorical depictions of setting.

[39] Todorov, p. 22.
[40] Bill Nichols, *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), p. 146.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the presence of inherent dualities in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *The House at Pooh Corner* and *Christopher Robin*, which belies assumptions about the simplicity of children's literature and children's film. These dualities support the argument that children's literature is complex. A multitude of themes and aspects of the stories work together to enhance the complexities in these texts. In the transition to the cinematic medium, these themes and aspects come to signify different things, but are still just as complex and significant.

One aspect of the *Pooh* stories that strengthens the case of their complexity is the duality in genre. As explained in Chapter Four, Fantasy is expressed in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* through the fantastic secondary world of the Hundred Acre Wood that represents a utopian space without the apparent intrusion of the alien species, namely adults. Of course, the adult omniscient narrator is a problematic figure in this sense because he is simultaneously representing the outside world whilst also controlling the fantasy space of the Hundred Acre Wood. In *Christopher Robin*, the forest represents childhood and joy mainly through the element of the portal-quest in combination with Christopher Robin's emotional journey and development. The setting of the Hundred Acre Wood is for Christopher a return to childhood innocence where he can be his playful real self without the burden of his work. Each time the portal in the tree is utilised, Christopher shows a change in himself and when he arrives in the forest, his emotional development is highly visible and is expressed by his smiling and laughing. The weather and mood of the forest changes too when Christopher Robin reunites with his childhood companions, which juxtaposes the colourful and idyllic atmosphere of the Hundred Acre Wood with the grey and busy world of London where there is no time for fun and play. The juxtaposition of the two worlds demonstrates that the setting enhances and facilitates the generic tropes and elements of fantasy, magical realism and adventure. Setting is an important aspect of generic classification because it can reveal the world as a representational space.

Narrative structures and techniques mixed with elements of fantasy are particularly convenient methods for conveying the central themes of the film such as internal struggle, coming of age, friendship, family, love and joy. The first three have been kept and transferred from the original *Pooh* stories to screen whilst the latter two have been added to the film. These multitude of themes are explored and conveyed through techniques of narration that are available to the cinematic medium which creates a rich and meaningful story.

Fantasy helps to convey the story in a particular way. Considering the thematic issues of childhood and adulthood raised in Chapter Two, fantasy is a way to clarify and emphasise this subject and give the story direction and symbolical significance. The dual aspects of child characters versus adult figures in Milne's books and Forster's film, are, in other words, connected to the use of fantasy elements and their opposition is accentuated.

The duality of the role of the adult as discussed in Chapter Two presents itself through adult characters, child characters who represent adults, concepts of adulthood vs childhood, and through a simultaneous appeal to an adult and child audience. Winnie-the-Pooh's relationship with Christopher Robin in the transition from text to screen was changed in its overarching nature due to Christopher's growth from child to adult and this plays into the larger argument that children's literature is invaded by adults and adult structures. Pooh's relationship to Christopher has not changed and he treats him the exact same way as when Christopher was a child. Christopher, on the other hand, has moved on from his childhood companions to the point where he has forgotten about them. Their relationship in the film demonstrates the separate spheres of childhood and adulthood and the expectations that comes with these states. The various ways in which adults and adult structures have pervaded *Christopher Robin* have been demonstrated to originate from Christopher Robin's tension-filled relationship with his boss Mr. Winslow, who works as the evil force in comparison to the idyllic second world of the Hundred Acre Wood.

Another way that adult structures invade the film is the film's answer to Milne's use of the father-narrator. In *Christopher Robin*, the camera becomes the narrator by the use of different camera angles to emphasise different points of view or important aspects of the story. This way, the story is presented both with a child's and an adult's point of view. The child's point of view is depicted mostly through Pooh, such as the scenes set in the train station where he is turned upside down as if the camera is his eyes, or, for example, when he is on the ground only seeing adult legs. Adults are more visually present in Forster's appropriation compared to their presence in the *Pooh* books.

The power struggles between child and adult forces in both *Winnie-the Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* emerge most prominently through the invading adult father-narrator who asserts his control over both his son Christopher in the frame story and Christopher as a character in the alternative fantasy world of the Hundred Acre Wood. Christopher Robin of the frame story intervenes the storytelling multiple times, yet the boundaries of the magical place of the Hundred Acre Wood are not broken. The narrator's voice is not overtly controlling, yet it is his subtle presence that pervades the stories. Furthermore, childhood and adulthood are

largely presented as separate spheres in the books due to the lack of adult presence in the alternative world. The Hundred Acre Wood is thus separated from adults. This issue is addressed both in Chapter Two and Four, due to its significant connection to tropes of fantasy.

The toys are presented as animate beings and not as inanimate beings that we usually encounter in real life. The stuffed toy characters, then, are highly anthropomorphic characters, which connects them to discussions tied to their functions and meanings in the stories. Their anthropomorphic nature also indicate that they are important functions within the narrative as elements of the genre of fantasy. In Milne's books, each of the toy characters possesses one main trait that is portrayed as dominant and that overshadows other parts of their personalities. Furthermore, the forest community is neatly separated, yet conjoined, into adult-like characters and child-like characters who each represent qualities child readers can identify with. The child-like characters are Pooh, a bear of 'very little brain' who represents the imaginative part of a child, Piglet is by his size and behaviour deemed timid even though he shows courage. Roo is desperate to break free from his mother Kenga, and together with Tigger who depicts the egocentric part of a child, they both represent the enthusiastic and energetic child. Eeyore is portrayed as largely pessimistic and sceptical, Rabbit as the controlling organiser (signalling the rational and the stubborn part of child), and Owl (embarrassed of too little knowledge) represents the pretentious part of the child. As supported by Nikolajeva, the stuffed animal characters together form a collective character: Christopher Robin. They each represent one aspect of his child psyche. In addition to being representative of Christopher's imagination, Pooh is also his soothing companion, which makes him Christopher Robin's transitional object: a toy that can soothe him in times of transition, for example as he develops a sense of self and prepares to go away to boarding school.

The toys' traits are largely kept in *Christopher Robin* as well, only that they are not transitional objects in the traditional sense of Winnicott's theory. They become nostalgic reminders of an idyllic childhood where play and joy are the only concerns. As in Milne's books, Pooh becomes a transitional object to Christopher because he is going through a transition in his life. Only now, he is not growing up as the Christopher in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*; he is journeying towards a better self, his real self, away from the obligations in life that bring him no joy and that tear him away from that what is most precious to him: his wife Evelyn and daughter Madelyn. His childhood toy companions help him realise that he is not living his life like he should. He should be focusing on what is important to him instead of work.

The toy characters are more easily adapted into a new narrative than the storylines of the original works are. This is due to the books' episodic narrative structure and lack of an explicit climactic chain of events. In other words, the toys and animals of Milne's original works are the most adaptable elements of the books and their relatable and lovable traits may be possible reasons for their longstanding popularity. The toys in the *Pooh* books come alive, but the narrative frame limits that idea to a certain extent because it makes them hover between the animate and the inanimate. This distinction is even more blurred in Forster's film because of the current technologies that allow animation to look close to real, as exemplified with their real-looking fur and stuffed animal material.

As a character, Winnie-the-Pooh can be seen to represent both adult-like and child-like characteristics. Pooh is not a one-dimensional character because he has very many traits and he does not only represent one characteristic. His wisdom and imaginative nature are among the many reasons why his character has been loved by audiences in all age groups. He is actually the opposite of a bear of very little brain: he may not appear clever, but it is Pooh that ends up being the hero of all of the toys' adventures and solves many of their problems. Pooh is in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* Christopher Robin's alter ego because he reinforces Christopher's sense of self by humbly acknowledging his intellectual limitations that make Christopher feel smarter and superior to him. Pooh is brought out of his role as Christopher's alter ego in the film because Christopher grows up, detaches himself from his bear companion and moves on to build his adult life.

To transition from a written form to a visual medium, then, changes are required in some form or other. One major difference between Milne's books and Forster's appropriation is the addition of action and plot elements. As Paula Connolly asserts, 'the principal change from Milne's stories to Disney retelling is in the development of conflict'.[1] In the *Pooh* books, things seem to just happen to Pooh and his friends, whereas in the film, the characters' actions are visually explicit through the their motivations. Forster has adapted themes and characters in Milne's stories to fit the cinematic medium and create a story that is more action-filled. The characters have more meaning behind their actions and they have a clear direction. Their motivations are created by the conflict-filled plot of the story. The stuffed toys encounter more problems and hurdles they need to get overcome to rescue Christopher because they believe he is in actual physical danger. Not only is there an external conflict that drives the plot, but Christopher has an internal conflict which is mirrored in his external problematic relationship

[1] Paula Connolly, Arcadia, p. 112.

with his boss Mr. Winslow. Furthermore, he does not feel that he can prioritise his family and there is tension in this part of his life as well, which adds onto the overall stress level of his life.

The stories of Winnie-the-Pooh, Christopher Robin and their forest friends are conveyed through tropes of fantasy; the idyllic secondary world setting of the Hundred Acre Wood; the use of anthropomorphic toys and animals as symbols of different parts of the child-self as demonstrated through Christopher Robin; the power struggle between adult intervention in the books as presented through the father-narrator penetrating the narrative exerting his control over it; the adult characters present in the film, and the ultimate changes and similarities of Winnie-the-Pooh's character. These elements are presented differently on screen than in the written and illustrated books due to their different available medium-specific methods of storytelling.

The common denominator of these discussions seems to be the opposition between childhood and adulthood, which is a prevalent theme throughout the chosen aspects. The opposition is showed through toy characters, human characters, Christopher Robin's inner struggle and journey, the setting and the tunnel, camera angels, juxtaposing points of view, and through appeals to both child and adult audiences.

These numerous dualities conveyed through different aspects of the books and film, demonstrate the complexities of these stories. Considering their dualities in characterisation, representation of adult and child figures, in presenting common concepts of childhood and adulthood, in the function and meaning of the toy characters, and in the combining of multiple generic and modal elements, Milne's *Pooh* books and Forster's film *Christopher Robin*, are complex stories. The complexity of these works indicated that there are multiple ways of reading children's stories and film, which in itself speak to a complex handling of children's works. Even though the *Pooh* stories and *Christopher Robin* do not speak for the entirety of children's literature and film, their dual and complex components can point to a possible deceiving simplicity in texts and films for children.

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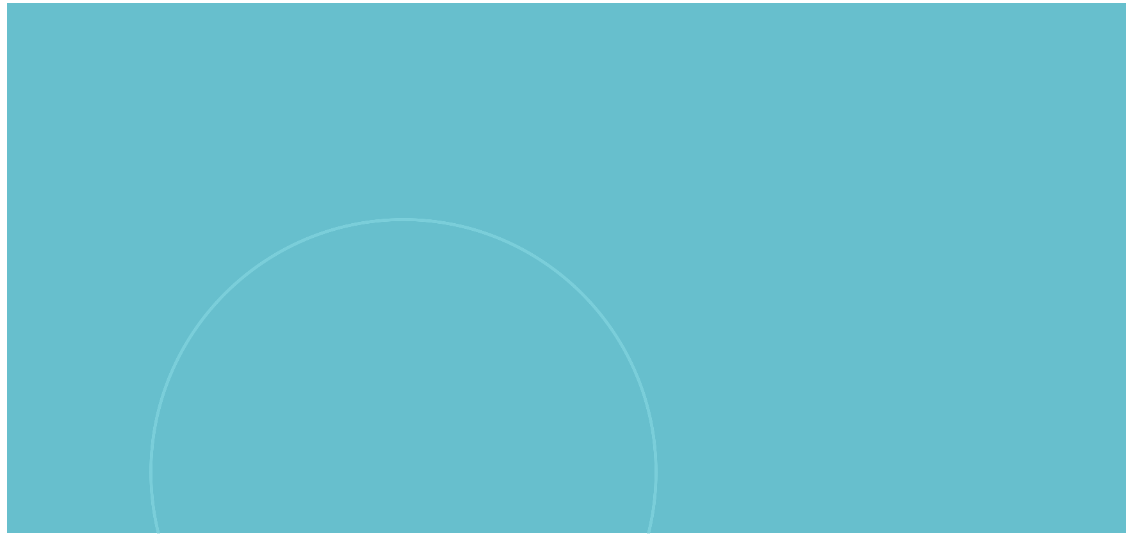
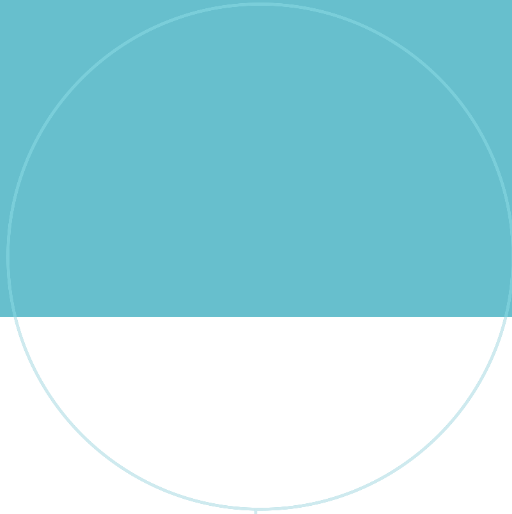

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