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Carol A. Stanger

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Carol A. Stanger

I The Popularity of the Stories

Pooh Bear has always had his fans. *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which sold in record numbers from the time it was first printed in 1926, sold 1,005,000 copies by 1975. These numbers can be partially explained by the fact that while *Pooh* was published as a children's book, it was often taken over for adult reading.¹ Alison Lurie makes this point in "Back to Pooh Corner,"

My friends and I not only read Milne's books over and over as children; all through high school and college we went on speaking his language, seeing people and events in his terms. My husband and I lived his first term at Middlesex as Piglet, with friends who were Pooh and Eeyore, and the school grounds and surrounding country were remapped accordingly; at college, I knew girls who went by the names of Tigger and Roo. Even today, occasionally, I will go back and reread a favorite passage. (11)

In addition, as Thomas B. Swann explains, Pooh has had more than literary recognition:

Pooh has not been caged between the covers of two small books. In 1951, his battered original from Christopher Robin's nursery, together with Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga, and Tigger, visited America and, insured for \$50,000, commenced a triumphant tour of libraries and bookstores. . . . Stuffed replicas, based on the Shepard illustrations . . . sell in many large department stores. It is possible to buy a place mat with Pooh in various stages of licking a honey pot. . . . Together with Christopher Robin, Pooh has been sculptured in stone as a garden ornament. . . . Maurice Evans has recorded two albums of readings such as 'Eeyore Loses a Tail'. . . . In the fall of 1965, Sears Robuck introduced a Pooh style of clothes for children . . . and in the winter of 1966 Walt Disney released [a] short feature, *Winnie-the-Pooh and the Honey Tree*. (133)

Products inspired by the Pooh books, like the books themselves, cause cash registers to ring daily; such sales indicate the strong impact of Pooh on the American reading public. And, as Alison Lurie testifies, the Pooh books strongly appeal to females as well as males, to mothers who read them and to little girls who listen to them.

Considering the almost totally male cast of characters, one may well ask why the book has gained such a wide female audience. A possible answer is that the stories are about the difficulty of coming to terms with a patriarchal society, a common experience for women, children, and some men. Most critics ignore the element of gender in the stories and would leave out the word “patriarchal” altogether. They claim that the Pooh stories are about the difficulty of growing up and fitting into society. But I believe that it is Milne’s hidden concern with gender that greatly adds to the work’s popularity and commercial success. And it is his concern with gender that invites a feminist approach.

II Reader Response Criticism and Women Readers

Reader response criticism has demonstrated that reading is not the straightforward procedure it was traditionally thought to be. The doctrine of the objectivity of the text, of the text as a constant object, has been questioned by the development of reader-response criticism, which posits that many valid readings are possible. As the “objectivist” model of reading began to be challenged by a “subjectivist” model, the interaction between reader and text became an interesting critical problem (Flynn and Schweickart ix).

In *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, Louise Rosenblatt begins to analyze the reading process itself, differentiating between a cognitive and an affective component. Most recently, work in linguistics, communication theory, and cognitive psychology continues to put a finer point on such analysis (Flynn and Schweickart xi–xii). For example, the work of Mary Crawford and Roger Chaffin is described by Flynn and Schweickart in these terms:

While evidence is far from conclusive, important experiments indicate that comprehension is mediated by generalized knowledge structures, or schemata, that exist in the mind of the reader. The schemata that are activated in the process of understanding a text provide a framework for the construction of meaning. They allow the knower to process the given information and, importantly, go beyond what is actually given. In the final analysis, what one reads out of a text depends on what one reads into it. (xii)

On the basis of this schema theory, Crawford and Chaffin argue that gender is a factor in comprehension, because a gender schema is not biologically determined, but is an internalized social construct. Thus, the effect of the gender schema on the individual varies in degree

(Flynn and Schweickart xii–xiii). If Crawford and Chaffin are correct about gender being a factor in comprehension, then women and girls read the Pooh stories in ways that are different from the way men and boys read them. All female readers may not be affected by this gender schema to the same degree, but one might reasonably expect some similarity in the response of female readers because the gender schema is a result of the socialization they have in common. Crawford and Chaffin point out that the gender schema is assimilated into the young girl's sense of self very early, at around the age of three, so when a female toddler reads Pooh (or hears it read to her) her "reading" is gender-inflected (13).

Feminist critics of the 1960s became interested in the relationship between reader response and gender. Unlike scholars in linguistics, communication theory, and cognitive psychology, who ask, "How does one read?" feminists ask, "How does one read as a woman?" As Carolyn Heilbrun has pointed out, a woman does not automatically read as a woman whenever she reads: to the contrary, a woman often is taught to read as a man, and most female graduate students in literature have been so trained in courses taught by phallogentric critics. Of course little girls who are learning to read and struggling with the alphabet have never been trained to approach a text in any particular way; however, they are often conscious of gender expectations, and it is highly probable that these gender expectations influence their perception of what they read or hear.

If, as Heilbrun claims, being a female reader does not insure reading as a woman, what else is necessary? Jonathan Culler, a male feminist critic, has identified different levels or "moments" when one reads like a woman.

At the second level the problem is precisely that women have not been reading as women. "What is crucial here," writes Annette Kolodny, "is that reading is a *learned* [italics his] activity which, like many other learned interpretive strategies in our society, is inevitably sex-coded and gender inflected" In its second moment, feminist criticism undertakes, through the postulate of a woman reader, to bring about a new experience of reading and to make readers — men and women — question the literary and political assumptions on which their reading has been based. (51)

In other words, according to Culler, "to read as a woman is to avoid reading as a man, to identify the specific defenses and distortions of male readings and provide correctives" (54).²

III "Reading as a Woman"

Up to now, critics of the Pooh stories, both men and women, have read the stories from a male perspective, that is, "as a man." As a result, they have failed to take into account that "all writing is 'marked' by gender," which is the hypothesis of feminist literary criticism (Ruthven 14). And consequently, these critics use a number of phallogocentric assumptions, both political and literary. For example, they base their reading on the unexamined political assumption that the male experience is universal. Alison Lurie, in her commemorative review of the Pooh books, argues for the universality of the Pooh characters (14). Since all but one of the characters, Kanga, is male, Lurie is assuming that the male experience is universal. Making the same assumption, Ellen Tremper claims that Pooh and his friends are 'humor' characters (45), in other words, types. Another unexamined political assumption is that the male point of view and the male system of values are the ones the reader should accept. In the much discussed final scene in *The House at Pooh Corner*, I have discovered no critical comment about the implications of the knighting of Pooh by Christopher Robin. This mock knighting, in which the young boy plays the role of King Arthur, is not simply an initiation into the adult world of "parents, teachers and adults" (as critics like Swann suggests) but also into patriarchy, built on the tradition symbolized by Arthur and his knights.

A third political assumption is one that Dorothy Dinnerstein has identified: that women "who introduced us to the human situation and who at the beginning seemed to us responsible for every drawback of that situation . . . carry for all of us a pre-rational onus of ultimately culpable responsibility forever after" (234). Many Milne critics have explained the Hundred Acre Wood community's desire to banish Kanga and Roo as a natural one since mother and child unexpectedly appear in the forest one day; often critics point out the similarity of this unexpected arrival to the arrival of a new child, which an older child would naturally resent. But if Kanga is disliked by the other characters because she evokes sibling rivalry in them, her characterization could be as neutral as that of Small, one of Rabbit's friends and relations, and she could still be disliked because it is her existence, not her personality, that is threatening. However, her character is a negative one and negatively dramatizes those elements associated with the bad mother figure. In the scene where she punishes Piglet for pretending to be Roo, she is particularly intrusive and controlling.

"I am not all that sure," said Kanga in a thoughtful voice, "that it wouldn't be a good idea to have a *cold* [*italics his*] bath this evening. Would you like that Roo, dear?"

Piglet, who had never been really fond of baths, shuddered a long indignant shudder, and said in as brave a voice as he could:

"Kanga, I see the time has come to speak plainly."

"Funny little Roo," said Kanga, as she got the bath water ready.

"I am *not* [*italics his*] Roo," said Piglet loudly. "I am Piglet!" . . .

Before he knew where he was, Piglet was in the bath, and Kanga was scrubbing him firmly with a large lathery flannel.

"Ow!" cried Piglet. "Let me out. I'm Piglet!"

"Don't open the mouth dear, or the soap goes in," said Kanga. "There! What did I tell you?"

"You-you-you did it on purpose," spluttered Piglet, as soon as he could speak again . . . and then accidentally had another mouthful of lathery flannel. . . . (150-6)³

Kanga's power in this scene comes from the power mothers have over children and she uses it to punish the timid Piglet almost to the point of cruelty.⁴ She is an especially important character for the female reader since she is the only identifiable female character in either book. It is significant that Christopher Robin's mother is not included in the narrative itself, only in the dedication. As an adult female reader, I find it hard to accept such a misogynistic characterization. If I try to identify with the female character, I call up the dependency, the pain, vulnerability, and disappointment almost all children felt to some degree as babies under their early nurturer, who is almost always a woman. If I identify with the non-female characters because of a powerful resistance to these feelings, then I am forced to accept the male view of Kanga. As Judith Fetterley puts it in *The Resisting Reader*, the female reader often "is asked to identify with a self-hood [a male self] that defines itself in opposition to her; she is required to identify against herself" (xii). Such a misogynistic characterization must raise uncomfortable issues for children, even though they are less likely to identify with Kanga than with the more likeable Pooh and Piglet. Exactly how young and old female readers identify with characters is only beginning to be studied. However, as K. K. Ruthven asks,

Do we read only to fortify the Self, and never to experience the Other? In the liberal humanist tradition, books are seen as constituting vistas on the Other as well as mirrors of the Self. . . . But if the Self happens to be female and the Other male, and reading is construed solely as reading-for-self identity, the reading of androtexts [male-centered texts] poses a dilemma. "The real question," according to Josephine Donovan,

“is not whether a woman *can* identify with the subjective consciousness of the self if it is male, but whether she *should* [italics his] given her own political and social environment.” (42)

It is sufficient to point out how problematic it is when a female reader or a pro-feminist male reader reads the scene between Kanga and Piglet. And as Jonathan Culler notes in his exploration of various assumptions of patriarchal criticism,

Indeed, if one tried to imagine the literary criticism of a patriarchal culture, one might predict several likely concerns: (1) that the role of the author would be conceived as a paternal one and any maternal functions deemed valuable would be assimilated to paternity; (2) that much would be invested in paternal authors, to whose credit everything in their textual progeny would rebound; (3) that there would be great concern about which meanings were legitimate and which illegitimate (since the paternal author's role in the generation of meanings can only be inferred); and that criticism would expend great efforts to develop principles for, on the one hand, determining which meanings were truly the author's own progeny, and on the other hand, controlling intercourse with other texts so as to prevent the proliferation of illegitimate interpretations. Numerous aspects of criticism, including the preference for metaphor over metonymy, the conception of the author, and the concern to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate meanings, can be seen as part of the promotion of the paternal. Phallocentrism unites a interest in patriarchal authority, unity of meaning, and certainty of origin. (60-61)

IV Phallocentrism and Popular Culture

Another way in which a phallocentric reading of the Pooh stories has been reinforced has been through their absorption into the popular culture. Capitalizing on the huge sale of Pooh books, there appeared in 1965 a Pooh-style of clothes: “shaggy bear” pullovers and “bear brown” toggle coats with hoods of “balloon-red” and “honey-beige” (Swann 133). The clothing—and placemats and dolls and mugs—sold because Pooh, the literary character, had entered American popular culture as an icon.

But a popular culture item like a placemat becomes a text itself, in the same sense that Eco considers a cartoon a text (16-17). And unlike the books, it is a text of signs, not of signifiers. For example, the placemat privileges the main text when it shows Pooh in various stages of licking a honey pot. It implies that the main text is the only text, that there is no hidden text. The placemat does this by pulling the scene out

of its original context and focusing on it, so the viewer can take a close look. In the Pooh scene, the effect of this close-up is to fixate the reader on a simpler element of the story, Pooh's gluttony. Thus, his characterization is reduced to the personification of Gluttony, a standard type that reinforces a simplistic – but non-threatening – view of human nature in the viewer or reader. So, by making the text fit into comfortable formulas, the Pooh products encourage readers to stick to the main text, to the most conventional reading, as opposed to encouraging them to search for a sub-text, e.g., to take a psychoanalytic or feminist approach, or simply to approach the text from a number of critical perspectives. Thus, popular culture influences the reading of the original texts because it works to control the interpretations of a literary work, which, as Culler points out, is a male defense (of the status quo); defensiveness is required because literature can foment political discord.

The history and popularization of the Pooh stories suggest ways in which popular culture reinforces patriarchal culture, which is much concerned with power and control in all areas of culture. Both the Pooh books and the Pooh products are tied together by a hidden sexual ideology.⁵ But while some books purport to tell one ideology, a careful reading often reveals another. Some books, in effect, question the ideologies they articulate (Ruthven 32).

IV A Feminist Reading

What, then, is the appeal of the Pooh books for females? What first strikes me about the Pooh stories is that they are about building a community (Bruffee, unnumbered). The two books are constructed around a series of episodes concerning the development of social relations among the characters. For most of the two books, the activities of the characters are flexible and unstructured. It is valuable to contrast this free-form community in Chapter VI with the socially structured community in Chapter II of the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In this chapter, Tom figures out how to avoid most of the work of white-washing Aunt Polly's fence: his solution comes easily, since he lives in a patriarchal, capitalist society which provides a model of social behavior. "He had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it – namely that in order to make a man or boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to obtain" (22). His discovery, of course, is the principle behind the American Dream. Using this principle, he creates a capitalist-worker relationship among

himself and his friends in order to get his own work done.

Such a scene of economic exploitation is alien to the world of the Pooh stories. There are the tricks on Kanga and Tigger, but such pranks strike the reader as more innocent since they are not placed in a "realistic" economic-social context but in a child's fantasy world. Even the game of floating sticks is abandoned before it becomes a serious competition.

Of course, the desire for power exists in Milne's fictional world. There are individual egos to contend with, like Owl's and Eeyore's. But to the extent that they seek control, they are made to appear ridiculous. It is the cooperative spirit and kindness of Pooh and Piglet that are celebrated in the books. Special power *is* bestowed on Christopher Robin: he is the one to whom all the characters turn for advice and he often saves the day. So he is already to some degree an authority figure to the animals, and, later in the story, when he goes to school, his authority will grow. But what is most appealing about Christopher Robin is that, as a little boy, his maleness is not yet a fixed quality. One of the qualities emphasized in Shepard's sketches is the undifferentiated "childness" of Christopher, his soft body with its undefined musculature. In illustrations, Christopher is sometimes dressed in a bonnet-like hat and a smock or a unisex slicker, which further feminizes him. Of course, the real Christopher Robin strongly resembled Shepard's drawings, but clearly, Milne could have had Shepard recast Christopher's image if the author wanted to make him less androgynous.

It is Christopher's androgynous quality that makes him such an attractive character to female readers of different ages. Women and girls can easily identify with Christopher's girlish appearance and his emotional range. For example, when Pooh and Piglet hunt a Woozle, and Pooh realizes they have been tracing their own footsteps, Pooh berates himself.

"I have been Foolish and Deluded," said he,
"and I am a bear of No Brain at All."
"You're the Best Bear in All the World," said
Christopher Robin soothingly. (43)

As a little boy, Christopher Robin is still concerned with the web of human feelings, not with abstractions, such as right and wrong. For most of the books, his autonomy from his father or the forest creatures is not an issue. To the contrary, he seeks to be close to the other characters, and especially to Pooh. His attachment to Pooh is what

psychoanalytic critic Nancy Chodorow would call primary love and primary identification, because it is based on the pre-oedipal perfect sense of oneness with the mother. In Chapter 1, Christopher's oneness with Pooh is emphasized by the little boy's carrying the bear with him everywhere. Given this kind of characterization, no wonder Christopher Robin appeals to female readers of all ages. And although he has the most authority in the Hundred Acre Wood, he is actually just a figurehead. His father, the teller of the story, has the real authority, since he controls the narrative, as I will demonstrate later in the paper. Christopher is the receiver of male narratives, not the writer of them.

As a feminist, I believe the turning point in the books occurs when "We Learn What Christopher Robin Does in the Mornings" (74) – he goes to school. Once Christopher becomes "Educated," he must leave the world of Pooh and the other animals, accept his gender, the law of patriarchy and its language. Juliet Mitchell describes this acceptance as "the moment of the symbolic. The symbol is the point of organization, the point where sexuality is constructed as meaning, where what was heterogeneous, what was not symbolized, becomes organized, becomes created around these two poles, masculine and not masculine: feminine" (290). One takes a sexual identity only within the framework of patriarchal law and language, what Mitchell calls the symbolic world. This is "the patriarchal sexual and social order of modern class-society, structured around the 'transcendental signifier' of the phallus, dominated by the Law which the father embodies" (Eagleton 187–88). Before Christopher Robin starts school, the characters exist in a pre-symbolic world, often described in modern criticism as the semiotic world, based on Kristeva's definition.

In the symbolic order, most elements of the linguistic system, such as syntax, pronunciation, signs and nomination, have been established and fixed. Yet, as the infant's first attempts at communication show, there is an order of linguistic phenomena [the semiotic order] which, while not clearly intelligible, still has significance. Although these sounds are seemingly meaningless, the unintelligible verbalizations produced by infants do show that human speech cannot be circumscribed to the established network of signification. Instinctual sounds and rhythms which resist meaning stand in opposition to the symbolic order, and they unsettle and subvert the expected normative forms of discourse codified by our linguistic practices—that is to say, authorized in the Name-of-the-Father. (Green and Kahn 73)

Terry Eagleton explains the symbolic order more fully.

This rhythmic pattern can be seen as a form of language, though it is not yet meaningful. For language as such to happen, this heterogeneous flow must be as it were chopped up, articulated into stable terms, so that in entering the symbolic order this 'semiotic' process is repressed. The repression, however, is not total: for the semiotic can still be discerned as a kind of pulsional pressure within language itself . . . in contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, silence and absence. The semiotic is the 'other' of language which is nonetheless intimately entwined with it. Because it stems from the pre-Oedipal phase, it is bound up with the child's contact with the mother's body, . . . (188)

Chapter V in *The House at Pooh Corner* is the chapter where the semiotic world gives way to the symbolic. Milne's playful use of language that fills both Pooh volumes is well represented in this chapter – the distinctive dependent clauses that serve as chapter titles, his use of capitals to show the speaker's attribution of importance to the word ("It was a Captainish sort of day"), the unorthodox spelling of Christopher Robin's first notice:

GON OUT
BACKSON
BISY
BACKSON.
C.R.

Milne's most sustained language game, however, is Pooh's hums, which are close to the early form of language Kristeva describes as the rhythmic pattern that is not yet meaningful. This hum, appropriately enough, is called "NOISE":

Oh, the butterflies are flying,
Now the winter days are dying,
And the primroses are trying
To be seen.

And the turtle-doves are cooing,
And the woods are up and doing,
And the violets are blue-ing
In the green.

Oh, the honey-bees are gumming
On their little wings, and humming
That the summer, which is coming,
will be fun.

And the cows are almost cooing,
 And the turtle-doves are mooing,
 Which is why a Pooh is poohing
 In the sun.

For the spring is really springing;
 You can see a skylark singing,
 And the blue-bells, which are ringing,
 Can be heard.

And the cuckoo isn't cooing,
 But he's clucking and he's oooing,
 And a Pooh is simply poohing
 Like a bird. (82)

Rabbit asks the poet, "Did you make that song up?" and Pooh explains, "It isn't Brain . . . it comes to me sometimes" (83). Here Pooh unknowingly describes himself as of semiotic disposition, being open to his instinctual drives as they affect language making. Of course, Pooh's "poohing" is an expression of the force of Milne's, his authorial persona's, semiotic current. Another expression is his choice to start the second Pooh book with a "Contradiction" instead of an introduction, a choice that makes sense narratively, but which subverts the form of the introduction by beginning instead with a non-introduction.

In both Pooh books, all these expressions of the semiotic become threatened once Christopher Robin learns to spell. This is because, in doing so, he has repressed the semiotic and accepted the symbolic, which, in effect, is the law and language of the father. For the reader, at least, Christopher's "moment of the symbolic" is undercut by Eeyore's discovery that an *A* is a thing that even a Rabbit knows, not something "great" and "glorious" as he believed a few minutes before.

Thus, when Christopher learns to speak patriarchal discourse, he unknowingly accepts the necessity of sexual difference, of distinct gender roles. It is Lacan, the French psychoanalyst, who has tied together sexual differentiation and the human relationship to language. In Lacan's theory of sexual difference, masculinity and femininity

are not fixed qualities but the mark that distinguishes them means that each is the condition of the other and at no point can they occupy the same place. They are vehicles . . . for meaning but have not meaning of themselves. . . . Because all societies make this distinction between the

sexes, femininity and masculinity are universal signifiers, signifying only their relationship to each other, which means their difference from each other. (Mitchell 241–42)

To put it simply, Lacan assumes that sexual difference is not just biologically determined – an essence – but instead socially determined – a social construct which is dependent on language for its formation. In effect, then, sexual difference depends upon the child entering the symbolic order, which Lacan calls the “Name-of-the-Father.” Jane Gallop explains the meaning of these terms: “Lacan’s Name-of-the-Father operates explicitly in the register of language. The Name-of-the-Father: the patronym, patriarchal law, patriarchal identity, language as our inscription into patriarchy” (47).

As Kristeva points out, the symbolic and the semiotic are finally inseparable: the carnival has to define itself in relation to the church. Still, gender is highly threatening in the semiotic world since it brings with it the realm of The-Name-of-the-Father. In the Pooh stories, the two characters who are given an unusual emphasis as outsiders are Kanga and Tigger. I point this out because feminist critics find that irregular elements in the text, like the presence of an “outsider,” help reveal a subtext. Kanga and Tigger do not fit in with life in the forest, although a case can be made that they are no more extreme characterizations than that of Eeyore. What is distinctive about Kanga is that she is sexed. She is a mother with a child so her femininity is a fixed quality. Except for the Milne persona who tells the stories, she is the only character who is an adult and whose sexuality has been distinguished (although, of course, not illustrated in Shepard’s delicate sketches).

Tigger too is a character who is set apart from the community. Although Tigger is not sexed, there is much in his characterization to suggest an unbridled physicality. In “CHAPTER II In Which Tigger Comes to the Forest and Has Breakfast,” we see Tigger’s uncivilized behavior. Tigger says to Pooh,

“Excuse me for a moment, but there’s something climbing up your table,” and with a loud *Worraworraworraworraworra* he jumped at the end of the tablecloth, pulled it to the ground, wrapped himself up in it three times, rolled to the other end of the room, and, after a terrible struggle, got his head into the daylight again, and said cheerfully: “Have I won?”

“That’s my tablecloth,” said Pooh, as he began to unwind Tigger.

“I wondered what it was,” said Tigger.

"It goes on the table and you put things on it."

"Then why did it try to bite me when I wasn't looking?" (23–24)

Of all of Tigger's qualities, the one that annoys the other characters most is his bounciness, which is a clever metaphor for unrestrained physicality. Milne's decision to deal with sexuality and physicality indirectly in the stories might imply his own discomfort with it in any form.

Of course, the attempted expulsions of these characters fail not because Kanga's plan of revenge is better than Rabbit's original plan to teach Kanga a lesson; instead, the expulsions never occur because the subtext that drives the story is the inevitability of a little boy's entering into the symbolic order and becoming masculine—not feminine. Given this text, the sexed characters cannot be driven out, because the child cannot win the struggle against becoming sexual. This conflict over accepting gender is an expression of the major conflict of the story—the struggle against integration into patriarchy.

If my reading is valid, then it becomes clearer why women and girl readers have been drawn to the Pooh stories for over 60 years. The stories affirm female fantasies, attitudes, values, and sympathize in a comforting way with female anxieties. First, there is the powerful fantasy of the semiotic world, which, as Kristeva notes above, is tied up with the mother's body; of the possibility of resisting socialization into a male-centered culture and a masculine role which does not allow space or time "to do Nothing."

Second, the stories respect what is traditionally given low status in patriarchal society, nurturing and emotion. For example, in response to Eeyore's disillusionment with male knowledge—"What is Learning?" "A thing Rabbit knows! Ha!" (90)—Piglet gives Eeyore a bunch of violets because he thought "how sad it was to be an Animal who never had a bunch of violets picked for him" (86).

Third, there is the attitude best represented by Pooh of accepting the physical side of oneself: whenever he feels a "little eleven o'clockish," he responds to his urges. Interestingly, that fact endears the character to the reader because Pooh's attitude is not to rank order the intellectual over the physical, a hierarchical state of mind that has a long history in androcentric culture. In spite of Milne's satirizing of Kanga's maternal acts, the stories basically accept physicality. Perhaps Milne was able to portray such acceptance despite his own discomfort (as suggested by his irritation with Tigger's lack of physical restraint), by making Christopher's defining trait his mind and Pooh's his physicality. In other words, instead of creating one round character—

integrating the mind and the body – Milne draws two flat characters – splitting the mind from the body. The hidden function of this split in the stories may be to allow Christopher to be less earthy by projecting the animal aspects of human nature onto Pooh. One of the paradoxes of the Pooh characterization is that it celebrates the physical at the same time it devalues it: Pooh, the honey-eater, is the most loveable character in the books, but, nevertheless, a bear “of very little brain.” Even as a poet, Pooh operates from the physical side, not from the intellectual: his hums, like baby talk, express the instinct to make noise.

Finally, the stories express the anxieties of the female reader. For both feminist and non-feminist women, the cost of living in a patriarchy as an inferior, as an “Other,” is – at the very least – a great deal of anxiety. The Pooh stories help women escape these effects of sexism by raising the possibility of an eventual return to a kinder, more humanistic time. In his “Contradiction,” the author assures us that “it isn’t really Good-bye, because the Forest will always be there . . . and anybody who is Friendly with Bears can find it” (x). In effect, the author is saying that the grown child can return to the semiotic world, the world of the mother.⁶

But the structure of both books militates against ever freeing one’s self from the Name-of-the-Father. After all, the author tries hard to control the interpretation of his literary work. For example, he made the artistic decision to narrate the stories himself and assimilate the maternal role. And he also takes great pains to remind Christopher and the reader of his authority as the author, his paternity of both text and protagonist, and of the unity he wants in his stories. Interrupting the flow of episodes, Milne returns the reader to the narrative frame:

“Is that the end of the story?” asked Christopher Robin.

“That’s the end of that one. There are others.”

“About Pooh and Me?”

“And Piglet and Rabbit and all of you. Don’t you remember?”

“I do remember, and then when I try to remember, I forget.”

“That day when Pooh and Piglet tried to catch the Heffalump – —”

“They didn’t catch it, did they?”

“No.”

“Pooh couldn’t, because he hasn’t any brain. Did *I* catch it?”

“Well, that comes into the story.”

Christopher Robin nodded.

“I do remember,” he said, “only Pooh doesn’t very well, so that’s why he likes having it told to him again. Because it’s a real story and not just a remembering.”

"That's how *I* feel," I said . . .
 "Coming to see me have my bath?"
 "I might," I said. (20–21)

Earlier in the paper, I made a distinction between ideologies that writers are aware of and those that they are unaware of. Milne, who despised the demands of realism that critics made on him, was probably unaware of the hidden ideology of male dominance, sexual ideology, that ties the Pooh stories together. Sexual ideology "operates by repressing what is repressible and displacing what is not, thus producing false resolutions of manifest contradictions in our society" (Ruthven 32). In the Pooh stories, women are out of sight, and England, an ancient patriarchal society, is displaced by the Hundred Acre Wood. Milne creates, in effect, an all-male Eden, a pre-sexual and pre-literate world. Nonetheless, there is a great deal for women and girls to like in the Pooh stories, such as their respect for domesticity and close friendship, and Milne's empathy for the sadness of Christopher's initiation into the world of men.

Notes

¹ How else can one explain the fact that *Winnie Ille Pu*, the Latin translation by Alexander Leonard, was on the best seller list in 1961?

² The specific defenses and distortions of female readings have not yet been fully considered by feminist criticism.

³ All further references to *Winnie-the-Pooh* and to *The House at Pooh Corner* will be to the Dell "Yearling" edition and cited in the text.

⁴ Most critics assume that Kanga is based on the English nanny type or on "Nanny" who is described in *The Enchanted Places*, Christopher Milne's autobiography. But, as the New Critics pointed out years ago, biographical knowledge has often been used to give critics the false authority to "control a text" and close down discussion about it. Thus, although the source of Kanga's character may be biographical, this should not discourage the reader from further analysis of the Kanga character.

⁵ Ideology is "that never fully articulated system of assumptions by which a society operates, and which permeates everything it produces, including of course what is deemed to be literature . . . 'Ideology' is manifest in the ways we represent ourselves (and are presented) to one another; 'sexual ideology' determines, for example, what is deemed to be socially acceptable behavior for

men and women. The function of the ideology is to justify the status quo and to persuade the powerless that their powerlessness is inevitable" (Ruthven 31).

⁶ He is not saying, like Kristeva, that the semiotic will continue to exist within the symbolic, but that it is always there as a separate entity, at least as a temporary alternative.

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