

*The Metafictive Playgrounds  
of Disney's Winnie the Pooh:  
The Movie Is a Book*

Paula T. Connolly

From the beginning, Disney films have reflected Walt Disney's consciousness of his own creative indebtedness to books. Among those films, it is *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* (1966) and its later accompanying featurettes that most clearly show Disney's exploration of the elasticity of mediums and how the "movie" may function as a "book" and, in reciprocal fashion, how the book (in this case, A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*) carries visual elements of movies. The film ultimately presents the most thoroughgoing metafictional representation of any Walt Disney movie. Indeed, *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* is, in many ways, a metafictional playground, overtly acknowledging itself as fiction, exploring the intersections of mediums, and providing a panoply of comments on the nature of film as book through narrative framing, verbal and visual punning, and narratorial interaction.

Books apparently played an important role in the Disney household, and Walt Disney's wife, Lillian, would often read to their daughters, Diane and Sharon, throughout their childhoods. According to Dave Smith, Director of the Walt Disney Archives, Walt Disney was first captivated by A.A. Milne's stories when he heard his young daughters' laughter as Lillian read them tales of Winnie-the-Pooh at bedtime ("Story"). The origin of Disney's interest in these stories says much about his faith in children as readers and audience: if the stories captivated his own children, they stood a good chance—he apparently believed—of captivating others. When he decided to make a movie of the Milne tales, Walt Disney noted enthusiastically that "these are good stories" ("Story"). That a book—particularly, as in this case and many others

in Disney's oeuvre—served as a central motivation for a film, also speaks to the personal nature of discovery, reading, filmmaking, and storytelling for Walt Disney.

Author A.A. Milne published four books that included the character of Christopher Robin: two collections of poetry and two storybooks, each illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard. In the first poetry collection, *When We Were Very Young* (1924), “Mr. Edward Bear” appears in the poem “Teddy Bear” (87–93) and a stuffed bear appears in several of the illustrations (see 82, 87–93, 102); in the second collection, *Now We Are Six* (1927), Winnie-the-Pooh appears by name as “Pooh” in a couple of poems (see 35–37, 67) and illustratively appears in a good many more (see 32–37, 44–45, 48–49, 57, 90, 99, 101), some of which also show other characters such as Piglet, Rabbit, and Eeyore (44–45, 57). Yet it is most famously in his two storybooks, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), where Milne tells the adventures of Christopher Robin and his cast of toy-friends. Revealing the gentle foibles of characters in a protected world of childhood,<sup>1</sup> the stories are organized as independent chapters structured in episodic style and perfectly styled for bedtime reading. Indeed, in the narrative frame of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Milne establishes the orality and intimacy of the stories as the father narrator accedes to Christopher Robin's request for a story—the ensuing tales about Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends being the intranarrative result. Indeed, these stories were told to the real-life Christopher Robin as well, and the stuffed toys Milne bought for his son—including Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Tigger, Kanga, and Roo—became the foundation for his published tales. Interestingly, both the intranarrative fiction of storytelling and the extratextual history of parent-storyteller evoke the experiences of Disney's daughters—and many other children—who would hear the stories read aloud to them by parents. It is this presentation of the stories as oral tales that informs Disney's adaptation, both in the representation of film as a book and in the continued presence of the storyteller-narrator.

Although Disney's daughters read the British-authored *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories, as Walt Disney adapted the stories to film,<sup>2</sup> one of his concerns was that American audiences at large might not be familiar with Milne's characters or books. So while he had initially planned to film a selection of Milne stories as a full-length animated feature, Disney decided to introduce Pooh and his friends to American audiences incrementally and instead created a “featurette”-length production of just under a half-hour, with other featurettes to follow (“Story”). The first of those, *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, was theatrically released in early 1966 as the introductory short for Disney's full-length live action *The Ugly Dachshund* starring Dean Jones and Suzanne

Pleshette. The title of Howard Thomas's review in *The New York Times*, “A Disney Package: Don't Miss the Short” summarized the view of many critics: “the treat [...] from Walt Disney is not [*The Ugly Dachshund*...] but the delightful cartoon supplement.”<sup>3</sup> Howard's hope that “this beguiling miniature” “means a whole series to come” came true with the later release of two other featurettes based on this initial plan: *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* (1968), which won an Academy Award for Best Cartoon, Short Subject, followed by *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too* (1974). The three shorts were then later collected and re-released as a re-titled full-length movie, *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (1977), with newly created animated transition-bridges connecting the three separate featurettes. Walt Disney died in December of 1966, the year *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* was released, yet his work in re-envisioning a new *Winnie-the-Pooh* for film not only provided the grounding for later Disney Studio productions of the material,<sup>4</sup> but also served as a tribute to his own fascination with books and adapting them into film.

Walt Disney's consciousness of the relationship of films to books is perhaps most evident in his longstanding use of “the book” as a narrative frame. The animated action of his first full-length feature, for example, is shown as nestled within the pages of a book whose gold-embossed cover announces, as if a second movie title shot, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The framing device not only metanarratively reminds readers that the film is a “story,” but in doing so, it defines the book as a type of authenticating document for the core animated text and thus implicitly argues the primacy of the book. Moreover, it positions the book as a stabilizing frame which safely contains and defines—in some ways, protects—stories. Through the “Once upon a time...” and “...happily ever after” literally inscribed on the opening and ending pages of the framing book in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), we learn that films are animated books, yet it is books which can expand concepts of time—moving us to the long-past before the movie's beginning and an unseen future of happiness.

This seemingly rudimentary casting of a narrative frame functions as a necessary peritext to orient the audience, as when the introductory book frame provides backstory for a film that begins with Snow White already working as a maid. No narrator reads to filmgoers here, and audiences were expected to read the words of the book's opening pages, thus initially interacting with the film as a written text. That these framing pages hold both verbal and illustrated texts provides a liminal area of book/film and directs an exchange of medium to move the reader to become a reader/viewer, negotiating both words and pictures for a short time before transitioning fully into the “moving pictures” of film.



The placement of these words on the page—here and in Piglet's description—argues a basic meta-narrative point: that words hold within them action, movement, story itself. In Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, words are sometimes freed from the constraints of typical linear placement and rearranged to show what they are; that is, they physically represent what they tell of.

In punning, too, words are often released from strict confines, particularly of single-minded definitions. Indeed, puns also become a way for metafictional commentary as they self-reflexively note the malleability of language, and how language can be both constructed and misconstrued. They further show the game-play of language, particularly how punning makes language a conscious construction open to multiple meanings—at least to the audience—even when it seems unconscious in characters themselves. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories are richly populated with verbal jokes and punning, as when Eeyore is described as “fond” of his tail, and “attached to it” as well (*Winnie* 54). Disney's featurette reiterates some of Milne's puns (as when Eeyore notes that “It's not much of a tail, but I'm sort of attached to it”) and also adds new puns (as when Owl describes how his “Uncle Clyde didn't give a hoot for tradition” or when Christopher Robin asks “What's up?” and Pooh responds in a literal fashion “Tigger and Roo are up” indicating the two stuck in a tree).

Disney's sense of energized story in *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*—that is, of readerliness, puns, viscosity and movement of the page—is both evocative of Milne's and Shepard's work and extends the metanarrative elements of the books. One sees this in the metanarrative punning of *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*. In their objective of making the Milne stories more “American,” animators added a new character: the working class Gopher, an excavation expert called in when Pooh is stuck in Rabbit's house. The punning that is typical of Milne's writing continues with this character, as when Owl asks Gopher about the cost of extricating Pooh—“What's the charge?”—and Gopher responds, “About seven sticks of dynamite.” Yet through Gopher, punning develops to include extratextual referents, as when Gopher announces

(several times) “I'm not in the book,” his reference to an unlisted phone number a playful wink toward Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. That Gopher's punning functions as an allusion to Milne's work shows the way in which allusions engender metafictional play. Disney films at times acknowledge the import of books by carrying allusions to original stories, bits of inside-information for readers who know the movie's story-source or other story versions. At the end of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for example, that a clasp comb decorates the final book-page's promise that “...they lived happily ever after,” alerts attentive readers to Grimm's tale, where Snow White had succumbed not only to the Queen's temptation to an apple but also to a comb,<sup>6</sup> and serves as a playful acknowledgement that more story lies behind the film than viewers see. Recycling images also implicitly acknowledges intertextuality, showing a permeability and connectability of films in Disney's oeuvre.<sup>7</sup> This occurs in the later *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* where Pooh's nightmare of shapeshifting honey pots and dancing elephants borrows images from Disney's much earlier *Dumbo* (1941). The effect of such recycling of images is inherently metafictional as one film re-creates and recursively comments on another.

*Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* and its following two featurettes demonstrate metafictional elements not only in narrative frame and allusion, but more famously in the design of the films themselves. The world of the film is literally depicted as a book in which these characters live and have their adventures. This structural framework both highlights reading conventions and reader expectations at the same time that it subverts those conventions through imaginative restructuring and self-reflexive commentary on the nature of the book. This allows opportunities for metafictional play in several ways, particularly in as much as metafiction often “concerns itself [...] with particular conventions of the novel, to display the process of their construction” (Waugh 4) and “offers both innovation and familiarity through the individual reworking and undermining of familiar conventions” (Waugh 12). Especially in Disney's translation of “book” to “moving book” or “book-in-film” one sees this play between “innovation and familiarity.” Story segments within the featurettes begin with chapter titles, not only showing the film as a book, but also recognizing the organizing structure of books and stories—here, how chapters tell story segments. The featurettes also move fluidly between scenes of full-pictorial animation and others with words and pages. In Walt Disney's rendition of *Winnie the Pooh*, scenes in which characters seem to be fully ensconced in an animated (unworded) secondary world at times pull back to reveal that the character inhabits an illustration on a printed page. The static watercolor-brushed backgrounds remind one

pleasure,<sup>8</sup> including the pleasures of bright colors and quick movement, absurd caricatures of people and animals, slapstick comedy, music, and even the pleasure of fright, as conveyed through the concluding lengthy scene of Ichabod being chased by the Headless Horseman.

One of the most interesting elements of *The Adventures* is that the film both highlights the pleasures of texts and contrasts pleasurable consumption of texts with texts which cause suffering. The movie foregrounds written texts for, immediately after the opening credits, the first shot is of a stained glass window which then dissolves into a library. The camera appears to be outside the library, and the library is dark until a light comes on within, as if the narrator, Basil Rathbone had stepped into the library to peruse his books and then select *The Wind in the Willows* for viewers' pleasure. This notion is supported through the narration, which begins, "If you were asked to choose the most fabulous character in English literature, who would it be? Robin Hood? King Arthur? Becky Sharp? Sherlock Holmes? Oliver Twist perhaps? Well, any one of them would be an excellent choice. Still, for the most fabulous character of all, I would nominate a toad: J. Thaddeus Toad, Esq." As Basil Rathbone speaks these words, the camera pans right across the volumes of the library as if the narrator is scanning them himself, looking for *The Wind in the Willows*. The list of characters Rathbone provides, with the exception of *Vanity Fair's* Becky Sharp, would be recognizable to young readers and viewers, and certainly one would assume stories involving Robin Hood, King Arthur, and Sherlock Holmes would be consumed with pleasure by young readers and viewers. Although *Oliver Twist* is clearly visible as the camera pans across the shelves, books containing the other characters mentioned by Rathbone cannot be seen. Those volumes closest to *The Wind in the Willows* are, on either side of Grahame's novel, *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales in Modern English* and a two-volume *History of the Highland Clans*, and, a little more remotely, a seven-volume edition of *The Works of Edward FitzGerald*. While *The Canterbury Tales* can certainly produce pleasure, as could, depending upon the reader, the other works, *The Adventures* presents a contrast in reading material—that which children are likely to search out on their own versus that which they might be instructed to read. While instruction might produce pleasure, its purpose is not pleasure. Rathbone's description of *The Wind in the Willows*—"this delightful little book"—is not likely to be a descriptor for the volumes surrounding it on the shelves, nor should we expect *The Wind in the Willows'* vibrant illustrations in those other texts.

Within the filmed narrative, though, the pleasure of reading and storytelling is contrasted with adults' experiences of written texts as causing or expressing suffering. The first written text we see once the adaptation of *The*

*Wind in the Willows* begins is a letter delivered to Rat from MacBadger, which demands that he and Mole come to Toad Hall. The words "must" and "at once" are underlined, and the letter concludes "Urgent!!" Furthermore, there are several inkblots at the beginning of MacBadger's signature. These details suggest that a crisis is in progress. When viewers see MacBadger at Toad Hall, he writes at a desk littered with papers. Behind him is a massive floor-to-ceiling bookcase, but rather than the shelves being filled with books to provide pleasure or at least leisure, the shelves are filled with ledgers. Framing MacBadger with the towering bookcase behind him suggests that he is being crushed under the weight of the accounts he has taken upon himself to settle. To MacBadger's left is a grandfather clock, which indicates he is under the pressures of time, whereas no clock is visible in the library where *The Adventures* begins. This library is not a cozy, warmly-lit refuge but a stark and demanding office. The written material MacBadger reads—invoices—produce no pleasure, only suffering, and as he attempts to settle Toad's accounts, numerous bill collectors pound on the doors to the manor house. The texts with which MacBadger works cause him so much suffering that he confesses to Mole and Rat, "I'm practically a nervous wreck."

A second form of adult reading material associated with suffering in *The Adventures* is journalism. At each stage of Toad's legal troubles—his arrest, conviction, appeals, escape, and exoneration—the screen is filled with images of various newspapers. While until his appeals Toad headlines each newspaper viewers see, the other front-page stories generally involve fatal or near-fatal violence. Upon Toad's arrest, the first newspaper we see is the *London Journal*. While one story connects to Toad's mania for speed—"Seaver's Yacht Finishes Well Ahead in Race"—the others intrigue readers with details of murder: "Man in Warrenton Gives up in Killing" and "2 Die in Gunfight at Doors of Palace." At the conclusion of Toad's trial, the *London Tribune* prints the stories "Girl's Body Exhumed" and "Reconstruction Follows Storm in Puerto Rico." The *Star's* coverage of the trial shares space with "Deputies Fight in Paris Chamber" and "Victory Sighted in Fight against Yellow Fever." Most sensationalistic of all is an unnamed newspaper which includes the headlines "Lightning Bolt Kills Two, Hurts Several Others" and "Meteorite Falls Near Baby." That these various newspapers pepper in sports news (such as in another unnamed newspaper, where the stories "Chinese Pirates Kill Two Britons" and "Bigger-Wicket Cricket" exist side-by-side) and ads for ale suggests that the newspapers are not providing important news as much as they are selling entertainment, and that in the adult world, literary entertainment is debased to enjoying stories about human suffering.

The presence of texts that cause suffering reaches its high point during

Toad's trial, which begins with the clerk reading the charges against Toad so quickly that they cannot be understood. Since the clerk reads the charges from a pad of paper, the suggestion is that only those with access to the piece of paper upon which the charges are written may know the charges brought against Toad. This focus upon ownership of paper allowing one to harm others without their clear knowledge is revisited at the end of the trial when Toad signs over the deed to Toad Hall in exchange for the weasels' motor car. Because the deed is in Mr. Winky's possession, provided he keep the deed hidden, he can both own Toad Hall and send Toad to gaol, not to mention cause Toad's friends MacBadger, Mole, and Rat to consider Toad a liar. Only through the childlike transformation of the deed into an item of pleasure—a paper airplane—is Toad able to reclaim the deed in an extended action scene toward the end of the first half of *The Adventures*. The scene ends with the weasels being buried under books. These books are not the ledgers from the office where we first see MacBadger but volumes similar in size to those seen in the library at the beginning of *The Adventures*. Thus, Toad is able to end the nightmare of adult texts and re-establish the primacy of pleasure. As agents of the adult world, MacBadger and Rat are distressed that Toad continues his mania for speed after his exoneration, yet only through indulgence in pleasure could Toad rescue his hall. That Toad's triumph is also a triumph of literature, of his gaining control of the narrative through control of the deed, is highlighted both by the portrait of Toad over a fireplace in Toad Hall—he stands with a large tome under his arm—and by Toad's parting words: "Hello you fellows, come, I'll show you the world, travel, change, excitement." These are also the last words of the volume of *The Wind of the Willows* viewers see put back on the shelf.

At the conclusion of the *Wind in the Willows* segment of *The Adventures* we return to the library and a seamless shift in narrators occurs as Basil Rabbone gives way to Bing Crosby, who intones, "Speaking of fabulous characters, England has produced a bumper crop of them. But don't forget over here in the colonies we've managed to come up with a few of our own. How about Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Johnny Appleseed, Black Bart, Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, and, of course, the one and only Ichabod Crane." While the opening of *The Adventures* contrasts *The Wind in the Willows* with adult and canonical works of British literature, the American portion of the library depicts little contrast. Titles of books surrounding *Ichabod Crane*, as "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" is retitled, bear the names of most of the figures mentioned by Crosby. Sprinkled in are the volumes *Life in America*, *The American Past*, and *The American Language*, all of which suggest both a singular national culture and strong connection between American literature and American

history, since many of the characters in the list Crosby provides are historical figures.

In contrast to Toad, who is never shown to read and only writes to sign over Toad Hall, Ichabod Crane is depicted enjoying the pleasures of written texts immediately, his long nose and face obscured by the book he reads as he walks into Sleepy Hollow. That his book can conceal the pie he pilfers from a worker at the bakery adds to the pleasures of the text, for the action links intellectual and sensual pleasures. Within the schoolhouse, Crane continues to have his face buried into book as he walks the aisle between desks and spies upon the contents of each student's lunch basket. Literacy and gastronomic pleasure are linked once more as Ichabod jots down his evaluation of a roast turkey dinner as he consumes a drumstick. His social calendar then shifts to another sort of pleasurable text, written music, for he underlines in his schedule "Ladies of Sleepy Hollow Choral Society," and there is a dissolve to Ichabod directing three female singers from a piano, all four participants reading from scores. At this point in the film, Ichabod's pleasure in texts is dropped in favor of his pursuit of Katrina and her father's riches. One might assert that Ichabod seals his own fate when he shifts away from finding pleasure in texts to chasing Katrina, but there is also a contrast between written and oral texts in this segment in *The Adventures*. While all of Ichabod's reading and writing activities provide pleasure, including his final act of reading when he receives a personalized invitation from Katrina to Baltus Van Tassel's Halloween frolic, Brom Bones' ghost story "The Headless Horseman," sung by Bing Crosby, no matter how much pleasure it might provide viewers of *The Adventures*, is designed by Brom to spark fear, not pleasure, in its targeted listener. Ichabod Crane not only experiences fear during the relation of the ghost story but also pain, for in his anxiety Crane consumes a hard-boiled egg upon which he had unwittingly dumped an entire shaker of red pepper. Crane's two greatest pleasures, language and food, now cause him suffering.

While in the first half of the film Toad conquers suffering through the play of paper airplanes, the second half seems to reverse direction. Fear, first during "The Headless Horseman" and then in his encounter with the Horseman, replaces Crane's initial pleasure. Except for a brief coda, the film itself ends in the darkness of the forest at night, whereas *The Wind in the Willows* segment concludes at sunrise. Crosby's narration mimics Crane's fear, for his final words are "Man, I'm getting out of here," as *Ichabod Crane* is put back on the shelf quickly and the light in the library is turned off. While the second half of *The Adventures* may seem to be opposed to the first, they remain linked through the vicarious pleasure of experiencing through literary and cinematic narratives that which would be dangerous to experience first-hand.

particularly as the narrator functions as an interactive character, a type of intranarrative Christopher Robin.

In this way, Disney's retelling of Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* protects the boundaries of the book while showing the boundaries of storymaking as permeable and creation as collaborative. Although in *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, Pooh is involved in several misadventures, the otherwise unruffled Gopher shows a sense of alarm when Pooh is finally released from Rabbit's house and seems to be flying out of the book. Knowing what is needed for rescue, Gopher calls, "Quick! Turn the page!" The unseen narrator does as he is bid, and Pooh ends up in a honey tree where he can eat to his heart's (or stomach's) content. Like the middle-class protection of the nursery in Milne's books and the metanarrative book frame of Disney movies, here the book serves as a boundary between the story and the outside world. It functions, in some sense, as the child's playroom of the narrative frame, a necessary insularity that defines the circumference of the toys' existence.

While stories—whether realistic or fantastic—typically carry or must confront "the necessity for narrative plausibility" (Moss 83), in Disney's *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, narrative plausibility is ingeniously trespassed on several levels, all while the film explores the parameters of literary conventions. This occurs most dramatically in the series' most meta-narratively playful scene, when Tigger is stuck at the top of a tree in the third featurette. Having trespassed physical boundaries because he almost "bounced right out of the book" (and viewers see Tigger bounce beyond the top boundary of the page), Tigger's boast—"Some bouncing, huh?"—then breaks the fictional fourth wall of film as he is shown looking directly out of the scene to the viewer whom he has presumably addressed. The "fourth wall" of film here is also the world outside the page of the fictional book as the scene blends the boundaries of book and film.

While Tigger may be aware that there is a world outside the book, he also learns more about its interior workings. Hearing a disembodied and disapproving voice proclaim, "Well, Tigger, your bouncing really got you into trouble this time," Tigger—looking confused—asks, "Say, who are you?" and is told "I'm the narrator." Since Tigger is unable to avail himself of his friends' attempts at rescue, within the limits of characterization and plausible plot, there is no way to get Tigger down from the tree. Reframing the implicit hierarchy in the narrator's judgment of his situation, Tigger counters any conventional notion that the written story is sacrosanct with the logical—yet seemingly infeasible—response, "Well, please, for goodness sake, narrate me down from here." As the narrator accedes to the request, the depicted page is reoriented ninety degrees so that a column of words offers Tigger a ladder

to the ground. Although Christopher Robin tells Tigger that "You can let go now," it is only the intervention of the narrator—who directs Tigger to "look for yourself. You're perfectly safe"—that reassures Tigger. Able to step onto the safety of words, Tigger safely slides to the ground.

This scene presents new imaginative possibilities outside the typical realm of "narrative plausibility" because the story becomes so pliable that nothing is impossible. It is a fanciful and playful scene, one that acknowledges the role between characters and authors that both shape and shift fictive possibilities. It also argues that the book is a construct in which any change can be enacted. Here, the rescue is plausible in the fictively presented world since the characters live in a book and words are a physical part of that constructed environment. Beyond that, of course, this scene metafictionally explores the parameters and possibilities of fiction. This rescue is also possible because of linguistic codes, inasmuch as the construction and placement of words can create fictions which allow one to move beyond the confines of logical "narrative plausibility" and effectively create what is otherwise the "narratively impossible." Here, words make the impossible possible. The perspective, of course, is keenly optimistic: words bring safety to a potentially hopeless situation. They reunite, they connect, they rescue.

The scene also speaks to a confusion—or at least, investigation—of authorship. Tigger speaks to the narrator (not to the author), addressing him as the one with the authority to manipulate the book. Yet it is the character Tigger who initiates a narrative rescue and resolution that can only be accomplished with the help of an unseen presence who literally holds and moves the book. Creating fiction is depicted as a multi-layered co-creation, and the scene fictively interrogates storymaking while it disassembles notions of there being a single authority of a text. This, too, typifies metafiction which "show[s] not only that the 'author' is a concept produced through previous and existing literary and social texts but that what is generally taken to be 'reality' is also constructed and mediated in a similar fashion" (Waugh 16). In *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, the fictional world—of character, narrator, book, and film—presents a thoroughgoing imaginative restructuring of the primary book source, and an examination of the construction of the book and narrative "reality," whatever that might be. In the playground of these featurettes, the book is a site of creativity and a place of balancing counterpoints: of safety and adventure, protection and independence, stasis and movement. David Lewis had described the "boundary breaking" of metafictional stories as occurring "when characters within a story are allowed [...] to wander beyond the narrative level to which they properly belong" (*Reading* 94). These featurettes playfully explore boundaries and boundary-crossings

ords, pages, illustrations, characters—principally, of the book itself; wandering is at the center of that play.

The metafictional elements of *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, and successors, *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* and *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too*, comment on the nature of film as much as the nature of the book. In this case, they remind viewers that they “read” films as much as they read books; that stories make static characters come alive; that words and pictures, imaginatively engaged, are continuously reimagined; that books—and films—are vibrant mediums; that “make believe” and wonder—the possibility of the impossible—lie within both book and story; that storytellers reshape realities and that characters can influence how a story evolves. Walt Disney’s decision to recast Milne’s and Shepard’s works as books-within-films was carried through in the three featurettes. Richard Sherman, who worked on the songs for the series, noted that although Walt Disney “wasn’t there to supervise” the second featurette, he had been involved in its planning. Sherman called it “Walt’s last great achievement” (“Story”). Indeed, particularly the metafictional play in the featurettes beginning with *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, seems a fitting tribute to Walt Disney’s work and a fitting homage, from Disney, to “the book” which he so often called upon in his own creations:

#### Notes

1. For discussion of the Milne books, see Connolly and Wake.
2. Disney acquired non-book rights to Winnie-the-Pooh in 1961 when he began to resculpt the stories into film.
3. See Thwaite about response of Shepard (who didn’t like the Disney production) and Milne’s wife, Daphne (who did). Milne died in 1956, but he had earlier thought Disney would do a good production of Kenneth Grahame’s *Toad of Toad Hall*, writing “It’s the thing for him [Disney], of course, and he would do it beautifully” (Thwaite 151–163).
4. Although there have been a number of Disney Studio versions of the *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories since *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (including the 1988–91 television series *The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* which moved the characters to more anxious situations of a contemporary world), in 2011 the Disney Studio released Disney *Winnie the Pooh*, which runs just over an hour, and hearkens back to the format of the featurettes, with its form as a book in a film and its tales drawn from Milne’s work.
5. For discussions of metafiction and metafictional strategies, see especially Lewis, Moss, Nikolajeva, and Waugh.
6. Disney streamlined Snow White’s susceptibility to the three temptations of the comb, and apple (found in the Grimm’s tale) to only the apple, perhaps to keep audience attention and to diminish understandable charges of Snow White’s vapidly for being tricked three times. See Holliss and Sibley, 8–9.
7. Recently, this recasting has been more explicitly depicted, especially in the way characters are embedded in other films, as if they have a life outside their specific story.

Although difficult to see because of its brevity, for example, *Belle of Beauty and the Beast* (1991) is shown reading while walking along a Paris street in a shot of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996). Other Disney films include images that acknowledge other films, as when Mrs. Potts and Chip of *Beauty and the Beast* (although not anthropomorphized) briefly appear in *Tarzan* (1999).

8. Although the letters seem to blow off the page, as Pooh jumps to the right-hand page, some of the words that had blown away are still there, the space where others may have blown away is not shown, and so may have returned. In this shot, we do not see their absence on the page.

#### Works Cited

- Cinderella*. Dir. Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi. Walt Disney Studios, 1950.
- Connolly, Paula T. “The Marketing of Romantic Childhood: Milne, Disney, and A Very Popular Stuffed Bear.” In *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Post-modern Contestations*. James Holt McGavran, ed. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1999. 188–207.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Winnie-the-Pooh and the House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia*. Twayne’s Masterwork Studies Series. New York: Macmillan-Twayne, 1995.
- Holliss, Richard and Brian Sibley. *Walt Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and the Making of the Classic Film*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Lenard, Alexander. *Winnie the Pooh*. New York: Dutton, 1960.
- Lewis, David. “The Constructedness of Texts: Picture Books and the Metafiction” in *Only Connect: Readings on Children’s Literature*. Shelia Egoft, G.T. Stubbs and L.F. Ashley, eds. Third edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. 259–275.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks: Picturing Text*. London: Routledge Falmer, 2001.
- The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*. Dir. Wolfgang Reitherman and John Lounsbery. Walt Disney Studios, 1977.
- Milne, A.A. *The House at Pooh Corner*. Illus. Ernest H. Shepard. 1928. New York: Puffin-Penguin, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Now We Are Six*. Illus. Ernest H. Shepard. 1927. New York: Dell, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *When We Were Very Young*. Illus. Ernest H. Shepard. 1924. New York: Dell, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Illus. Ernest H. Shepard. 1926. New York: Puffin-Penguin, 1992.
- Moss, Anita. “Varieties of Children’s Metafiction.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 18.2 (Fall 1985): 79–92.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. *Children’s Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic*. New York: Garland, 1996.
- Sipe, Lawrence R. and Caroline E. McGuire. “Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation.” *Children’s Literature in Education* 37 (2006): 291–304.
- Smith, Dave and Steven Clark. *Disney: The First Hundred Years*. New York: Hyperion, 1999.
- Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Dir. (supervising) David Hand. Walt Disney Studios, 1937.
- “The Story Behind the Masterpiece: *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*.” Dir. Harry Arends. Walt Disney Home Video in association with TV is OK Productions. Walt Disney Company, 2001.
- Thompson, Howard. “A Disney Package: Don’t Miss the Short.” *The New York Times* (7 April 1966): 45.



- Thwaite, Ann. *The Brilliant Career of Winnie-the-Pooh: The story of A.A. Milne and his writing for children*. London: Methuen, 1992.
- Wake, Paul. "Waiting in the Hundred Acre Wood: Childhood, Narrative and the A.A. Milne's Works for Children." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 33.1 (January 2007): 34-43.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Methuen, 1984.

DIS

and :  
orch  
pers  
and  
pret  
pop  
The  
wor  
ide

thi

ca  
of  
de  
as  
th  
c  
F  
J  
c