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The World of Pooh:
A Green Study

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Introduction

“*Winnie-the-Pooh* is, as practically everyone knows, one of the greatest books ever written, but it is also one of the most controversial. Nobody can quite agree as to what it really means!”, Frederick Crews¹ observes in the preface of his book in which he sheds some light on A. A. Milne’s stories of Winnie-the-Pooh (ix). Quite a few different approaches have been taken to analyse the Pooh-stories and their characters. Some critics, for example, use parts of the story to demonstrate basic principles of economy (cf. *Creating Experience in the Experience Economy*), whereas others take a psychoanalytical approach and focus on one of the characters (cf. *Pooh and the Psychologists*).

Although a lot of studies can be found about nature and the landscape in the stories of Winnie-the-Pooh, and eco[-]criticism has analysed pastoral literature before, an analysis which combines the pastoral and an eco-critical perspective of the Pooh-stories in particular has not been done before. Pastoral literature presents an idealised kind of relationship between man and nature because human beings are represented as living in a utopian landscape in full harmony with nature. Literary eco-criticism focuses on “the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty, qtd. in Garrard 3). As Garrard makes clear, “modern environmentalism ... relies on the literary genre[] of pastoral” which “imagin[es] the place of humans in nature” in some particular way (2). “[P]astoral has decisively shaped [man’s] constructions of nature ... Even the science of ecology may have been shaped by pastoral in its early stages of development and ... the founding text of eco[-]criticism, *Silent Spring*, drew on the pastoral tradition” (Garrard 33). These reasons have led to the decision to focus on both pastoral elements of *The World of Pooh* as well as to analyse the stories eco-critically.

¹ Although several chapters in Crew’s book seem to be written by different authors, this paper will refer to Crews because critics reveal that his book is a parody on literary criticism (Carpenter 202). Considering the ridiculous names of the authors, he must have come up with the authors himself.

The aim of this paper is to explore the pastoral characteristics of the landscape in *The World of Pooh*, as well as the relationship between the characters and the natural world which they inhabit in the Pooh-stories. By means of comparative analysis of the texts of *The World of Pooh*, including the accompanying illustrations and relevant viewpoints of critics, this paper particularly seeks to address the pastoral landscape in the first place, and additionally takes an eco-critical perspective in analysing the relationship between the text and the natural environment as presented in the stories. The illustrations drawn by E. H. Shepard are included in the analysis, because according to Nikolajeva and Scott, “Milne approved of the original illustrations to [his] works, therefore we might assume that the visual images are congenial to their verbal counterparts” (213).

Chapter 1: The Pastoral Forest in Pooh's World

1.1: General characteristics of the pastoral

Pastoral landscapes in literature traditionally involve “nostalgic image[s] of the supposed peace and simplicity of the life of shepherds and other rural folk in an idealized natural setting” (Abrams 240). Virgil has written pastoral works that present Arcadia, “a mountainous region in Greece”, as the “idealized pastoral milieu” (Abrams 240). Panofsky explains that Virgil has idealised the Arcadian landscape, because in reality the region was hardly liveable for the inhabitants of Arcady (qtd. in Schneidau 163). According to Sauer, Arcady was “a poor, bare, rocky, chilly country, devoid of all the amenities of life and scarcely affording food for a few meager goats” (qtd. in Schneidau 163). Schneidau claims that this idealisation of Arcady has led to “the trivialization of pastoral”, in which nature is mainly opposed to culture and the literary genre became “an indulgent and escapist fantasy” (163).

Schneidau's observations are comparable to Empson's view that pastoral is “any work which opposes simple to complicated life, to the advantage of the former: the simple life may be that of the shepherd, the child, or the working man” (Abrams 241). Terms which are related to either early pastoral writings or to Latin and Greek words for *shepherd* and *herdsman* can also be used for the pastoral, such as *idyll*, *eclogue*, and *bucolic* (Abrams 240), although shepherds are not necessarily present in pastoral literature, as Empson already makes clear.

1.2: Pastoral aspects in *The World of Pooh*

1.2.1 The simple life:

The simple life of which Empson speaks is clearly depicted in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories²: it is a world of a young boy and his (stuffed) animals. There are no shepherds present herding their flocks or “reclining under a spreading beech tree and meditating on the rural muse”, as in some pastoral works of Virgil (Abrams 240), but the lives of the inhabitants of the Hundred Acre Wood and surroundings³ are simple: there are no features in the landscape that seriously disturb their lives, which may imply “that childhood itself is Edenic” (Kuznets 51-2). The Forest, therefore, provides the supposed peace and simplicity of life that Abrams connects to pastoral landscapes. Kuznets stresses that the only disturbances in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories are not inherent in the landscape itself, but that “[e]xplicit tension [...] in *The House at Pooh Corner* [...] comes from outside the 100 [Acre] Wood” (52), although she admits that some threats “come from nature (high water and high winds)” (51). Additionally, Carpenter’s view is in line with Schneidau’s observations of the concept of escapism in pastoral works, for he imagines that Milne, as the creator of the Hundred Acre Wood in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, was “longing [...] to escape from the confines of an impossible situation”, namely a loveless marriage (195-6). In this way, Milne has created a world completely the opposite of the complicated world he himself lived in: the simple life of a child versus the complex life of the adult. The simple life of a child belongs to the pastoral, according to Empson. Furthermore, according to Carpenter, “[e]ach of [the animals] personifies one characteristic, one type of selfishness” (202). This choice to let the animals each represent only one aspect of the human character shows that the stories depict a simplified version of the real world, in which human beings can have several characteristics at the same time.

² Nb: “Winnie-the-Pooh stories” means the stories in general: both the stories from *Winnie-the-Pooh*, and from *The House at Pooh Corner*. Because *The World of Pooh* contains both novels, this paper refers to *Winnie-the-Pooh* as pt. 1, and to *The House at Pooh Corner* as pt. 2.

³ It is made clear that only Owl lives in the Hundred Acre Wood, which is part of the Forest where the other animals and Christopher Robin live (55; pt. 1, ch. 4), which can also be seen in Shepard’s illustration on the inside of the novel’s cover.

1.2.2: The child as shepherd:

Despite the absence of actual shepherds and sheep, the child in the Forest, Christopher Robin, can be compared to a herdsman, with his animals representing the flock. Carpenter emphasises that neither Owl nor the motherly Kanga, but rather Christopher Robin represents “[t]he only real adult in Pooh’s World” (203), which means that he is the one to look after the other inhabitants of the Hundred Acre Wood, like a herdsman looking after his herd of animals. This leading and caring role can be seen in chapter 8 of Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*, “In Which Christopher Robin Leads an Expedition to the North Pole” (pt. 1, ch. 8). First of all, it is Christopher Robin who comes up with the idea to go on an expedition (111; pt. 1, ch. 8). He, as the title of the story already suggests, is the leader of the whole group of animals coming along. Christopher Robin initially tells Pooh that the expedition means “[a] long line of everybody” (111; pt. 1, ch. 8), although the story makes clear that it is rather Christopher Robin at the front and everybody behind him. Although Crews suggests the importance of a so-called *hierarchy of heroism* in which, for example, Pooh has a higher rank than Piglet and Owl, he, too, places Christopher Robin at the top (10-11). The illustration accompanying the story also shows Christopher Robin in a leading position, calling the animals to follow him (Shepard 114-15; pt. 1, ch.8):



Another instance depicting Christopher Robin’s leading role is: “Christopher Robin called “Halt!” and they all sat down and rested” (118; pt. 1, ch. 8). Furthermore, as shepherds protect their flocks from danger, Christopher Robin takes his responsibility as well when Roo has fallen in the stream. Although no real danger is present, because Roo can swim, the leader

immediately comes “rushing down to the rescue” and calls: “[a]ll right, Roo, I’m coming” (121-22; pt. 1, ch. 8). It must be said, nonetheless, that “[e]verybody was doing something to help” and eventually, it is Pooh who helps Roo to climb out of the water (121-22; pt. 1, ch. 8).

In addition, Christopher Robin’s role as protector of the animals is illustrated by Crews mentioning that “[w]henver Pooh and Piglet imagine that they are in danger they wish to be soothed, not by their own fathers and mothers, but by Christopher Robin; and the same holds true for the other animals” (45). The animals are not afraid if Christopher Robin is present. This can be illustrated with several examples, such as Piglet not being “afraid if he had Christopher Robin with him” (74; pt. 1, ch. 5), or Pooh telling Piglet that they are going on an expedition:

“Christopher Robin didn’t say anything about fierce. He just said it had an ‘x’.”

“It isn’t their necks I mind,” said Piglet earnestly. “It’s their teeth. But if Christopher Robin is coming I don’t mind anything.” (113-14; pt. 1, ch. 8)

Still another example shows Piglet suggesting Christopher Robin’s protective character to Pooh, when the boy enters: “Ah, then you’ll be all right,” said Piglet. “You’ll be quite safe with *him*” (50; pt. 1, ch. 3). A final example of Christopher Robin being portrayed as a guard is found in “In Which Kanga and Baby Roo come to the Forest, and Piglet has a Bath” (pt. 1, ch. 7), when Kanga discovers that her baby, Roo, is not in her pocket:

... Just for a moment, she thought she was frightened, and then she knew she wasn’t; for she felt sure that Christopher Robin would never let any harm happen to Roo. (104; pt. 1, ch. 7)

Crews even argues that these examples prove Christopher Robin's "identification [with] God Himself, ... a kind of omnipresent Force at work for the rescue of the weak" (60). The link between a shepherd and God is also present in the Bible, when Jesus says: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10.11). These arguments show that within a pastoral work the shepherd can also be depicted as a godly figure, caring for his flock, so that Christopher Robin can serve as both a shepherd and a divinity.

1.2.3: Leisure and pleasure:

Paul Shepard adds to the aspects of pastoral that it is "a life without "arduous labour", [gives] "freedom to discourse, think, make music, dance, and make love" ... and, of course, make poetry" (qtd. in Schneidau 158). Particular aspects of these are found in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, especially in Pooh himself: in many stories he is singing, both known and invented songs, and composing lines of poetry, such as his "Lines Written by a Bear of Very Little Brain" (100-01; pt. 1, ch. 7). Thinking is also explicitly mentioned several times as if the thinker actually takes time to think: Christopher Robin "stayed indoors most of the time, and thought about things" (135; pt. 1, ch. 9), and: "One day, when Pooh was thinking ..." (209; pt. 2, ch. 4). Furthermore, the absence of "arduous labour" is also true for the stories: almost no instances are found in which the animals are working hard. Pooh's singing and composing poetry in many stories, Piglet's "sitting on the ground at the door of his house blowing happily at a dandelion" (113; pt. 1, ch. 8), the gathering of the animals at the Pooh party (142-54; pt. 1, ch. 10), Pooh's having nothing to do (163; pt. 2, ch. 1), Pooh and Christopher having a picnic (235; pt. 2, ch. 5), and Piglet picking "himself a bunch of violets" (237; pt. 2, ch. 5) are all examples illustrating the peaceful lives of the animals and the boy. Additionally, the pastoral quality of the stories lies, according to Kuznets, in "a limited daylight landscape that completely contents its inhabitants and from which they ... have no reason to wander, since they experience no longing for either "higher" or "lower" things"

(51). The mysterious and probably fearful night world is generally absent in the stories and nature is satisfying enough for the inhabitants so that ambition is dispensable. Smith also argues that “[t]he central meaning of pastoral [...] is the rejection of the aspiring mind” (qtd. in Schneidau 158). The emphasis lies on leisure and pleasure. Nevertheless, one exception must be made for Eeyore, who explains himself:

“... We can’t all, and some of us don’t. That’s all there is to it.”

“Can’t all *what?*” said Pooh, rubbing his nose.

“Gaiety. Song-and-dance. Here we go round the mulberry bush.” (76; pt. 1, ch. 6)

Eeyore cannot join the others in singing and dancing, which are supposed to be characteristics of pastoral life. On the other hand, pleasure is still more prominent in the stories than sadness, and it is not mentioned that Eeyore does not enjoy himself. Moreover, Eeyore’s melancholy is in such a contrast with the merrymaking of the others, that it endorses their joyful pastoral life. Pleasure is furthermore emphasised, since serious threats such as death are completely absent in the Hundred Acre Wood. Empson writes about another version of pastoral which does involve death, namely *Alice in Wonderland* (268), but death is never mentioned nor even touched on in Milne’s Pooh-stories. Even when Piglet is surrounded by rising water and realises that when no help will come, he will have to swim, which he cannot (131; pt. 1, ch. 4), he does not think of drowning. The stories stress merriment rather than affairs disturbing the peaceful life.

1.2.4: Landscape and climate:

As for the setting of the pastoral, Siddall suggests “an idealised temperate landscape” (22). The idyllic landscape is “full of nature’s charm” (Siddall 11). The setting for the Winnie-the-Pooh stories is much influenced by the setting of the farm where Milne raised his

son Christopher (Kuznets 47). Carpenter describes the environment of that farm as idyllic and as “a true Arcadian setting, with its sandy wooded landscape on the edge of Ashdown Forest, its small streams and paths” (201). The landscape of the Hundred Acre Wood is clearly idyllic: there are “sandy bank[s]” (35; pt. 1, ch. 2), “rocky beds of streams” (55; pt. 1, ch. 4), all sorts of trees, “a stream which twist[s] and tumble[s] between high rocky banks” (117; pt. 1, ch. 8), and the Hundred Acre Wood provides Owl a living place “of great charm” (55; pt. 1, ch. 4). The descriptions of this rural landscape are on the whole undeniably “full of nature’s charm”. Eeyore’s place, however, contrasts the attractiveness of the rest of the countryside in the stories. He lives in his “Gloomy Place” (167; pt. 2, ch. 1) and is found “in a thistly corner of the forest” (52; pt. 1; ch. 4), which would better suit gothic landscapes, which deal “with fear and horror” (Siddall 66). On the other hand, for Eeyore that particular part of the countryside is the right place to be because it corresponds to his character, and the thistles provide his food (119; pt. 1, ch. 8). What is painful and consequently unpleasant for the one, is ideal for another. In this sense, his own place is just as Arcadian for Eeyore as the rest of the landscape is for the other animals and Christopher Robin.

In addition, the poetic descriptions of the landscape also illustrate its beauty, for example “the new green lace which the beeches had put on so prettily” (55; pt. 1, ch. 4). Nature, besides the inhabitants of the landscape in *The World of Pooh*, is portrayed being happy in itself, rejoicing in the spring after autumnal weather:

ONE DAY when the sun had come back over the
 Forest, bringing with it the scent of may, and all the
 streams of the Forest were tinkling happily to find
 themselves their own pretty shape again, and the little pools
 lay dreaming of the life they had seen and the big things
 they had done, and in the warmth and quiet of the Forest the

cuckoo was trying over his voice carefully and listening
to see if he liked it, and wood-pigeons were complaining gently
to themselves in their lazy comfortable ways that it was the
other fellow's fault, but it didn't matter very much ... (142; pt. 1, ch. 10)

After the bad weather and hard rain, nature itself can revive and peacefully and gaily take rest at the same time, as the shepherds in the pastoral take their rest retreated in the countryside.

The climate, as the landscape, also is expected to be pleasant in the pastoral. This is certainly true for the climate in the Pooh-stories. Most of the notions given about the climate provide an image of lovely weather: sunshine and a temperature good enough to be outside laying in the grass (62; pt. 1, ch. 5) or having a party (pt. 1, ch. 10). Another example of the temperate climate is given in a detailed description of nature:

It was a fine spring morning in the forest as [Pooh] started out.
Little soft clouds played happily in a blue sky, skipping from
time to time in front of the sun as if they had come to put it
out, and then sliding away suddenly so that the next might
have his turn. Through them and between them the sun
shone bravely ... (55; pt. 1, ch. 4)

On the other hand, there are also stories in which the weather is not that sunny, when, for example, the continuing rain makes the “ditches ... become streams, the little streams ... [become] rivers, and the river, between whose banks they had played so happily, ... sprawl[] out of its own bed” so that the animals cannot go anywhere and subsequently will flood out of their houses (127-8; pt. 1, ch. 9). Two other stories see the animals in wintertime, although the one tells about a “fine winter's day” when for Pooh and Piglet it is still comfortable enough to be outside (pt. 1, ch. 3), and the other sees them singing the “special Outdoor Song which Has To Be Sung In The Snow” (166; pt. 2, ch. 1). These stories demonstrate that the winter for the

animals is not that unpleasant, although it is for Eeyore, who does not like that it is snowing and freezing (170; pt. 2, ch. 1). However, after he has found himself a house again, he seems to forget about that (177-8; pt. 2, ch. 1). The only stories dealing with less fine weather that are left, are one in which it is “cold and misty” (260; pt. 2, ch. 7) and another in which the autumn wind blows down Owl’s house (pt. 2, ch. 8). The stories of bad weather are thus five out of twenty, most of which have no seriously threatening outcomes. The differences in the climate result from the natural changing of the seasons, although autumn and winter are less often present. Consequently, most of the time Kuznets is right when calling the natural environment in the stories a “peepshow into paradise” (47). Although Kuznets mentions natural problems such as the water and winds, she also explains that these are easily solved (51). Wullschläger calls the landscape “Arcadia evoked in all its seasons as an English pastoral dream” (qtd. in Wake 36-7).

1.2.5: The end of the pastoral life:

A final point must be made about the symbolic features of the landscape. Although in pastoral, as in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, the emphasis lies on peace and pleasure, as if life will never end, the stories work to an end showing that change is inevitable. First of all, there is the change of the seasons instead of only a continuing summer. Secondly, several suggestions are made in the stories that Christopher Robin is growing up. “He learns. He becomes Educated. He instigates ... Knowledge” (237; pt. 2, ch. 5). Rivers and streams are present in the landscape, “symbolising the passing of time” (Siddall 24), and “[g]reen is the colour of growth and renewal” (Siddall 20), which is also notably present from the beginning: Christopher Robin lives behind a green door (21; pt. 1, ch. 1) in a green environment. Whereas the animals do not show actual development, Christopher Robin does.

Moreover, according to McGillis, “description of setting” in the Pooh-stories “reflects the characters” (34). The story succeeding the one in which it becomes known that Christopher Robin goes to school, starts with the following passage (242; pt. 2, ch. 6):

BY THE time it came to the edge of the Forest the stream had grown up, so that it was almost a river, and, being grown-up, it did not run and jump and sparkle along as it used to do when it was younger, but moved more slowly.

It is striking how this reflects Christopher Robin’s growing up. After this excerpt, Christopher Robin is only seen when he is helping the animals, for example to find Pooh and Piglet who have become lost (267-9; pt. 2, ch. 7) and to instruct the animals how to get things out of Owl’s old house (294; pt. 2, ch. 9). Christopher Robin spends less spare time with his friends, such as having a picnic or a party. However, it must be said that he is almost never seen playing with them, as Carpenter (205) points out, except for the game Poohsticks (254; pt. 2, ch. 6). The final story has him sitting on the top of the forest, where many trees stand in a circle, and he is “looking out over the world” (310-11, 313; pt. 2, ch. 10). It is as if the wide world is attracting him, and he has to leave the forest of his childhood. The forest has clear borders and values and the trees may stand for shelter as well as for a veil keeping certain things hidden, but now Christopher Robin will leave he can discover anything he likes and does not like. According to Carpenter, Christopher Robin’s leaving the forest and the animals will make “their continued existence impossible” (202). It is as if the flock, together with the shepherd, and the whole pastoral life will vanish as soon as Christopher Robin has grown up.

Chapter 2: An Eco-critical Approach to *The World of Pooh*

2.1: Concerns of literary eco-criticism

During the nineteenth century both American and English writers started “drawing attention to the threats to the environment by urbanization and industrialization” (Abrams 87). Eco-criticism “takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature” (Glotfelty, qtd. in Dobrin and Kidd 49). Literary eco-criticism, therefore, critically “explore[s] the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities” (Abrams 87). There are eco-critical writers of poetry or prose (according to Siddall 108), but also eco-critics who are not literary artists themselves responding to literary works. The latter group belongs to the field of eco-criticism “see[ing] texts as artifacts that can be examined eco[-]critically for the sake of better understanding a relationship between a text and a physical environment, and eco[-]criticism is thus a tool, a critical inquiry that can be applied to text in order to see the relationships of that text in a particular way” (Dobrin 233). Eco-criticism wishes to analyse texts of all literary genres in order to find “implications of a text for environmental concerns” (Abrams 89). Abrams explains that not only fiction, but also scholarly texts should be used for this “green reading” (89). Regarding literary fiction, “the hitherto undervalued forms of nature writing and of *local color* or regional fiction”, and children’s literature are also included (Abrams 89).

Although eco-criticism cannot entail a single theory, according to Abrams “certain issues and concerns are recurrent” (88). Among these is the replacement of “anthropocentrism by ecocentrism” (Abrams 88). As said by many eco-critics, Western culture is too much “oriented to interests of human beings, who are viewed as opposed to and superior to nature,

and free to exploit natural resources and animal species for their own purposes” (Abrams 88). Eco-critics want an ecocentric worldview, which means “that all living things and their earthly environment ... possess importance, value, and even moral and political rights” (Abrams 88), so that human beings on the one hand and animals and nature on the other hand are seen as being equal, instead of opposed to each other. Additionally, eco-writers “imagin[e] a state of nature prior to the fall into property, into inequality and into the city” (Bate, qtd. in Siddall 109). “[T]he biblical account of the creation, in which God gave man “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth” (Gen. 1.26), therefore, is rejected (Abrams 88). In addition, eco-criticism criticises the binaries of “man/nature or culture/nature, viewed as mutually exclusive oppositions” because it is thought that “these entities are interconnected, and also mutually constitutive” (Abrams 88). Plevin adds that eco-criticism “emphasi[s]es] the interdependence of human and animal life while also respecting the specificity — even the inaccessibility — of the latter” (qtd. in Dobrin and Kidd 12).

Siddall mentions that “[e]co-critics value human rootedness, of dwelling in a home, as distinct from living in a house” (107). City life and rural life are opposed because “[d]welling’ in full identification with the earth is more likely to be achieved in a rural culture than in cities” (Siddall 107). In other words, it is implied that people and environment can unite, and people are encouraged to retreat from the “restless and rarely satisf[y]ing” city and move into the countryside. Whereas the city provides “a mobile culture” constantly emphasizing change, another value of eco-critics is to “resist change, except for the recurring and organic processes of birth, growth, death and renewal” (Siddall 107). In this way culture and nature are somehow opposed to each other, although the binary culture/nature is said to be criticised at the same time. Siddall explains what is meant with *home*, by saying that it is not the same as “feel[ing] at home in [one’s] own nation”, because “‘home’ for the eco-

[writer] is a deeper ideal: to dwell in a remembered place rather than to live in a country for which we can feel patriotic” (108).

The eco-critic Jonathan Bate also points out that eco-writers’ “way of articulating the relationship between humankind and environment, person and place, ... is experiential, not descriptive. [Their works are not] narratives of dwelling, ... [but] revelation[s] of dwelling” (qtd. in Siddall 109). Bate makes clear that eco-writers do not just create an amusing story, but that they bring to mind their own experiences with the natural environment, which they share with readers.

Finally, Siddall points out that, when taking an eco-critical perspective, the poet Wordsworth may be praised “for rejecting cities and finding his soul in landscape, [but that] his brand of nature depends on what it offers to humankind” (108). According to Siddall, “[a] deep eco-critic would relegate human needs (even Wordsworth’s) and celebrate nature in its own right” (108). For that reason, nature should not be praised for the sole reason that people can consume what nature provides, like food, but because nature is praiseworthy in itself, for its beauty, for example.

2.2: Eco-critical approach to *The World of Pooh*

2.2.1 Why *The World of Pooh* can be approached eco-critically:

Both pastoral literature and the nineteenth century writers drawing attention to human influence on the environment, among others, belong to a “[genre] called *nature writing*”, which represents the natural environment (Abrams 87). Siddall adds that “[m]uch literary eco-criticism pays attention to pastoral ... writing” (106). Although Milne himself is not seen as an eco-critical writer, his Pooh-stories have many descriptions of the environment and clearly belong to the genre of nature writing. Because these stories have a pastoral setting, it is

appropriate to take an eco-critical approach while commenting on *The World of Pooh*. Furthermore, as Glotfelty states, eco-criticism particularly takes a look at “the cultural artifacts of language and literature” (qtd. in Dobrin and Kidd 49). By paying attention to literature eco-criticism broadens its own boundaries. *The World of Pooh* is present within these boundaries, for it can be seen as one of the cultural artifacts: it is a piece of writing which itself incorporates the cultural artifacts of language and literature within the stories, considering the several poems and songs that Pooh composes. Obviously, it is Milne himself who composed this poetry and these songs, so that the complete literary work of *The World of Pooh*, including the compositions supposedly made by Pooh, may reveal something about the relationship between Milne and his work on the one hand, and the physical environment on the other hand.

Furthermore, as Dobrin and Kidd explain, “[w]ith respect to literary representation, ... on the one hand ... [c]hildren are still presumed to have a privileged relationship to nature On the other hand, the child is still assumed to be devoid of content The child thus has no necessary connection with nature, no experience or understanding of it” (5-6). This makes analysing children’s literature in an eco-critical perspective interesting. The Pooh-stories show a particular relationship between a child and his natural environment, which makes the stories suitable for an eco-critical approach.

Finally, considering the environment, Milne’s Pooh-stories can be seen as regional fiction since the stories take place in a setting which is very much like the setting of Cotchford Farm, where the Milne family lived (Kuznets 47). McGillis argues that the Hundred Acre Wood in the Pooh-stories “could not be [set] anywhere”, but that “[t]he south and central regions of England are precisely appropriate because of their domestic and pastoral qualities” (35). Cotchford Farm was situated “between Tunbridge Wells and East Grinstead ... on the

edge of Ashdown Forest (Carpenter 201), which is located in the South East of England (“The Forest Today”).

2.2.2 Anthropocentrism:

First of all, it must be clarified whether the Pooh-stories provide an anthropocentric or ecocentric world. According to Crews, Christopher indirectly asks Milne’s voice to make “Christopher Robin ... the center of attention” in the narration (7). Crews backs up his claim with the following excerpt from the very first story, with Milne’s responses left out:

“What about a story?” said Christopher Robin.

[...] “Could you very sweetly tell Winnie-the-Pooh one?”

[...] “About himself. Because he’s *that* sort of Bear.” (16; pt. 1, ch. 1)

It is quite likely that what Christopher Robin is asking in fact, is Milne’s voice to tell stories concerning himself as the main character instead of Winnie-the-Pooh. This will emphasise the role of both the listening Christopher and the character of Christopher Robin as presented in the stories. Furthermore, each story has Christopher Robin mentioned at least once, either when he is directly involved in a particular action, or when the animals think of him, such as in “In which Rabbit has a Busy Day, and we learn what Christopher Robin does in the Mornings” (pt. 2, ch. 5). Even in this story it is clear that Christopher Robin plays an important role in the animals’ lives, for they do not rest until they know why he is not home and what he does in the mornings. Hemmings, conversely, argues that “Christopher Robin is not the protagonist in his imagined world”, because “Winnie-the-Pooh and his animal friends cut the narrative path through the Hundred Acre Wood” (73). It is true, however, that Christopher Robin is important to the animals: even when he is not present they think of Christopher Robin when help is needed. In this way, he very much seems to be the protagonist in the animals’ lives. Carpenter also stresses Christopher Robin’s importance to the animals, for he describes “the relationship in which Pooh, Piglet, and the other toys stand

to Christopher Robin” as one of “adoring, admiring, fearing only his reproof” (192). It may be asked whether Christopher Robin in his turn also tries his best to suit the animals likewise, because no instance in the stories hints at this. Christopher Robin seems to be the centre of the animal’s lives.

Secondly, the biblical account of creation of which Abrams speaks is reflected in *The World of Pooh*. The Bible tells that God gave human beings authority over His creation, namely over the earth and all the animals living on it (Gen. 1.26). Lurie indicates about Christopher Robin that “in the Pooh books he rules over — and in the illustrations physically towers over — a society of smaller beings” (qtd. in Kuznets 51). As can be seen from the picture below (23; pt. 1, ch. 1), Christopher Robin is looking down at Pooh, but it can also suggest Christopher looking down on Pooh.



In the stories Christopher Robin’s stuffed animals have come alive, although they remain stuffed. However, these toys could also have been turned into life-size animals. Instead, the illustrator chose to keep their sizes small enough, presumably in accordance with the

narrator⁴. This allows Christopher Robin to own the animals, similar to a boy in real life being the owner of his stuffed animals, and in that way he can do with his cuddly toys and with the real animals in the forest whatever he wants. Since size can be related to power, Christopher Robin's being taller than Pooh may illustrate his authority: he can without difficulty hold his own against a bear, for example. Kuznets, moreover, claims that Christopher Robin is "in godlike control" (55), and "hungry for power" (56). The animals acknowledge his authority, for example when Rabbit says: "What does Christopher Robin think about it all? That's the point" (253; pt. 2, ch. 6), and when Piglet wants to be sure that a particular thing they are up to is the right thing to do: "Would Christopher Robin think so?" (259; pt. 2, ch. 7). The animals "know of no other power in their lives", according to Carpenter (204). A distinction between real and stuffed animals is mentioned by Kuznets, who explains that "Owl and Rabbit and his kin" are the real animals, and all the others stuffed (50), although in the "Hundred [Acre] Wood distinctions between toy animals and other animals are not made" (212). Anyhow, "the child is a god amid the toys and animals" (Kuznets 51), and Christopher Robin's "authority is never questioned" (Hemmings 72). Christopher Robin's living "at the very top of the Forest" (135; pt. 1, ch. 9) may hint at his superiority as well.

2.2.3 Ecocentrism and possession of nature:

However, the anthropocentrism of the Pooh-stories can be put into perspective. First of all, according to Sobel most of "the characters are animals", and there is a human being "interacting with animals"; therefore the "animals play a central role" in the stories (29). As Hemmings already pointed out, Pooh is at least as important as Christopher Robin (73). Even though Pooh is not an authoritative figure, the novels are titled after him, and he is present in every story as well as Christopher Robin. Additionally, it is clear that the animals have their own lives, and they also have their own places to live. Although Christopher Robin's opinion

⁴ According to Kuznets, the illustrations "seem an integral part of the Pooh books, and ... add a visual dimension" (54).

means very much to them, they also do what they themselves want without asking Christopher Robin what they should do, such as visiting each other (pt. 1, ch. 2), hunting tracks (pt. 1, ch. 3). There even is an instance when Pooh sings that he will not go to Christopher Robin: “And I’m not going to see Owl or Eeyore / (or any of the others) / Or Christopher Robin” (212; pt. 2, ch. 4).

Although Christopher Robin is called the owner of the animals (Kuznets 50) and his authority is acknowledged, he does not reveal himself as a boss commanding his subordinates (apart from the story in which he leads the expedition, perhaps (pt. 1, ch. 8)) or as a father punishing his children. Christopher Robin is never seen reprimanding the animals for things they do wrong, not even when he “enter[s] the episode at the end to set all wrongs right again” (Crews 9). An example is provided when the animals unkindly want to teach Tigger a lesson by losing him in the mist and finding him only the next day (pt. 2, ch. 7). The result is that they become lost themselves (268-9; pt. 2, ch. 7). Christopher Robin does not blame them, but is relieved to find them (270; pt. 2, ch. 7). The animals and Christopher Robin are depicted more like equal beings than as opposed to each other. Christopher Robins clearly loves the animals (75; pt. 1, ch. 5), particularly Pooh (27; pt. 1, ch. 1). The binary of man/nature as opposed to each other, therefore, is not that prominently present in Milne’s Pooh-stories.

Furthermore, one particular thing indicates that the nature of Pooh’s world is not, as eco-writers rather imagine, in “a state ... prior to the fall into property” (Bate, qtd. in Siddall 109). This sign of nature fallen into human’s property is the broken board next to Piglet’s house, “which had: “TRESPASSERS W” on it” (44; pt. 1, ch. 3), which must stand for *Trespassers will be prosecuted*. However, the board is broken and the message made unclear. The landscape has become accessible for anyone, and it is as if Milne did not want that particular scene to belong to someone in special. It may also be the case that Christopher Robin broke the board when he entered the forest, so that he could make his residence in this

environment. In any case, either the environment being under someone's possession or the inaccessibility of the forest is being mocked at, because Piglet claims that the text on the board is "his grandfather's name ... and it was short for Trespassers Will, which was short for Trespassers William" (44; pt. 1, ch. 3). Although at first he almost reveals the correct meaning, Piglet clearly gives a wrong and perhaps also subversive explanation of the text.

2.2.4 Dwelling in a rural landscape:

Christopher Robin and his toy animals retreat into the countryside to live there among real animals and dwell in nature. This is at least what Milne chooses to do with his son and his stuffed animals. Instead of living in a man-built house in the city, Christopher Robin dwells in a green or natural home in the forest. This evidently embodies the eco-critical value of dwelling in a home, in full identification with the earth (Siddall 107). The houses in which they live are tree houses for Christopher Robin (see picture on page 23; pt. 1, ch. 1) and Piglet (44; pt. 1, ch. 3), and a hole in a sandy bank for Rabbit (35; pt. 1, ch. 2), for example. In this way the characters really live *in* nature. The greenness of Christopher Robin's house is even more stressed by his green door (21; pt. 1, ch. 1).

The busy city life is absolutely absent in the stories. Even when Christopher Robin goes to school in the mornings, Milne rather lets him vanish from the scene than writing about the school or placing the school in the forest. Neither does the author tell his readers anything about the world outside the forest, nor is the school on the map on the inside of the cover of the book. The rustic life in the countryside is not disturbed by noisy schoolchildren; no human beings other than Christopher Robin enter the forest. It is as if Milne wanted his son to grow up in a green environment. If Milne shared "the eighteenth-century Lockean view of the child as a blank slate on which the environment could make its mark" (Kuznets 35), then it could be argued that Milne saw nature as a positive influence on Christopher's growing up. Carpenter claims that "Milne felt very strongly that the Wordsworthian view of childhood was

completely wrong” (197) because children have “a natural lack of moral quality, which expresses itself ... in an egotism entirely ruthless” (Christopher Milne, qtd. in Carpenter 197). Although Milne may not have shared the view of the child being as pure as a blank slate, it is true that in the Pooh-stories he fantasises his son having a green childhood, so that he must prefer growing up in a natural environment rather than in a city.

Furthermore, the descriptions of the landscape and nature are more likely to be experiential, and thus revelations of dwelling, rather than descriptive. The setting of the stories was provided by Cotchford Farm, “a Sussex farmhouse for use as a weekend and holiday alternative to the family’s London home” (Carpenter 201). So also in real life Milne now and then retreated from the city into the countryside. Additionally, Milne himself had lived in the same region in his own childhood, as Carpenter makes clear: “at about the age of eleven he himself had begun a very happy period living in that part of England” (201). Milne found happiness in nature when he was a child, and now wanted his own son, both in reality and in the stories, to experience the same relationship between humankind and environment.

Finally, although the rustic life in the countryside is opposed to the mobile culture of city life, Milne does not leave out “the recurring and organic processes of birth, growth, death and renewal”, which is exactly what eco-critics emphasise. Nature in *The World of Pooh* shows these organic processes, such as the turning of the seasons, the turning of night into day and vice versa, and Christopher Robin growing up. Additionally, Pooh once composes some lines summarising the different seasons and weather:

On Monday, when the sun is hot

... On Tuesday, when it hails and snows,

... On Wednesday, when the sky is blue,

... On Thursday, when it starts to freeze

And hoar-frost twinkles on the trees (100-01; pt. 1, ch. 7).

As a final example, Milne gives a symbolic account of the turning of night into day: “The Sun was still in bed, but there was a lightness in the sky over the Hundred Acre Wood which seemed to show that it was waking up and would soon be kicking off the clothes” (70; pt. 1, ch. 5).

2.2.5 Praise of nature in its own right:

The detailed and lengthy descriptions of nature and the environment reveals Milne’s great interest in the landscape beside his interest in the characters of the stories. Pooh’s songs and poetry often deal with the natural environment as well, for example the song called “Noise, by Pooh”:

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,

For 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 cucking and he's ooing,

And a Pooh is simply poohing

Like a bird.

According to Hemmings, in books of the Golden Age “desire is irrepressibly present through the attention to acts of consumption” (59). Because consumption of things provided by nature is almost absent in *The World of Pooh*, it cannot be said of Milne, as of Wordsworth, that “his brand of nature depends on what it offers to humankind” (Siddall 108). Pooh, however, thinks that “the only reason for being a bee that I know of is making honey. ... And the only reason for making honey is so as *I* can eat it” (18; pt. 1, ch. 1). This clearly is a case of happily making use of nature, instead of thinking about the animal species as having their own rights, and instead of relegating one’s own needs. However, it must be said that this is the only instance in which Milne shows desire and consumption of nature so explicitly. Neither Christopher Robin nor the animals are depicted as having a predatory attitude to the natural environment and resources. Milne does not praise nature for what it offers to humankind, except perhaps for the pastoral aspects of the landscape.

Conclusion

The main goal of this paper was to analyse the pastoral characteristics of the landscape in Milne's *The World of Pooh*, and in addition to explore the relationships between the characters and their natural environment. This investigation was done using the method of comparative analysis of the texts and some illustrations of the Pooh-stories, and significant viewpoints of critics. The analysis shows that a lot of general characteristics of the pastoral are found in Milne's work, such as the simple life, the shepherd and his flock, the emphasis on leisure and pleasure, and the rural and temperate landscape. However, it is also made clear that there comes an end to Christopher Robin's pastoral life. Furthermore, taking an eco-critical perspective, the Pooh-stories provide both an anthropocentric and an ecocentric world, and mock the possession of nature by human beings. In addition, in *The World of Pooh* Milne embodies the eco-critical value of dwelling in the countryside as opposed to living in a city and the praise of nature in its own right. It must be said, however, that the stories provide both arguments against and arguments for the aforementioned findings, and that critics, too, sometimes seem to contradict each other.

Due to the limitations of this paper, only the two novels in *The World of Pooh*, namely *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, could be analysed. Furthermore, only a small selection from the great amount of available information could be used for introducing the literary terms of *pastoral* and *eco-criticism*, due to the same limitations. Finally, not all viewpoints of critics could be included in this paper, and these had to be selected as well.

For future analysis of Milne's account of the natural environment in the light of eco-criticism it would be interesting to include (some of) his other works which also deal with landscape and/or human beings in relation to nature. For more general analysis of how nature is represented in children's literature it might be fascinating to examine children's literature of

other writers, or to look at how the representation of the natural world in children's literature has changed in the course of time.

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