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“Aesopian Language of Soviet Era Children’s Literature: Translation, Adaptation, and
Animation of a Western Classic”

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Introducing the Most Famous Bear in Children's Literature

Analyzing spoken, written, visual, or tangible material can offer sophisticated insight into the complexity of social life, understood through analysis of language in its widest sense; it offers ways of investigating meaning, whether in conversation or in culture. The idea of *retelling* foreign texts may be alien to some cultures, and understanding why, how, and when a particular work was created is essential for understanding the Russian one. In highly censored Russian culture, skepticism is a prerequisite for reading a text in the Soviet era, as it frequently served as an Aesopian hint or an allegory on contemporary issues. "Aesopian language" as a term was first coined by Russian satirist Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin in his *Letters to Auntie* (1881-1882), in order to designate a "figurative language of slavery", an "ability to speak between the lines... at a time when literature was in a state of bondage". The practice of this elusive discourse is investigated in Lev Loseff's fundamental study, in which he defines Aesopian language as "a special literary system, one whose structure allows interaction between the author and reader at the same time that it conceals inadmissible content from the censor".¹ Russian texts written during this time have a tendency to unlock secret meanings, social critique, and political challenges, thus Soviet cultural production can be understood as an act of resistance.

The relatively liberal politics of Khrushchev's Thaw (mid 1950s-early 1960s) called into life significant changes in children's literature of the Soviet era. Among those was the revival of Western classics for children, an opportunity the Soviet generation was deprived of during

¹Lev Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature*, trans. by Jane Bobko (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1984), p. x.

Stalin's times. The retelling² of A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1960) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1962) by poet and translator Boris Zakhoder (1918-2000) resurrected the tradition of "playful" poetry of the 1920s.³ His text enjoyed an immediate popularity among readers, both children and adults, and was adapted into a mini-series (1969, 1971, 1972) by Soviet film animator, Fyodor Khitruk. Both the literary text and visual productions made *Vinni Pukh* into a medium of Aesopian message about freedom of imagination and artistic expression.

This text-into-visual adaptation process in Russia was a very different case from that of Disney Studios' in the United States. Disney's first three short featurettes (1966, 1968, 1974)⁴ and eventual advent of the children's animated series, "The New Adventures of Pooh" (1988-1991), were entirely new and domesticated versions of Milne's stories that debuted Pooh and his friends as characters with middle class values frolicking in the Hundred Acre Wood, simplified and sanitized from the original. With *Winnie-the-Pooh* as my case study, I will investigate how this canonical text was retold/converted/transformed into a paragon of consumerism in the U.S. and an anti-totalitarian message in Russia, thus influencing two different communities: those of happy shoppers of Winnie's artifacts and those of dissident

²A translation is keen on language conversion to achieve meaning equivalence and although the notions of this technique intercross with those of retelling, a retelling introduces a second, personal touch into the rewriting and alters/localizes the foreign version or makes it linguistically and culturally appropriate to a certain region, in this case, Soviet Russia. Retellings could captivate Soviet society more than translations and some classic characters were completely Russified.

³See Larissa Rudova's list of playful elements (fanciful transformations, comical and absurd situations, and inventive language) in "Invitation to a Subversion: The Playful Literature of Grigorii Oster", in *Russian Children's Literature and Culture* (New York, Routledge: 2008), 325-341. Retellings in Russian literary culture were not a new concept, among the first were the popular adaptations of *Dr. Doolittle* by Kornei Chukovsky in 1929, but the choice of which authors got published was controlled by the Party in the 1920s-1930s. It wouldn't be until Khrushchev's Thaw that welcomed new reading and retelling opportunities from abroad.

⁴The Disneyfication of Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* is not limited to these productions, in fact, the more intense simplification/sanitization can be exhibited in the later versions. My focus is on the three featurettes to numerically and symmetrically correspond to the only three shorts of the Russian adaptations.

voices who camouflaged their resistance to the Soviet regime through references taken from both textual and visual adaptations of the original text.

The methodology for decoding the complex nature of the Russian textual and visual adaptations of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, as well as the Disney animations of the stories, will employ a two-fold theoretical framework, the first being used for the literary analysis, and the second for the visual analysis. The former requires Wolfgang Iser's Reader-Response theory; the latter Lev Loseff's description of Aesopian language functions as a medium of subversive messages in children's literature, Jack Zipes' *Disneyfication* and *Disney Spell*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's culture industry concept, and Iser's reader-response theory which I have modified into viewer-response theory.

The Historical and Cultural Context for the Transformation from Winnie to Vinni: The Thaw and Stagnation (1954-1968)

The fate of Soviet Russia was so tensely intertwined with Joseph Stalin and vice versa, that it would have profound implications for the future of the country. Despite the human costs of Stalin's brutal initiatives of collectivization and industrialization, peasants, workers, the intelligentsia, and the party itself seemed to share an acceptance of deprivation in exchange for the promised utopia and praise other aspects of his legacy, such as modernizing the country and closing the gap between Soviets and the West. During the period following his death on March 3rd, 1953, one could observe millions of Soviet people lamenting in tears among the eerie atmosphere at his funeral procession; those with the deepest desire to see Stalin's body would overcome barriers, sometimes crushing others to death to reach his coffin.⁵

⁵For a better description of the ravages of Stalin and Stalinism, see an excerpt from Yevgeny Yevtushenko's *Precocious Autobiography*, in *The Russia Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, Duke UP: 2010), 537-539.

Necessitated by economic and social needs, Stalin's successors issued amnesties that released surviving victims and exonerated prisoners of the Great Purges (1937, 1947, 1949, 1952).⁶ The newly freed Soviet people publically advocated for rehabilitation for themselves, family members, and comrades, and their cries pervaded the Soviet populace and the possibility for openness expanded and a new national consciousness pervaded the air. Nikita Khrushchev emerged as party chief and continued the liberalization. His "Secret Speech" at the debates of the Twentieth Congress on February 25th, 1956 attacked Stalin's "cult of personality", leaving his audience stunned, while also introducing sudden shifts in rhetoric. His renunciation of the mass arrests, deportations, and executions that characterized the totalitarian relations between the government and society under the previous leader brought into question how the legacies of Stalinist violence and "victories" were to be handled. Thus, Khrushchev took measures to change the Soviet strategy and doctrine by overturning the absolutist and oppressive regime, imposing de-Stalinization, and reforming the entire system at home and its relations with the socialist states.⁷

The atmosphere under Khrushchev was as complex and contradictory as its leader. Khrushchev's constant deviations to and from conservatism, radicalism, and liberalism managed to attract support from both sides of the political spectrum.⁸ Although serious restrictions were upheld for those who persisted to openly oppose the regime, Khrushchev's reform, "socialist legality" (социалистическая законность), "eased the pressure on intellectuals, party and

⁶Ibid., 545-550.

⁷While Khrushchev set out to liberate Marxism-Leninism from the legacy of Stalin, it would become apparent that the two were inextricably interwoven, and to try to separate one from the other risked terminating both.

⁸The complexity of Khrushchev and his regime is expounded in Karen Evans-Romaine, Helena Goscilo, and Tatiana Smorodinskaya, "Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeevich", *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Russian Culture*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 297.

government officials, and ordinary people.”⁹ Russian literature played a key role in promoting reform and pushing the limits of discussion about the moral implications of Stalinism and of Soviet communism in general. After Stalin’s death, Anatoly Cherniaev, a World War II veteran, innovative thinker and reformer, wrote in his memoir:

everything honest, healthy, ethical that had been surviving for several decades in this deceived and maimed society began to boil like geysers under the surface of the dead sea, attracting everybody’s attention. And as it had been the case many times in Russian history, the leader and avatar in the liberation of minds was literature.¹⁰

In part due to the scarcity of public outlets for independent expression or debate, literature withstood the upheavals of time because Soviet people would often retreat into their books to explore life’s larger questions. Reading could provide an escape, an “internal emigration”¹¹, and explains the common overlapping of literary and political culture in Russia. Khrushchev's own criticism of Stalin’s “cult of personality” spurred intellectuals to create or republish dissident works against Stalinist practices of prosecution of the innocent.¹² In fear of his act of clemency going too far, Khrushchev placed limits on the style and content of creative works, believing it would further bolster socialism. Writers were initially obliged to convey messages that would abide by the “theory of no conflict” (теория бесконфликтности) to portray a Soviet society

⁹Ronald Grigor Suny, “Khrushchev and the Politics of Reform”, *The Soviet Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1998), 404.

¹⁰Vladislav Zubok, “The ‘Children’ Grow Up”, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2009), 52.

¹¹During the Nazi period in Germany, a special term was created for literature that was not meant for public display. *Literatur aus der Schublade*, or “literature from the desk drawer”, became very popular during the 1960s and especially during the 1970s. See more in Marina Balina and Evgeny Dobrenko, introduction to *Cambridge Companion of the 20th Century Russian Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2011), 34.

¹²Among dissident writers were writers like Vladimir Dudintsev, Boris Pasternak; Evgenii Evtushenko and Andrei Voznesenskii were the younger generation poets who also experimented with form and criticized totalitarian policies.

supposedly free of conflict. This theory was rejected in late 1954 at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers, signaling the commencement of a more lenient cultural period.¹³ With writers at the forefront of liberal advocacy, the Thaw led to the inexorable downfall and eventual demise of socialist realism, the leading artistic method (or even the only one!) in all aspects of the cultural endeavour, while the freezes revealed the trepidation that characterized the Party and its proponents at the new literary developments.

Khrushchev's Secret Speech became a misnomer as it almost instantly trickled into political discourse of the Soviet Union in countries of the Eastern Bloc, and not too long after, published in abridged translation abroad in the *New York Times*.¹⁴ Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin rippled to include indictments of the Soviet system that spawned Stalin in the first place. Large sectors of those governed under Communist regimes were unhappy and angry due to their stagnant economies, restrictions on privacy and consumption, and the censorship on social, cultural and political aspects of life. In Eastern Europe, the unintended consequences of Khrushchev's speech took the form of fatal uprisings. Hungary's leadership, for instance, was brought into uncertainty and instability, and Khrushchev's Thaw granted the nation a limited liberalization that ushered a mood of radical change, igniting the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. It began with the writers, journalists, and other intellectuals criticizing "Stalin's best Hungarian disciple" Mátyás Rákosi, as documented in the following excerpt:

On October 23, thousands marched to the statue of the poet Petofi in Budapest, to read his emotional poem 'Arise, Hungarians!'... The crowd moved on to another statue, this

¹³Suny, "Khrushchev and the Politics of Reform", 405.

¹⁴The exact article appeared almost four months after Khrushchev delivered his speech in June 5th, 1956.

time of Stalin. It was torn down and broken up into souvenir-sized pieces. Only the boots remained.¹⁵

Workers later joined the intellectuals in this nationwide revolt and their unhappiness permeated the consciousness of Hungary. The revolutionary activism of the “de-Stalinization” campaign was not meant by Khrushchev to inspire a change back to capitalism, or freedom from Russian control. Instead, he believed the Party’s mission would be reinforced by reviving Lenin and preaching the imminence of Communism. The armed Soviet forces ordered onto the streets of Budapest may have temporarily subdued the activists, but it was too late to halt the demanding masses of Hungary, whose newly created revolutionary and workers’ councils were already establishing an alternative to the Communist system.

The Soviet invasion of Hungary, and to a lesser extent the events in Poland, impassioned dissent among Russian youth,¹⁶ whose hopes, recently raised by the Secret Speech, shattered, and the new relationship between the Party and society was not fully established. The hostility of increasingly pessimistic and dissident youth frightened Khrushchev and in response, he took aggressive actions against young Soviets (arrests made, directors of higher-education institutions expelled students and withheld their stipends, teachers increasingly monitored their pupils) to bring back the repressive status quo. Overall, their deviation from the previous social norms of dress, taste, and leisure activities can be accredited to the improving relations with the West. The United States attempted to diffuse its message of the “free world” behind the Iron Curtain

¹⁵Brian Moynahan, “Curtain Fall”, *The Russian Century: A History of the Last Hundred Years* (New York, Random House Inc.: 1994), 197-198.

¹⁶Student and youth-led protests sporadically erupted for a time in late 1956 at many universities, such as Moscow State University, Leningrad State University, Gorky University, Sverdlovsk University, Kuibyshev University and elsewhere. For a complete list of institutes that held protests by Russian youth, see Mark Kramer, “The Soviet Union and the 1956 Crises in Hungary and Poland: Reassessments and New Findings”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33, no. 2 (1998): 196.

through outlets like *Voice of America* and *Radio Free Europe*; the popularity of Western clothes and music in the Soviet Union was fundamentally anti-conformist, yet the government politicized the activities and took a harsh stance against them.¹⁷ As a tactic to quickly bring communist youth back into line, the Khrushchev regime chose the World Youth Festival in 1957 as their “ideological weapon.”¹⁸ For the first time, foreign visitors came to Moscow in large numbers. At home, the festival provided the Soviet state with the first real opportunity for ordinary citizens to establish direct personal contacts with foreigners, foreign works of art and literature, and exotic consumer goods. In regards to international prestige, it also improved the image of the Soviet regime in the eyes of the West. The new attitude towards the capitalist world enjoyed a long term impact: the Soviet Union was no longer seen by international communists as the model socialist country that it had been earlier.¹⁹

Soviet relations with the West, especially with the United States, experienced an ebb and flow between moments of relative relaxation and a period of tension and crisis. The cultural reforms of the Thaw, such as new reading opportunities from abroad, positively contributed to the thematic and stylistic diversity of children’s literature. Although Soviet children’s literature has a history of being confined to Soviet ideological values, it still retained its ability to reflect on real-life experiences. By implementing literary techniques such as play on words, humorous verse, and silly imagery, Russian poet and translator Boris Zakhoder spearheaded the rebirth of playful poetry, and consequently gained legendary popularity among children and adults. His

¹⁷Recall the Soviet government’s occasional condemnations of ‘decadent’ jazz in the 1950s.

¹⁸The ideological weapon Khrushchev refers to is that of “press and radio, literature, art, music, cinema and theatre”, that “should be kept ready for action at all times and strike telling blows at our enemies”. He and his party leaders desired to stimulate only those creative forces which would contribute to the strengthening of socialism. The full quote is reported in Khrushchev’s memoir as cited in Suny, “Khrushchev and the Politics of Reform”, 404.

¹⁹For further information see Pia Koivunen, “Propagating a New, Peaceful Image of the Soviet Union”, in *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. Melanie Ilić and Jeremy Smith (London, Routledge: 2009), 45-65.

retelling of A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh* (1960) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1962) was not focused on the literary accuracy of the original text; rather, his creation of new words with only contextual meaning, and the tweaking of the characters and original settings to make them more recognizable by the Russian readers demonstrated the unlimited creativity an author possesses. The freezing of the Thaw soon after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 would not assume such drastic forms in children's literature as it did in adult literature. While children's literature could be evaluated as one of the most liberal domains of creative literary expression,²⁰ it was unmistakably a part of the Soviet propaganda system as well.

There was a general optimism that pervaded the Soviet middle class in terms of material achievements of the Soviet system to Western capitalism. The USSR swelled in patriotic pride after the successful 1957 launching of *Sputnik* or the pioneering 1961 flight of Yuri Gagarin, and a conviction that Soviet leaders had the best interests of the people at heart was generally shared. This conviction remained firm until the beginning of the end of the Thaw, after Khrushchev's notorious 1962 visit to an exhibition of paintings by contemporary artists at the Manège Gallery in Moscow. He used hysterical and foul language to detest unconventional art, especially abstract art, and initiated an extremely repressive policy towards the press, television, art institutes, and works of graphic artists and book illustrators.²¹ Emerging networks of people of the 1960's were threatened to be silenced and all hopes for Avant-garde shattered.

Growing complaints about lack of freedom, shortages and inefficiencies, the low quality of material life, coupled with the humiliation of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, led many to

²⁰On the concept of "убежище", which reflects children's literature as a place of escape for both Soviet writers and readers, see Игорь Кондаков, «Детство как убежище, или "Детский дискурс" советской литературы» (Москва, Научная книга: 2008), 138-166; and М. Чудакова, *Новые работы: 2003-2006* (Москва, Время: 2007), 481.

²¹Suny, "Khrushchev and the Politics of Reform", 407.

blame Khrushchev for the accumulating failures.²² The early 1960s witnessed the start of a general move toward the kind of behavior that would later characterise the more open and legalistic dissident activity of the Brezhnev years. Khrushchev did not recognize the conceptually confusing and insuperable contradictions latent in all of his policies. Ever since the Twentieth Congress, his progressive reform and mobilization of the masses competed with his insistence on discipline and the primacy of Communism. He was removed as the First Secretary by the Central Committee in 1964, thus putting an end to the Thaw, and replacing him was Leonid Brezhnev whose regime would be characterized by cynicism, corruption, and economic and social stagnation.

The inevitable disappointment and weakened faith in Marxism-Leninism among intelligentsia during the early 1960s roused a period of searching for new philosophies, values, and forms of expression. The utopian ideals preached within the communist framework were not fulfilled and dissident movements with more wide-ranging objectives broke out; change was only possible with people's organizing themselves outside the structures of the party and state. The ouster of Khrushchev and the ascendance of Brezhnev reflected the new relationship between Party and society; authorities became increasingly cautious of provoking widespread discontent within society, and still the number of people jailed for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda during the early 1960s was far from insignificant.²³ In 1966, the trial and conviction

²²For a more detailed account of how Khrushchev's initial cultural and agricultural successes suffered reversals, turn to Adele Marie Barker, and Bruce Grant, eds. "The Thaw", *The Russia Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, Duke UP: 2010), 535-536.

²³More than 1,200 individuals were sentenced for anti-Soviet activity between the turn of the decade and Khrushchev's ouster. See *Istochnik*, 1995, vol.6, p. 153.

of two samizdat²⁴ authors, Andrei Siniavskii and Iulii Daniel, for anti-Soviet activity would further spur discontent within Soviet society. The demonstration at Pushkin Square on December 5th, 1965, held in defiance of authority and to demand *glasnost*²⁵ in the forthcoming trial of Siniavskii and Daniel, is widely acknowledged as one of the most prominent collective protests for the observance of human rights in Soviet Russia.²⁶ The global outcry over the authors' censorship and sentencing was soon silenced under the 1968 thunder of Russian tanks, lurching across Wenceslas Square, which would spectacularly foreshadow the Soviet takeover of mass communication outlets in Prague.²⁷ The crushing of the Prague Spring, both literal and metaphorical, motivated seven people to demonstrate at Moscow's Red Square on August 25th, 1968. Even though their demonstration was silent, all seven were sent to the psychological asylum for "anti-Soviet propaganda".²⁸ This grave outcome truly sparked the dissident movement in Soviet Russia and the violation of the fraternal relations between communist countries urged many communist parties to begin to doubt and question international socialism. Their efforts would eventually lead to the complete demise of the Eastern European communist regimes.

²⁴The principle of relying on open, legal struggle had begun to take root. The key medium for the spread of information was the system of independent publishing called, *samizdat*. Reading this type of literature consolidated a sense of opposition in people.

²⁵Literally, 'openness'.

²⁶For some, intelligentsia dissent events emerged with the two series of unofficial poetry meetings held at Mayakovsky Square in Moscow. The first series of gatherings were in 1958- early 1960, and the second began at the end of that year and lasted into late 1961. See more in Suny, "Khrushchev and the Politics of Reform", 406.

²⁷For a detailed account of Soviet tanks crushing the Prague Spring, see Moynahan, "The Big Sleep", 217.

²⁸For a personal account from one of the protesters who covers the historic event in greater detail, see H. Горбаневская, *Полдень: Дело о демонстрации 25 августа 1968 года на Красной площади* (Москва, Новое издательство: 2007).

History of the Russification of Winnie-the-Pooh: Becoming Acquainted with Boris

Zakhoder

A.A. Milne's silly old bear had been described as such not by chance, indeed Winnie-the-Pooh frequently contributes both out of the ordinary thoughts to himself and ideas to his forest friends. In one instance, Winnie conjures up an intricate plan to steal honey, found in the beehive hanging from a tall tree. Surely, he came up with the most bizarre and creative idea of sorts: he would transport his tubby self to the beehive via balloon, coated in mud, justifying that the mud on his chubbiness would serve as his dark cloud disguise for the angry bees. A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928) gained instant popularity in both England and the United States, and it would not be long before the unforgettable characters of the book traveled from the page into the cultural and commercial mainstreams of both countries.²⁹ Adapting children's literature from abroad was not a foreign concept in Soviet Union, but since the writing and publication processes were controlled by the state, the Russian retellings would have to uphold the regulations set forth.³⁰ The author who made Milne's globally recognized characters accessible to Soviet children (and adults) was the widely popular children's poet and author, Boris Zakhoder, who retold the famous escapades in Russian.

Born in 1918 in Kagul of modern-day Moldova and raised in Moscow, Zakhoder had not always dedicated his efforts to children's literature.³¹ Prior to being drafted into service for two

²⁹In its first year of publication, *Winnie-the-Pooh* sold over 150,000 copies, as mentioned in Paula T. Connolly, "The Importance of the Works", in *Winnie-the-Pooh and House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia* (New York, Twayne Publishers: 1995), 8.

³⁰Regulations to be followed by Soviet authors include the need to express socialist themes and help build strong moral character. For more on the socialist realist canon, see E. Добренко и X. Гюнтер, *Социалистический канон* (Санкт-Петербург, Академический Проект: 2000).

³¹His first work for children that was published in the newspaper, *Pionerskaya Pravda* (1947), and in the journal, *Murzilka* (1947).

wars (World War II and the Russo-Finnish War),³² he studied at the Moscow Aviation Institute and later at the Department of Biology at Moscow and Kazan University.³³ When he enrolled at the Maxim Gorky Literary Institute, literature captured his heart. He developed a style that frequently incorporated anthropomorphism and would allott special attention to compelling and vivid, individualized characters. His characters would cause not only affection, but also irritation, exuding such features as savagery, ignorance, narcissism, and stupidity. As they should, the heroes of Zakhoder's children's works would commit both good and bad deeds, talk and argue with each other, and ask for justice and protection.³⁴

Other notable characteristics of Zakhoder's artistic style include his warm and welcoming tone, understanding humor, and constant verbal play that excited restless schoolchildren. The following stylistic techniques were omnipresent in his works: play on words (игра слов) with the purpose of discovering the hidden (исконный) meaning of words; creation of new words from child neologism and by recognizable analogies; and overall explanation of unclear concepts according to children's logic. Zakhoder's poetry humored the child reader, as they imagined the story with associations they grown up with, and also cultivated a greater interest towards their mother tongue, as well as, an anticipation to point out familiar words.

Zakhoder developed a strong camaraderie between the forest friends from Milne's stories. His first encounter with Winnie-the-Pooh was in a British English children's

³²The Russo-Finnish War in (1939-1940) was just three months after the outbreak of World War II that lasted from 1939 to 1945. For Zakhodor's duty in the Russo-Finnish War, see Г. Заходер, «Арон. Финская война», *Заходер и все-все-все* (Москва, Захаров: 2003), 46-48.

³³"Boris Zakhoder," Site for Children, accessed December 5, 2016, <http://site-children.com/author7-zahoder1.htm>.

³⁴His style can be exhibited in his brightly illustrated poetry collections: "On the Back Bench" (1955), "Monkey Tomorrow" (1956), "None other" (1958), "Who are Different" (1960), "Comrade Children" (1966), "School for Juveniles" (1970), "My Voobrazilija" (1980), "If I Give the Boat" (1981), and others.

encyclopedia at the library in 1958.³⁵ He described the meeting to be more than friendly, “It was the love at first sight: I saw the image of this nice bear cub, read several poetic quotes—and started looking for the book. So there came one of the happiest moments of my life: days of work on *Pooh*”.³⁶ After the Russian Revolution of 1917,³⁷ socialist realism took shape as the official aesthetic principle of the new communist society, and children’s literature started to be formed as an educational tool. When Zakhoder retold the Western canonical text during Khrushchev's Thaw in 1960, he did not adhere to the socialist restrictions and actually never created it for the promotion of the socialist cause.³⁸

Traditionally, Russian children’s writers would get assignments from the government that would call for writing politically correct verses for a celebratory cause (International Worker’s Day, greetings from Party Congresses, Anniversary of the October Revolution) or that would promote the socialist cause as a whole. Boris Zakhoder did not abide to previous creative criteria that was supposed to illustrate the Soviet hero and ideal Soviet citizen.³⁹ Instead, he aimed at emphasizing universal moral values and put forth a chubby bear, that was too selfish to share his honey among his comrades, as his hero. In his memoir written by Zakhoder’s wife, *Boris Zakhoder and All-All-All*, she takes note of the following:

Indeed, Boris Vladimirovich did not give a reason to reward himself, he resisted the temptation to write a children’s humorous greeting (he could have done it!), for example,

³⁵The title and edition are unknown.

³⁶Г. Заходер, «Винни-Пух или Уинни-мзе-Пу», 182-192.

³⁷Specifically, two revolutions, the first of which, in February (March, New Style), overthrew the imperial government and the second of which, in October (November), placed the Bolsheviks in power.

³⁸For children’s books that would celebrate International Worker’s Day, the anniversary of the October Revolution, or promote the socialist cause in other ways, see Ben Hellman, “A New Society—A New Literature (1932-1940), in *Fairy Tales and True Stories: The History of Russian Literature for Children and Young People (1574-2010)* (Leiden, Brill: 2013), 376.

³⁹For more information on the Soviet hero and ideal Soviet citizen, see Г. Карлтон, «На похоронах живых: теория “Живого человека” и формирование героя в раннем соцреализме», *Соцреалистический канон*, 339-352.

for the Congress Party or for the anniversary of the October Revolution, although that would have promised even greater privilege that favored the authorities, the ability to publish a personal book. If he did not like something, not a single one of the most favorable conditions could have forced him to sacrifice his honor and conscience.⁴⁰

In his merged retelling (пересказы) of Milne's stories, *Vinni Pukh and All-All-All* (1960),⁴¹ Zakhoder utilizes intonations and special lexical features and puns that would be understood by the Russian reader, all while managing to preserve the unique spirit of the original author. The creative work finally attained approval and was published by The State Children's Publishing House, or Detgiz, (Детское государственное издательство, ДЕТГИЗ), despite earlier dissatisfactions for the translated version being too "Americanized".⁴² The children's volume acquainted Russian readers with classical and foundational children's literature from abroad that they could not have had access to if it weren't for the Thaw. Still, the disputes to publish it under those grounds reveal again the intermittent nature and relative freedom that characterized the Thaw. The book enjoyed such an unexpected success (Soviet *Vinni Pukh* even got his own radio show),⁴³ that Zakhoder would work in tandem with renowned Soviet film animator Fyodor Khitruk to produce three animated shorts.

⁴⁰Г. Заходер, «Имя», 249.

⁴¹In Russian, *Винни-Пух и все-все-все* [др. вариант – *Винни-Пух и все остальные*]. The retelling was a single volume that combined and adapted both *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*.

⁴²Юрий Левинг, «“Кто-то там все-таки есть” Винни-Пух и новая анимационная эстетика», *Веселые человечки* (Москва, Новое литературное обозрение: 2008), 320.

⁴³For the interview with Boris Zakhoder for the *The New York Times* over *Vinni Pukh* and his popularity, see Dena Kleiman, “Now 60, Milne's ‘Pooh’ Is Big in Soviet Union,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times), December 27, 1986, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/12/27/books/now-60-milne-s-pooh-is-big-in-soviet-union.html>.

History of the Russification of Winnie-the-Pooh: Becoming Acquainted with Fyodor Khitruk

At the very beginning of the Thaw, animators were not completely unchained from the long tradition of using films as propaganda tools to promote the newborn Soviet society. From the 1960s onward, Khrushchev's political and cultural renewal allowed for animation films to take on completely new qualities. Fyodor Khitruk's film, *The Story of a Crime* (1962)⁴⁴ spearheaded the change in animation style to something that resembled what the United Productions of America⁴⁵ was doing, and for the first time since the avantgarde years, he was able to tackle a contemporary story in his own distinctive way. Khitruk exuded a freer, less extravagant, more economical art style than the sentimentality and excessiveness of Disney. His films had less dimension and detail, the animations were lean and witty, and his style was overall a laconic and multi-layered one. His own unique approach paved the way for a vast number of young animation directors, who in the following years developed their own distinctive styles and approaches.⁴⁶

Fyodor Khitruk was an influential force in the history of Russian animation and helped to rejuvenate Russian animation. For this, he was recognized as a People's Artist of the USSR and a

⁴⁴The film explains why a mannered and peaceful clerk should have beat two housewives to death with a frying pan. Almost justifying the murder, it showed how the clerk suffered a sleepless night because of the constant noise made by his unthinking neighbours in his apartment block. The film critiques aspects of Soviet life, such as overcrowded housing and the neglect of the needs of the individual.

⁴⁵Began as a studio creating political/industrial and World War II training films. After receiving a contract to produce theatrical shorts for Columbia Pictures, UPA became quite influential as it developed its own unique animation style and technique. UPA pioneered the technique of limited animation as a stylistic alternative to the growing trend of recreating cinematic realism in animated films, not as a cost-cutting and time-saving measure as it later became.

⁴⁶One of the most political was Andrei Khrzhanovsky, whose surrealist film *The Glass Harmonica* (1968) was severely cut by censors, but shelved nevertheless. Anatoly Petrov is known as the founder of the cinema journal *Vesyolaya Karusel* (*The Happy Merry-Go-Round*, since 1969) that gave an opportunity to many young directors to make their first own films. Among them were Leonid Nosyrev, Valery Ugarov, Eduard Nazarov, Ivan Ufimcev and others.

Meritorious Artists, and later received the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, as well as the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland”.⁴⁷ He was particularly excited to work on the visual adaptation of Winnie-the-Pooh and in his memoirs he described his first meeting with the honey fanatic as such, “For quite a long time I dreamt of putting that production on screen... I was afraid to work toward my dream because every line in that book was so rich... I had really wanted to work it into a film, but I was afraid.”⁴⁸ Khitruk studied the original book by Milne first in English and only later reading Zakhoder’s retelling.⁴⁹ Zakhoder became a co-writer of the first two parts of the trilogy, and despite Khitruk’s personal intimidations to project Pooh on the big screen, they worked alongside each other (though not enthusiastically) to recreate the original Milne story from Russian text to Russian screen. Khitruk had not seen the Disney adaptations (neither the three featurettes nor the first feature-length film, *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, 1977) and refused to imitate the style of Disney that was highly recognizable.

The Russian animated trilogy consisted of the following chapters: “In which we are Introduced to Winnie-the-Pooh and Some Bees, and the Stories Begin” (1969),⁵⁰ *Winnie-the-Pooh Pays a Visit* (1971)⁵¹ and *Winnie-the-Pooh and the Blustery Day* (1972).⁵² Despite the extensive use of Milne’s original text, often bringing out aspects of Milne’s

⁴⁷For a concept map on Khitruk’s awards, see “Fyodor Khitruk,” Unionpedia, accessed December 7, 2016, http://en.unionpedia.org/i/Fyodor_Khitruk.

⁴⁸Excerpts from his memoir and more on his biography in Федор Хитрук, *Профессия - аниматор (комплект из 2 книг)*, 190.

⁴⁹In an interview for *The Moscow Times*, Khitruk recalls, “I was acquainted with Zakhoder’s [Russian] translation. With his magnificent translation! Maybe it’s not even a translation, but a second version — that’s how interesting it turned out.” See more at “Winnie the Pooh Is 90 Today, but the Soviet Cartoon Remains Timeless,” *The Moscow Times*, October 14, 2016, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/winnie-the-pooh-is-90-today-but-the-soviet-cartoon-remains-timeless-55761>.

⁵⁰In Russian, «Глава первая, в которой мы знакомимся с Винни-Пухом и несколькими пчелами». Boris Zakhoder’s first four chapters are not chronologically ordered when compared to A.A. Milne’s text, as he made minor adjustments to the structure of his retelling, and for this reason will appear as: Chapters I, II, IV, and VI, when compared to the original.

⁵¹In Russian, *Винни-Пух идёт в гости*.

⁵²In Russian, *Винни-Пух и день забот*.

characterization,⁵³ the Soviet adaptations adjusted the characters and settings to be more understandable and relatable by their child (and adult) audience. The animations were not based on the originals by E.H. Shepard, and took their own form, as they converted Shepard's simple and serene backgrounds into ones that resembled drawings done by a child. Khitruk also placed an emphasis on the rhythm of dialogues—songs and phrases blurted by the forest friends were ironic and were intended to make a mockery of the Soviet regime during Stagnation. When Khitruk visited the Disney Studios, Wolfgang Reitherman, the creative director assigned to transforming Winnie-the-Pooh in classic Disney fashion, told him that he liked the Soviet version better than his own.⁵⁴

The depictions of the bear in the book were strikingly dissimilar from those on screen. The famous Winnie-the-Pooh, speaking with Evgeniy Leonov's voice,⁵⁵ had little in common with the literary character. Indeed, the Zakhoder-Khitruk tandem was doomed from the beginning, as “the creative strengths of the genius translator and brilliant director” came into conflict.⁵⁶ Zakhoder was dealing with a text-text adaptation process when reworking the original (sixth chapter of the original presumed the fourth and created songs that never appeared in the original). Khitruk, too, had his own creative vision, but he was working with a text-text-visual

⁵³Khitruk's characters were also friendly, naive and full of good intentions. They are also spunkier and less soppy than Disney's interpretation.

⁵⁴In a 2005 interview for *The Moscow Times*, Khitruk recalls, “At that time, I hadn't yet seen the Disney film... Maybe, if I'd seen it, I wouldn't have done my own. What's the point in doing it over? But I should tell you that I'm not really satisfied with the Disney version. And now, in hindsight, I can tell you what the director of the second American film, Wolfgang Reitherman, told me. He also wasn't happy with his version.” See more excerpts from the interview at: “Winnie the Pooh Is 90 Today, but the Soviet Cartoon Remains Timeless,” *The Moscow Times*, October 14, 2016, accessed November 1, 2016, <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/winnie-the-pooh-is-90-today-but-the-soviet-cartoon-remains-timeless-55761>.

⁵⁵Evgeniy Leonid was a highly popular comedy actor who always played outcasts in Soviet era comedies. To access his biography and filmography, see “Леонов, Евгений Павлович,” *Krugosvet*, accessed October 13, 2016, http://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/kultura_i_obrazovanie/teatr_i_kino/LEONOV_EVGENI_PAVLOVICH.html.

⁵⁶Юрий Левинг, «Кто-то там все-таки есть» Винни-Пух и новая анимационная эстетика», 320.

adaptation process. Beyond their clashing creative visions that spoiled the relationship between Zakhoder and Khitruk, their personalities were incompatible as well. The former was characterized by dry humor and irony, while the later claims to have worn a simpleton mask in front of Zakhoder despite being sharp in reality. Personifying Pooh as his co-author (instead of Khitruk), Zakhoder recalls in his memoirs, “Myself with Pooh undertook this position with great enthusiasm.”⁵⁷ The tension was so high between the two creators they had secretaries as their intermediaries and usually turned to letter-writing as their form of communication despite the fact that they resided in the same city. Following is an excerpt from a letter from Khitruk to Zakhoder while they still worked together: “Could you fix the first song, work on it? This is especially true of the first verse. Don’t necessarily emphasize that the fact that Winnie has sawdust in his head and that he, therefore, is not real, fake.”⁵⁸ In response, Zakhoder notes: “This, in my opinion, is a strange statement that somewhat alarmed me. But it was followed by an even more astonishing claim. ‘In the second couplet it isn’t quite clear why he is afraid to get fat (site the story with the rabbit that would be in the next film, if there is going to be one at all)’.”⁵⁹ Clearly, if they did everything possible to avoid all personal contact, it explains why they stopped creating more series and especially why the three 15-minute long animations each took a year to complete! Each of them worked with different media and their different artistic pursuits resulted in the disappearance of Milne’s original Winnie-the-Pooh altogether (neither of the translators ever consulted with Milne’s publishing house over the copyrights⁶⁰).

⁵⁷Ibid., 321.

⁵⁸Ibid., 322.

⁵⁹Ibid., 322.

⁶⁰For more on the copyrights and practices of the creators, see Арлен Блюм, *Запрещенные книги русских писателей и литературоведов 1917-1991: индекс советской цензуры и комментариями* (Санкт-Петербург: Санкт Петербургский государственный университет культуры и искусств: 2003), 5-30.

The twenty years Khitruk devoted as an animator in the government animation studios and his service in the army as a German translator during the post-war occupation lent him an air of trust. Just like most Soviet animation films, his Vinni Pukh recreation was not considered a medium that would have critique embed within it. Khitruk was politically savvy, in the sense that he played up his loyalty to the Communist Party and understood when his work pushed the line too far. He understood Winnie to be “constantly full of grandiose ideas, that are too difficult and cumbersome for those trifling affairs,”⁶¹ (the grandiose ideas of Winnie slyly reflected the utopian ideals that Khrushchev promoted during the Thaw).

Unlike Zakhoder, who had far less artistic freedom to make as many political jabs, Khitruk’s critiques were as sharp as they were vivid, each filled with saturating primary colors reminiscent of those a child would use. Each creator of the Zakhoder-Khitruk tandem had his own creative agenda, the former being more restricted than the latter. Khitruk was able to push Zakhoder’s retelling to the next level by delivering masked jokes of each character type stereotypical to the multilayeredness of Soviet society.⁶² Even though Zakhoder did not inwardly agree with Khitruk’s aspirations for Vinni, he did not interfere with the filmmaker’s creative process. It was thanks to the animation that the retelling gained immense popularity. Zakhoder jokingly called Vinni “a skipping and jumping potato” and at the same time he considered it the best embodiment of Winnie-the-Pooh in the world of animation.⁶³ When the political climate started to shift during the Brezhnev years, Khitruk not only noticed this, he also had more the reason to stop producing more Vinni Pukh shorts.

⁶¹Юрий Левинг, «“Кто-то там все-таки есть” Винни-Пух и новая анимационная эстетика», 328.

⁶²For more on the typical character types of Soviet society, see X. Гюнтер, «Герой», *Социалистический канон*, 743-785.

⁶³For the exact Russian quotes, see <https://focus.ua/society/131902/>.

Though Khitruk's films are delightfully critical of the surrounding Soviet atmosphere, he projected optimism for the future of society and for the future of animation by presenting humour and wit in his animations, aspects forbidden before the Thaw. He signaled an epoch where children's animation could be more than slapstick humor or morality tales, and when his directing years were over, Khitruk did not curtail his efforts in the industry. His devotion to animation was eternal, and served as an inspiration and guide for the next generation of animators.⁶⁴ If Khitruk could not fully test the limits and possibilities of animation, he made sure that subsequent animators of the world would accept the challenge.

Decoding the Textual: Reader-Response Theory

When discussing an observer's active role of perceiving ideology in poetry or of constructing meaning in fiction, the chief question that naturally arises is *who* is the reader? Leading German literary scholar, Wolfgang Iser, proposes Reader-Response Theory, which decontextualized and dehistoricized the oscillation that occurs between text and reader. The text can set the terms on which the reader actualizes meanings to an extent, while the reader's "concretization" of the text is relative to their own extra-literary norms, values, and experiences—a literary process that will itself be modified in the act of reading. In this dialectical relationship between text and reader, Iser did not ultimately accord responsibility to either the text's determinacy or the reader's experience. Although the power of the text to select certain norms and value systems for the reader should not be neglected, the final arbiter of the reader's

⁶⁴In 1993, he and three other prominent animators (Yuriy Norshteyn, Andrey Khrzhanovsky, and Eduard Nazarov) founded SHAR Studio, an animation studio and school in Russia. In the studio's short history, animated films produced there have won prizes at film festivals around the world. At 91 years old, he released a two-volume book, *The Profession of Animation*, based on his 50 years of experience animating and teaching.

actualizations appears to be placed on the reader for taking the text into their consciousness where they insert their opinions into the interpretation, in order to fill a “gap” or “blank” in the text.⁶⁵

The most important aspect of Iser’s Reader-Response Theory to be applied in this decoding of the Russian retelling is the subdivision of the term, “reader” into “implied reader” and “actual reader”. The former is created by the text itself and amounts to “a network of response-inviting structures” which make individuals susceptible to reading, and thus making meaning of it, in certain ways.⁶⁶ The latter conjures up particular images during the act of reading; however, the images will inevitably be tinted (or tainted) by the reader’s “existing stock of experience”.⁶⁷ The implied reader of Zakhoder’s *Vinni Pukh* is the child and it is Zakhoder’s creative network of dialogue, playful diction and syntax, and overall absurdity of the situation, that easily leads the young audience to make sense of the text in a way that is innate of a child. The actual reader of *Vinni Pukh* could be the child (perhaps the adult, if they too were involved in the storytelling experience), who brings the text to mind, and through their own worldview fills in the gaps that are open to interpretation within the text. It is important to note that whoever the actual reader may be, regardless if it is a child or an adult, their worldview may in the end be modified as a result of formulating the unformulated, to apply Iser’s words.

For many Soviet writers, including Zakhoder, translation or retelling became the only possible outlet for creative freedom because they would speak in the language of the Other.⁶⁸ In

⁶⁵For further reading on Wolfgang Iser’s theory, see his key work, Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

⁶⁶Ibid., 55.

⁶⁷Ibid., 55.

⁶⁸For more on Soviet translations and retellings for the Other, see “The Silver Age,” in *A History of Russian Literature*, by Victor Terras (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

its very nature, Soviet children's literature was a more liberal space than the proper and political literature for adults. The entertainment value necessary for children's literature attracted more writers to experiment since it was more difficult to detect and censor critique. Boris Zakhoder's literary output was not crafted toward those censors demanding socialist realism and ideological relevance, and largely drew from practices that characterized Oberiu (ОБЭРИУ: Объединение реального искусства), the avant-garde literary group of the 1920's-1930's,⁶⁹ whose endeavor was to entertain and not forcibly indoctrinate the Soviet child reader. Zakhoder incorporated puns, flexibility of the situation, surprising viewpoints, and an overall playfulness in *Vinni Pukh*. His innovation within verbal culture was liberated of the heavily ideological, socialist realist paradigm found in existing Soviet children's literature, and in order for him to escape the pressures of censorship, he needed to hide behind someone else's name, specifically, A.A. Milne.

The exciting event of opening up Zakhoder's *Vinni Pukh* before bedtime, whether an adult is present or absent, is particularly unforgettable because of his decision to retain Milne's travel from reality to fantasy. The narrator (Christopher Robin's father in the physical world reading the story to Christopher Robin) leads a dialogue in the Russian retelling to establish a relationship with the implied reader (child in the physical world). Zakhoder is able to tap into a child's mind by making a fun and direct exchange:

⁶⁹It group was founded in Leningrad by Aleksandr Vvedensky, Daniil Kharms, and their friends. They were infamous for their ludic way of life and twisted, macabre, surrealist writings. See more on playful poetry and the avant-garde in the 1920's-1930's by reading on creators such as Aleksandr Vvedensky, Daniil Kharms, Nikolay Zabolotsky, Evgeny Schwartz, Yury Vladimirov, and Nikolay Oleynikov, in Ben Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories: The History of Russian Literature for Children and Young People (1574-2010)*, pp. 301-336; pp. 302-304; 324-336.

Well, before you is Pooh. As you can see, he is coming down the stairs after his friend Christopher Robin, head down, counting his own steps with the nape of his neck: boom-boom-boom. He knows no other way of going down the stairs... now he has finally come down and ready to meet you.⁷⁰

The narrator directly addresses the young reader as “you”, and by giving them the same pronoun that is allotted to characters in the fantasy world, the implied reader in the physical world is identified as one of the characters in the story. In short, they *are* Christopher Robin, a child character of the narrative, as well as the addressee of the text. The narrator frames the story by telling it to Christopher Robin in third-person omniscient voice, then personifies the child audience reading the text as Christopher Robin in the physical world, and additionally goes another level when Christopher Robin becomes one of the main characters in the fantasy, dragging the Soviet reader into the story. In Zakhoder’s retelling, as well as in the English original, Christopher Robin constantly weaves in and out of reality, as he (the character in the fantasy world) interrupts the third-person version of the story, and the narrator reverts back to the second person voice in order to directly address his question or comment. Christopher Robin’s function of constantly crossing this blurred border between reality and fantasy parallels how a real child would function and exist while reading the text! When the retelling is read aloud, the changes in narrative voice become important, vividly bringing to life all of the characters,⁷¹ making it especially interactive and engaging for the actual reader.

Another tactic employed by Zakhoder to hint at his implied reader (the child) is the playful diction that he adapts from Milne, Russifying the language in the process to make it more

⁷⁰Борис Заходер, *Винни Пух и Все-Все-Все* (н.п., 2008), <http://lib.ru/MILN/winnizah.txt>.

⁷¹Ibid.

relatable for the child actively perceiving it. When Pooh is introduced descending from the stairs, the exchange not only welcomes a bizarrely named Pooh for entertainment purposes, Zakhoder also incorporates an oxymoron of the verb “бумканье”, or ‘booming’, to add a loud imagery of the plush toy hitting his head down each step, using a term only the Russian child could recognize. Zakhoder continues to describe Vinni Pukh⁷² as “living under the name of Sanders” (“под именем Сандерс”),⁷³ literally under a sign that read “Sanders”, presumably the former owner of the house. He makes metaphors function as literal facts, thus living under the name becomes the house with the name Sanders fixed atop it, because this is how the child reader would interpret it. Such word play allows children to recognize the dual function of sentence structure, which also happens to be funny.

The following examples show how the text is abundant in childlike talk which hints at the verbal structure used in children’s language: the height of the oak tree is hyperbolic “высокий-превысокий” (the closest literal English translation would be “high-very high”);⁷⁴ the repetition in how Vinni “thought-thought” to himself (“подумал-подумал”);⁷⁵ when Vinni philosophized about the existence of honey, he stresses how much harder he has to think for being a bear with sawdust in his head, just as a child might blame their young age for not understanding adult words and concepts; when Vinni approached a “familiar puddle” (“знакомой луже”)⁷⁶ of mud to roll in for disguise; and most humorously when he climbed the oak to reach the beehive and first fell three meters downward, then another five meters

⁷²The Russian *Vinni Pukh* literally translates to ‘Winnie Down’, or ‘Plush Winnie’.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

(“пролетев добрых три метра вниз ... пролетев еще метров пять,”⁷⁷ all of which is totally absurd and highly similar to the neology that a child would lean on to make sense of distance.

In a similar fashion of childlike neology, Zakhoder uses short, laconic language to carry suspense in the opening page, “This night...” (“В этот вечер...”),⁷⁸ and easy-to-follow humor throughout: Vinni’s songs were sporadically inserted throughout the story, as if to represent how this bear of little brain cannot concentrate and is constantly interrupted by his own thoughts. The expressive language and scattered narrative structure imitates the excited spirit innate to children and their process of comprehending reality.⁷⁹ All this goes back to blurred borders between fantasy and reality in the child’s point of view.

Although Zakhoder’s adaptive goals for *Vinni Pukh* were bereft of ideology, depending on who is perceiving the text, it is possible that his use of literary devices can go beyond entertaining his implied reader (the child) to be interpreted as having a dual function for the actual reader (the adult). The anthropomorphic animals never would have been permissible in Russia’s literary past, and the talking teddy bear functions as an important participant in fulfilling the assignment of the fairy tale and fantastic (which Nadezhda Krupskaya, Vladimir Lenin’s wife, was fighting so hard against in the 1920’s).⁸⁰ The fact that Zakhoder *chose* to have Vinni as the main character, instead of the ideal Soviet citizen, led adults to create their own submersive meaning of the retelling.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹For more information on one of the narrative strategies used by a child, see Kornei Chukovsky, *From Two to Five*, ed. Miriam Morton (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

⁸⁰For further details on Nadezhda Krupskaya’s actions to reform the educational system in the 1920’s, see Marina Balina, introduction to *Russian Children’s Literature and Culture* (New York, Routledge: 2008), 1-18

The personality that Vinni represents stands in stark contrast to what adults would have been exposed to before the Thaw. Vinni is described as an animal with a heightened sense for honey (“Он мог чують мёд, он мог видеть мёд”), but it is honey that in the end he cannot attain (“но достать мёд он, увы, никак не мог”).⁸¹ Vinni’s sole desire is to indulge in this sweet treat and his behavior reveals that he would do anything to get his paws on it. Such an idiosyncrasy and self-centered attitude toward life would have been unheard of before the Khrushchev period, when the dominant paradigm of ordinary people’s day-to-day experience of state socialism was directed toward collective goals. Honey is the single driving force behind all of Vinni’s ideas, he reasons, “the only reason for making honey is so *I* can eat it” (“А зачем на свете мёд? Для того, чтобы я его ел! По-моему, так, а не иначе!”).⁸² Such an egocentric phrase was controversial for publishing even during the Khrushchev period, a time when the needs of the majority were stressed and mass consumption coexisted with concerted efforts to reinvigorate mass political activism.

Vinni’s instinctual drive for satisfying his personal needs leads to many of Vinni's great shortcomings, like getting stung by bees, falling down the tree into a thorn bush, or having his balloon transportation pop mid-air. This appears to abide by didactic Socialist agenda, however, these are *individual* shortcomings and Vinni learns from his *own* mistakes, not from prescribed Socialist examples. Vinni’s constant desire for rivers of honey (fairy tale imagery absent in Socialist Realism) would also be understood by the adult reader as another unattainable goal of communism. Regardless of how one interprets Vinni’s decision to spend time doing as he likes, in this case, eating pots of honey, Zakhoder never intended for his retelling to be ideological.

⁸¹Борис Заходер, *Винни Пух и Все-Все-Все* (н.п., 2008), <http://lib.ru/MILN/winnizah.txt>.

⁸²Ibid.

Instead, he wrote to instill in the child neither the logic of the Party, nor of the adult, nor of the school board; he aimed to give the child reader his/her own voice.

The key distinction that needs to be made before proceeding with Khitruk's intention for his Vinni visuals is that while Boris Zakhoder's implied reader may have been the child (mostly for entertainment and spreading universal moral values with the absence of ideology), Khitruk's implied viewer shifts to the adult (mostly for political parody of Soviet ideology) and disguises this by having a child audience to aim toward grasping on the surface.

Decoding the Visual: Lev Loseff's Aesopian Language and Implied Viewer in Khitruk's Animations

The disappointments of the Thaw and Stagnation provided ample fodder for visual satire and other forms of multilayered aesthetic communication. Interpretation and decoding of creative works require devices such as allusions, allegories, and irony, among others, and when examined collectively they create an entity that will be identified as "Aesopian language".⁸³ In Lev Loseff's monograph, *On the Beneficence of Censorship*, he explained Aesopian language to have a structure which "allows interaction between the author and the reader at the same time that it conceals inadmissible content from the censor."⁸⁴ Aesopian language as a semantic apparatus

⁸³The expression "Aesopian language" was brought into currency in the 1860s by M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin.

⁸⁴Lev Loseff, introduction to *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner in Kommission, 1984).

shares characteristics with those of a riddle, an enigmatic statement that functions with ambivalence at its core. The existence of ideological censorship is the evident precondition for the rise of Aesopian language in Soviet literary and visual culture. The straightforwardness and simplicity of the plots and styles found in tales for children, along with their playful ambiguity, made it the ideal venue for writers and artists to hide their critiques beneath entertainment. Aesopian language for children liberated their minds and stretched their imaginations; for adults, it functioned as a political opportunity by the intelligentsia to conceal its true identity behind humorous and playful rhetoric. Loseff goes beyond the duality of readership (child and adult) and extends the function of Aesopian literature to “the gradual nurturing of a future Aesopian reader.”⁸⁵ I will apply Loseff’s literary theory beyond its textual application and will modify it to include the young viewer, a crucial audience that is to be educated on viewing between the lines. The *Vinni Pukh* films became a tool that could teach Russian children how to decode Soviet life under a totalitarian regime, and consequently make fun of it.

The side by side analysis of the Russian retelling and the three Soviet animations reveals the most important change that occurred during this creative transformation: the implied reader in Zakhoder’s text shifted from being the child, to the adult serving as the implied viewer in Khitruk’s visual series. Khitruk’s colorful illustrations (reminiscent of Eric Carle’s children’s books), catchy tunes, charming characters, and silly verbiage did entertain the actual viewer (the child), but his visual devices more so masked the comments aimed at his implied viewer (the adult). The short film trilogy did not make authorities and those who fulfilled the Socialist agenda suspicious of his social critique, as Khitruk’s production is entirely animated, completely

⁸⁵Ibid., 213.

extracting the reality of the physical world that was emphasized in both the original English and Russian retelling. Removing Christopher Robin from the series was a provocative decision, as well as a safety net because it placed the viewer immediately in the fantasy world, avoiding all skepticism that *Vinni Pukh* was anything more than entertainment for the child.

Khitruk retained the spirit of Milne and Zakhoder by implementing catchy tunes that were cheerfully sung throughout the forest. One scene features Vinni humming and singing to himself about the sawdust in the back of his head (“Там-парам-пурум в затылке! Пум-пурум-карам вопилки! Пум пу-пум пум...”).⁸⁶ The word for sawdust (“опилки”) is intentionally mispronounced, a challenge to many children. The bouncy and playful tunes are tempting to sing along to, and appear to break up the monotony of the dialogues, considering the short attention spans of young viewers. A closer Aesopian viewer recognizes that actually it is the implied viewer, the adult, that has the greater responsibility in making the songs proverbial. Vinni, a plump caricature of Nikita Khrushchev, is constantly admitting to the sawdust in his head that prevents him from actualizing his honey finding schemes. Recall Khrushchev preaching utopian hopes and the imminence of communism which was wishful talk that never received the outcome it had desired, just like Vinni. In another instance, Vinni and Pyatachok (the Russified Piglet) skip through the forest, boasting in rhyme about their “secretive” adventures together (“Куда идем мы с Пятачком - Большой-большой секрет!”).⁸⁷ This big secret that only they two share implicitly mocks the inconsistencies and lies during Khrushchev's leadership. That political culture exhibited Party members preaching that they have the people in

⁸⁶For all three soviet animations with English subtitles, see “Russia Has Its Own Classic Version of an Animated Winnie-the-Pooh,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 1, 2014, accessed September 12, 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/russian-version-winnie-pooh-different-also-classic-180953496/?no-ist>.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

their best interest, when in actuality this elite group would have their own inter-party secrets and goals.

Khitruck was also strategic with the verbiage his characters used. When preparing to take his flight via balloon (a reference to the Soviet obsession with space exploration) to reach a beehive atop the oak tree, Vinni rolled in mud to “fool” the bees that he is a dark cloud. His best companion, Pyatachok, repeatedly warned aloud that it would soon rain (“Кажется, дождь собирается”),⁸⁸ as if simply repeating a lie to fool the bees would make the statement true. This is yet another intention of Khitruck to critique all of the empty promises that were made to the Soviet people during the Thaw. Among those promises was the USSR’s surpassing of the United States in the output of the most important industrial and agricultural products, when in reality, people would have to line up for potatoes and bread all night, there would be no bread and butter in food stores, prices were hiked for meat and dairy products, and workers were told to work harder, despite the heavy cuts in their salaries. The scheming duo in that scene humored children, who would laugh at Pyatachok’s accidental gunshot to Vinni’s balloon, bringing him down to land in a thorn bush. Displeased with the outcome of the situation, Vinni displaced the blame onto the bees and honey for being the “wrong kind”, and a trained Aesopian viewer would distinguish that foolish act and excuse as being characteristic to those who held the Soviet Union as a paradise built on communist ideology (a myth that to a great extent was stipulated by the Soviet Union).

Vinni and friends may reside in the Hundred Acre Wood, but their lives are very much independent of one another, each having their different styles and tastes. Sova (the Russified

⁸⁸Ibid.

owl) is archetyped as the wise and intellectual one, living to fulfill her (not his!) own role in life, rather selfishly and materialistically. She attempts to sound smart when aiding Vinni in writing a birthday card to Eya-Eya (the Russified name for Eeyore that would phonetically be the sound a donkey makes), but falls short when her own spelling is flawed. Similarly, she does not justify that her new bell ringer that she picked up in the forest is actually Eya-Eya's own tale; this act of grabbing whatever she can scavenge is a typical attitude of the Soviet era shopper.

Vinni Pukh is even more of a unique individual. When Vinni searches under his bed for honey pots, he rapidly pulls out a lot of miscellaneous objects that are too cluttered to be clearly distinguished. His walls are decorated with an enframed self-portrait and a separate painting of honey. To the untrained eye, it appears that he is just a disorganized bear who is looking for a pot of honey among all the kept empty containers. To the Aesopian viewer, that is an individual who decorates his *own* home to his *own* taste with petit bourgeois items.⁸⁹ This character, who belongs to the lower middle social class, thinks his honey and empty containers are more important than other belongings and does not see a need to change nor organize. He is also depicted as a typical Soviet shopper who keeps everything just in case. He was also pictured as a somewhat melancholy, contemplative character. Frequently visualized with a worried facial expression as he pauses to ponder life, friendship, and existence, Vinni projects a pensive, anxious personality that is more reminiscent of Soviet society's hopes and fears, rather than of the Western placid and harmless bear (more on the Western adaptation in the Disney section).

The multilayered actions of Krolik, the intellectual rabbit must also be closely examined. He regards himself as practical and takes the lead among his friends, all while enjoying his *own*

⁸⁹For more on this term, also spelled "petty bourgeois", refer to middlebrow taste in Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Duke: Duke University Press, 1990).

wisdom in his *own* intellectual hemisphere. Krolik is also well-equipped at home, having everything from a handwashing station with soap and a toothbrush, to a large armoire decorated in pretty flowers and vegetables stocked with extra pots of honey. This detail of having extra food stems from the Soviet idea of storagging in case of another food storage or economic deficit, and it also represents the popular notion of Russians always being prepared with the best treats in case guests unexpectedly visit. These details could only have been noticed by the Aesopian viewer. Krolik is able to poke fun at food shortages not only because it was done in a witty way, but also because Khitruk was not one to be suspected of lashing out against the government, and thus his work trickled through the cracks of censorship.

Another one of his creations, Khitruk's Pyatachok was another not so innocent character, despite piglets traditionally being linked to the *Three Little Pigs*, a story of little weaklings experiencing danger in their own homes due to the threats coming from the big bad wolf. The high-pitched, little-bodied Pyatachok is not to be underestimated, being the only one in the forest to own a gun! When Vinni asked him to bring it out during his sticky situation in mid air with the angered bees, Pyatachok obeyed and was not afraid to shoot, and did shoot by the way. Though very compliant and much of a follower to Vinni's grandiose ideas, Pyatachok was willing to do anything for his best friend. Khitruk created him as a caricature of the obedient Soviet citizen who is willing to do anything he is told, especially in assistance to a fellow comrade.

Vinni Pukh reflects the multilayerdness of Soviet Russia after the revolution. The Aesopian viewer is able to understand Khitruk's subtle comments about the revolution never erasing the borders within Soviet society. In fact, despite their differences and personal needs, each of them are able to live together (yet separate) in their own homes due to one strong and

consistent link: friendship. This should ring a bell (maybe it is far too early for jokes about Eya-Eya's tail): the assemblage of characters from all walks of life are able to coexist because they are all friends, the idea behind "friendship of nations".⁹⁰ Despite their different personalities and tastes, the animals of the Hundred Acre Wood live together, yet live to fulfill their own separate destinies. Khitruk's social critique of individual values effortlessly takes over the moral values with which Zakhoder was preoccupied, and for this, the films became more popular among adults in particular than the retelling. While Zakhoder's text aimed at entertainment for the child and skirted overt ideology, focusing more on timeless moral instruction, Khitruk implicitly suggests that individual values pervade collective ones, while also entertaining the child, but more as a secondary goal.

Introducing Walt Disney: The Search for Success, Innovation, and Sales

At the cusp of what Henry Luce, founder of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, would acknowledge as the American Century, Walter Elias "Walt" Disney was born in 1901 as the fourth of five children to an impecunious family.⁹¹ Two of his older brothers ran away when he was just 4, sick of the constant work and deprivations. The disappointment and failure Disney experienced in his early years⁹² flamed his achievements in the world of animation, and further helped establish him as a globally recognized American entrepreneur, business magnate,

⁹⁰Marina Valina/Балина, М. «Все флаги в гости будут к нам» эволюция образа ребенка-иностранца в советской детской литературе 1920-1930-х годов. С. 156-166.

⁹¹Which is why they bounced from Chicago to Missouri farm to Kansas City in search of a living. For more see Neal Gabler, *Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007) and Steven Watts, "Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century." *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 1 (1995): 99-100.

⁹²For a timeline of events and more on being rejected as an intern in a cartoon section and his first studio went bankrupt, see "Walt Disney Biography," The Famous People, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/walter-elias-disney-3151.php>.

animator, voice actor, producer, director, writer, and eponymous founder of the Walt Disney Company.⁹³

A. A. Milne's relationship with Walt Disney can be traced to Disney's animated adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows* (Disney, 1949), which is highly indebted to *Toad of Toad Hall* (Milne, 1929), Milne's theatrical adaptation. Disney's book-loving daughter, Diane Disney Miller, would be found laughing in her room at "the gentle, whimsical humor of A. A. Milne's *Pooh* stories" (*Disney Insider*, 2010), inspiring Walt to seek the screen rights to Pooh immediately after the success of 1937's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*,⁹⁴ and continued to pursue this property over the years. A general air of malaise began to permeate at the Walt Disney Company in the pre- and post-war years, when staff was limited and operating capital was scraped, particularly for the making of *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) in the very month Disney got evicted.⁹⁵ When Disney acquired the rights to Pooh in 1961, he was determined to keep the bear safe from financially suffering and was decidedly strategic in his creative goals for the visual adaptations.

Originally, Disney had plans to remake Milne's *Pooh* into a feature-length animated film, but instead broke it into short featurettes when he foresaw it achieving wider popularity among Americans, who were not as familiar with the original Milne stories as the European audience was, and thus focused on building up an American following of a little bear.⁹⁶ Disney handed the

⁹³This is the chief production arm for Disney's motion pictures. A complete breakdown of the Walt Disney motion Pictures Group can be found at "Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group," The Disney Wiki, accessed December 02, 2016, http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/Walt_Disney_Motion_Pictures_Group.

⁹⁴For the full corporate history, visit: "The Walt Disney Company," The Disney Wiki, accessed December 12, 2016, http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/The_Walt_Disney_Company.

⁹⁵For a more detailed examination of the financial struggles of Disney, see Gabler, *Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination*, 283.

⁹⁶"Disney and Pooh," Just Pooh, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.just-pooh.com/disney.html>.

assignment of directing the first featurette to Wolfgang Reitherman, who was previously responsible for the dramatic battle in *Fantasia* (1940), the whale-chase scene in *Pinocchio* (1940), and the fire-breathing clash between Prince Phillip and the Dragon in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). Thanks to Pooh, Reitherman was the first in the company's history to receive directorial reigns of an entire animated feature.⁹⁷ Considering his prior accomplishments in carrying out Disney's aesthetic endeavors (for instance, the modified element of including a dragon for action-packed entertainment in *Sleeping Beauty*) and Reitherman's task of making the material identifiably Disney, it is reasonable to infer that Disney trusted Reitherman would be successful in "Americanizing" the characters in the Milne adaptations.

As an engineer of enchantment and committed producerist, Disney helped clear the path for advancing consumerism. His transition from cartoon shorts to feature-length animations and on to "real people" motion pictures, has shown the company's innovative skill. His devotion to make every project widely accepted by the public is abundantly clear, as he was one who:

regularly showed works in progress to his assembled studio staff and then distributed questionnaires and suggestion sheets to help guide the process of production. He secretly previewed films at local theaters, sneaking into the balcony with his creative artists to view moviegoers' reactions.⁹⁸

He was fixated on producing an American classic to his target audience, the middle class Americans who reveled in these new "family films", and used "total merchandising" techniques for the family fare. When commenting on Disney's ability to create a new story only identified in the Disney version, *Newsweek* once reported:

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸ Steven Watts, "Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century," 109.

Walt Disney's career may be founded on elfin fantasy and hybrid corn, but it thrives on the hardest sell in Hollywood: The "total merchandising" concept. "Once a decision is made to make a picture, the marketing starts," says soft-spoken Roy Disney, Walt's brother and financial mentor. "All the moves are geared to publicizing the final product, and making money while you do it."⁹⁹

Both Disney's reach and grasp were carefully coordinated than any other producers of "entertainment," whose root meaning is "to hold the attention" (not to be confused with "amusement" as diversion and escape). In an interview in *Walt Disney: Conversations*, Disney declared that, "I don't pay attention to the so-called critics... The real critic is that great American public out there."¹⁰⁰ There has been an enthusiastic embrace of Disney's works consistently over time, thanks to their technical excellence, positive messages, and particularly their exceptional marketing ploys.

Analyzing the Visual: Pooh and Friends Under the Disney Spell

Disney's greatest ambition was not to create art for the few but to meld art and commerce for a middlebrow market. Bearing such a goal, he intuitively developed an art uniquely American as a branded venture, one yet to be surpassed in scope or output. The derivative works thereafter would become successful enough to overshadow and obscure the original work completely, with children and adults from globalized capitalist parts of the world being more apt to be familiar

⁹⁹For the exact interview see "All of the Moves are Geared to Publicizing... and Making Money," *Newsweek* December 1962.

¹⁰⁰For more see Kathy M. Jackson, ed., *Walt Disney: Conversations* (Jackson: University Publication of Mississippi, 2006).

with cinematic versions of the original written story. Acclaimed translator and scholar of children's literature and culture, Jack Zipes contends that:

Disney was a radical filmmaker who changed our viewing of fairy tales and his revolutionary technical means capitalized on American innocence and utopianism to reinforce the social and political status quo... he animated the fairy tale only to transfix audiences and divert their potential utopian dreams and hopes through the false promises of the images he cast upon the screen.¹⁰¹

Zipes also recognizes and is concerned with the extent to which the cultural field of production has been influenced by market conditions, so much so that individual reading (or in this case, the viewing) of multi-modal materials in America today is contingent on the child's socio-cultural situation, which is "produced to further adult aims and the power of the market."¹⁰² The interference from media and advertising, from growing international conglomerates like Disney, has significantly affected the operation logic of publishers by shaping "what manuscripts are considered market-worthy and what authors 'bankable'."¹⁰³ Moreover, the network of production today:

prepares children to operate functionally according to capitalist interests and values. It means that predispositions and tendencies are cultivated in children by design and by chance to desire, need, and consume cultural materials manufactured to maintain those desires, needs, and habits of consumption.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹See entire article Jack Zipes, "Breaking the Disney Spell," in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Maria Tatar (New York: Norton, W. W. & Company, 1998).

¹⁰²For more on the cultural field of children's literature, see Jack Zipes, "The Cultural Field of Children's Literature," in *Relentless Progress: The Reconfiguration of Children's Literature, Fairy Tales, and Storytelling* (New York, Routledge: 2009) 4.

¹⁰³Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 14.

I will apply Jack Zipes' political and socio-historical approach to analyze *Winnie the Pooh* in the realm of Disney and the cultural significance of its productions. It is within this framework that I will examine how Disney's wanton tampering with *Winnie the Pooh* robs the literary tale of its voice and changes its form and meaning to establish itself eventually as a mass-mediated commodity, or a widespread and consumed (purchased) product, to subsume the cultural significance established by Milne.

The forest friends inhabiting Hundred Acre Wood made their debut in the first featurette, *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* (1966), using the following chapters as the basis: "Winnie-the-Pooh and Some Bees" and "Pooh Goes Visiting", both of which were taken from Milne's first work, *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). It begins with a showcasing of a real child's bedroom,¹⁰⁵ furnished in a style that could be British considering the cricket bat propped alongside the clothing drawer. But there is something "all-American" about it, perhaps it is the numerous toys displayed, among them a model steam locomotive that has an urban-minded and distinct American appearance. The animated characters are aware that they are literary characters in the animation, as they directly interact with the story via words on the page; for instance, when it's windy, the letters blow off the page. The way the stories are blended by the narrator so as to give the impression of reading a book and the incorporation of the "Hundred Acre Wood" map to literally open up the tale is a surprisingly sensitive interpretation of Milne's work.

However, Disney was quick to make the executive decision in the omission of Piglet, Pooh's closest friend in the original, and replacing him with Gopher to give the story an

¹⁰⁵This bedroom image became classic for generations of Americans to follow: wallpaper, night lamps, colors of the rooms, and bedspreads took over as standard features in trendy nurseries and playrooms across America. For more on collecting Winnie-the-Pooh artifacts, see Amazon under: V-Tech-Winnie-the-Pooh Kids' Furniture, Decor, Storage.

American character. When Pooh becomes too plump from the vast amount of honey at Rabbit's, he gets stuck in Rabbit's front door when upon existing. While he waits for Rabbit to get help, Pooh is visited by Owl and Gopher who lend their expertise. Since Owl and Gopher attempt to reverse Winnie's dilemma, it draws away from Christopher Robin's character in the original, who was the problem solver in the scenario. Gopher, speaking in a whistling lisp, says, "Sssomebody call for an excavation expert? I'm not in the book, but I'm at your service!"¹⁰⁶ Gopher makes a sly double-layered comment part of a much grander scheme, paying homage to the works of Milne, but at the same time gives the project that Disney signature. The American audience would be sure to relate to this genuine showing of sincere, dedicated and in-the-moment attentive concern to listen and to care for another, regardless of how close the ties are with that person.

Along with the omission of Piglet was also the omission of the unmistakable songs and poems that frequent Milne's story, as they are integral to the appeal of the stories. When he isn't scrounging for honey pots, Milne's Pooh is making up songs and poems and in fact, the very stories are built on those creations. As a substitute, the soundtrack to the Disney animation was congruent and typical to Disney's animations at the time, distinctly syrupy, but also catchy. One continues to hum along to the songs long after they have finished. The songs written by Richard M. Sherman and Robert B. Sherman would capture and exude the whimsy of Milne's poems, such as, "Rumbly in my Tumbly" and "(I'm Just) a Little Black Rain Cloud."¹⁰⁷ Commercial success might be an answer to why the original songs and poems were not incorporated; songs in Disney animations were either public-domain pieces or original compositions, which had the

¹⁰⁶ *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, directed by Wolfgang Reitherman, (n.p.: Walt Disney Company, 1966), Film.

¹⁰⁷ More info on the Sherman brothers can be found in *Mouse Tracks: The Story of Walt Disney Records*, pp. 77-78.

potential to add revenue in the form of sheet music and records. Usually the sheet music, records, children's toys and Disney book versions of any classic were available before the film was released. Disney was thus assured that the audience would be familiar with the main characters long before the film could be shown. Children raised on Disney merchandise were ready for the film, film which would become an American classic.¹⁰⁸

The relationships portrayed in the original Milne text nourish emotionally, spiritually, and otherwise. To put it in the words of Pooh himself, the original is a “Sustaining Book”. In it, Christopher Robin is depicted as brave and helpful, just as a loving parent is to a child (in the original Christopher Robin helps Winnie escape the bees, he makes Winnie feel safe when feared the apparent tracks of Woozles, etc.). And occasionally, as adults may do, Christopher Robin reveals his frailty, such as the time he wanders off with Rabbit to have a private conversation because he has forgotten what a North Pole would look like and thus seeks Rabbit’s advice. In *A.A. Milne: The Man Behind Winnie-the-Pooh*, Ann Thwaite explains:

it is Pooh who is childlike, egotistical, hungry, alternately boastful and self-deprecating, occasionally managing to be brave and useful, accepting things without really understanding them, as children so often have to accept understandable explanations from adults. The child listener or reader can recognize oneself in Pooh as she/he longs to be and as she/he *thinks* they will be in Christopher Robin.¹⁰⁹

While Christopher Robin is still a helpful young boy among his less capable stuffed pals, this adult role model to child dynamic is lessened in the Disney animations, as Christopher Robin is transformed into a child himself. When Pooh searches for honey in the beginning scene, he

¹⁰⁸The history of Disney music can be found at: “The History of Disney Music (with Images),” Storify, <https://storify.com/jmcdnld7/american-culture-and-it-s-effect-in-the-music-of-d>.

¹⁰⁹Ann Thwaite, *A.A. Milne: The Man Behind Winnie-the-Pooh* (London: Faber Paperbacks, 1992).

attempts to outsmart the bees with some help from Christopher Robin. The only indication that the bees are bothering Pooh is that he says, “Ow!”¹¹⁰ whereas in the Disney version, the bees form an angry mob and attack both the bear and the boy. In *Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner: Recovering Arcadia*, Paula T. Connolly observes:

The child who seems to offer protection in Milne's Forest has his facade of power utterly shattered here as he, too, must flee the bees and hide in a mud pond to escape their sting. This is not a world in which he seems to reign, but rather one from which he, too, must guard himself.¹¹¹

The Walt Disney Company had an agenda of making Christopher Robin an identifiable boy, with whom young viewers could sympathize. Considering the initial discussion by the Walt Disney Company about Christopher Robin’s ‘boyishness’ or lack thereof, the Company wanted to cut his hair, but decided that as it was 1966 and the likes of The Beatles were sporting the same haircuts, then his hair would remain.¹¹² It is apparent that the Company configures children into its calculations, placing more value on training them to consume over teaching them how to thrive socially, and such framing makes it different for the young to establish their own identities and a sense of autonomy.¹¹³ The featurette was an instant success, much of the iconography and key scenes from continue to be extracted and utilized today (particularly in The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh attraction at Disneyland). This was most likely due to both the

¹¹⁰A. A. Milne and Ernest H. Shepard, *The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh* (New York: Dutton Children’s Books, 1996), 17.

¹¹¹Paula T. Connolly, *“Winnie-the-Pooh” and “The House at Pooh Corner”*: *Recovering Arcadia* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., U.S., 1994), 112.

¹¹²Christopher Finch, *Disney’s Winnie the Pooh: A Celebration of the Silly Old Bear* (New York: Disney Editions, 2002), 64.

¹¹³Jack Zipes, “The Cultural Field of Children’s Literature,” 5.

magical alchemy of the creative team Disney assembled, and the fact that the source material was the only Pooh animated project that Disney himself was personally involved in.

The American audience, who had little or no exposure to the original Pooh stories, responded favourably to the first featurette, but it was the viewing public abroad, particularly in Britain with one campaign led by film critic Felix Barker,¹¹⁴ and another by Milne's niece,¹¹⁵ who reacted in outrage over the American accents, the creation of Gopher, and the omission of Piglet. The Disney Company consented to re-dub the part of Christopher Robin with a British accent¹¹⁶ in the 1968 featurette, "Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day", also marking the debuts of both Tigger and Piglet. One notable move by Disney that honored Milne's legacy was the incorporation of a 'Poohism', the play on the words in "Windsday", referring to the blustery weather. Pooh sets out to wish everyone "a happy Windsday", whereas in the book, Pooh and Piglet set out to "wish everyone a Very Happy Thursday". Despite the clever insert, the featurette was based on seven chapters from the original,¹¹⁷ material from which Disney exercised far greater liberties than with the previous release in such a way that original meaning was castaway. In a particular sequence, Owl's house is blown down, while Piglet and Pooh are still in it. When the house finally topples to the ground sideways, Owl turns to Pooh vexed asking if he was responsible for the destruction. Owl maintains the stereotype of the wise

¹¹⁴See "Winnie the Pooh," Geo Cities, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.geocities.ws/keystoneangel/pooh.html>.

¹¹⁵See "Disney and Pooh," Just Pooh, accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.just-pooh.com/disney.html>.

¹¹⁶Christopher Robin's voice for the first time is supplied by the authentically British John Walmsley, whereas in the previous featurette, the accent was British-sounding, but still distinctly American.

¹¹⁷Specifically: "In which Pooh & Piglet go hunting and nearly catch a Woozle" (Chapter III of *Winnie-the-Pooh*), "In which Piglet does a very grand thing" (Chapter VIII from *The House at Pooh Corner*), "In which Eeyore finds the Wolery and Owl moves into it" (Chapter IX from *The House at Pooh Corner*), "In which Tigger comes to the forest and has breakfast" (Chapter II from *The House at Pooh Corner*), "In which Piglet meets a Heffalump" (Chapter V from *Winnie-the-Pooh: Winnie the Pooh's nightmare of Heffalumps and Woozles*), "In which Piglet is entirely surrounded by water" (Chapter IX of *Winnie-the-Pooh*), and "In which Christopher Robin gives Pooh a Party and we say goodbye" (Chapter X of *Winnie-the-Pooh*).

know-it-all, yet often misses the mark. Making sense of Disney's massive presence in modern American culture requires the understanding of the commercial success that Disney and his Company sought. The strengths Disney possessed (recognizing and molding the talent around him and editing rather than drafting) coupled with the monetary success affixed to creative goals, meant that multiple aspects of an original work were to be highly altered or deliberately avoided altogether in the adaptation process.

Evidence for the above claim can be exhibited in Disney's clothing of Roo, Eeyore, Piglet, and Pooh, who quite often appear unclothed in the Milne originals.¹¹⁸ Roo has been dressed in a light blue shirt, a classic color frequently painted on the walls of nurseries for American boys. This sanitization goes beyond the appearance of the young kangaroo, he has become an "All-American" precocious child. During the big flood in the Hundred Acre Wood, Piglet has just enough time to send an SOS in a bottle before he is swept away down the river. Soon after, Roo is the one to find the bottle and in a good-boy manner alerts the rest of his discovery, "Look, I vested a bottle and it's got somethin' in it too!".¹¹⁹ Eeyore and Piglet underwent slightly different transformations. Eeyore, who would frequently lose his tail in the originals, maintained his cluelessness and lack of responsibility when it came to caring for himself, but was now adorned with a big pink bow. While E. H. Shepard had given Eeyore a thin and black scribbled tail, Disney took it to the next level transforming his tail into an iconic prop.

¹¹⁸The first time Pooh and his friends appeared in colour was 1932, when he was drawn by Slasinger in his now-familiar red shirt and featured on an RCA Victor picture record. Parker Brothers, American toy and game manufacturer, also introduced *A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh Game* in 1933, again with Pooh in his red shirt. In the 1940s, Agnes Brush created the first plush dolls with Pooh in his red shirt. Shepard had drawn Pooh with a shirt as early as the first *Winnie-The-Pooh* book, which was subsequently coloured red in later coloured editions. See: "Famous Bears: Winnie the Pooh," CanaBears, accessed August 26, 2016, <http://www.canabears.ca/canabears-blog/famous-bears-winnie-the-pooh/>.

¹¹⁹ *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*, directed by Wolfgang Reitherman, (n.p.: Walt Disney Company, 1968), Film.

“Pin the Tail on Eeyore” can now be printed or purchased, depending on the desired quality of the game and one’s willingness to support the Disney franchise. Likewise, Piglet originally portrayed in a green striped suit, until the consumer-obsessed minds at Disney dressed him in hot pink. Clearly, Disney desired that the appearance of his characters is more suitable and cutesy for the big screen,¹²⁰ giving them more anthropomorphic qualities, or in the case of Piglet, more “pig-like” qualities. Pooh also appears clothed in a full nightgown and cap or semi-clothed in a red t-shirt that would become iconic. Moreover, the very drawing style is changed, as the Disney characters appear less naturalistic and more rounded. Such a transformation is likely to appeal to children who will find the characters much more cuddly and appealing. Pooh and his friends went from being the actual plush toys of Christopher Robin, to naturalistic illustrations by E. H. Shepard in the Milne books, to being mass produced in all things accessible, appearing on lunchboxes, crib sets, wall decor, clocks, phone cases, and various others items in a multitude of sizes, at which point the Disney versions successfully appropriated the original.

The rest of the animals in the Hundred Acre Wood also underwent similar transformations analogous to Disney’s tendencies to oversimplify and oversanitizize their animations. In the third featurette, “Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too” (1974), Tigger is flamboyant and has developed a coil tail, rambunctiously bouncing from one side of the room to the opposite, portraying a far more parodic version than his storybook persona. The British colloquial saying, “ta ta for now”, has now branded Tigger with the abbreviated catch phrase, “TTFN”. Christopher Finch, author of *Disney's Winnie the Pooh: A Celebration of the Silly Old*

¹²⁰The second featurette was indeed more popular than the first, winning an Academy Award (Oscar) in 1968 for best Cartoon Short Subject, see “A Bear of Very Little Brain But a Lot of Money: Disney’s the Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh,” Tor, September 3, 2015, accessed December 7, 2016, <http://www.tor.com/2015/09/03/a-bear-of-very-little-brain-but-a-lot-of-money-disneys-the-many-adventures-of-winnie-the-pooh/comment-page-1/>.

Bear, asserts that “Disney’s Tigger must be judged an unqualified triumph— arguably more convincing on screen than in the Milne books”.¹²¹ One is urged to ask the question: Why does Tigger *need* to be more convincing than his original character in the books? This type of entertainment stimulates the imagination (anthropomorphic toys), protects innocence (Tigger is goofy yet good-natured), and creates a healthy sense of adventure (bouncing taken to new proportions), all of which is deemed “good” for children. Considering the character of Rabbit, in the featurettes he appears to have maintained his bossy, busy-bodied nature, but his appearance looks as if he could have hopped out of any Disney animation: big eyes (gives characters a congenial look that makes them seem trustworthy and pure of heart), elongated features (longer, thinner body types follow Western beauty standard) and human-like hands (allows animals to be more expressive and captivating with their gestures). In the Disney version, Rabbit acts bossier and fussier, and is also a keen gardener (no where in the books is it mentioned that he enjoys growing vegetables). In this way, Rabbit makes a louder and more memorable statement, particularly with his garden since rabbits are stereotyped to munch on carrators, this is simply another branding ploy that indeed this is the one and only rabbit in the production and must be celebrated and purchased.

While the featurettes bear resemblance to Milne’s style and overall spirit, the above examples are instances in which Disney discourse overwrites Pooh’s authorial source. Those who espouse fidelity as a criterion for the successful adaptation would be particularly outraged with the Disney production. However, scholars of adaptation find plenty of faults with “fidelity discourse”. Among those scholars, Thomas Leitch writes, fidelity to an original “is a hopelessly

¹²¹Finch, *Disney’s Winnie the Pooh*, 71.

fallacious measure of a given adaptation's value,"¹²² and Julie Sanders argues that focusing on fidelity leads to value judgements –“the book is better”–while modern academic scholarship is generally “not about making polarized value judgements, but about analyzing process, ideology, and methodology.”¹²³ A commitment to fidelity also peremptorily elevates the literary original over the cinematic adaptation.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, condemning Disney is neither an ingenious nor effective way to counter its power and influence, and the following difference must be deciphered instead: unjustly criticizing Disney for failing to deliver the impossible task of capturing a transcendent authorial intent, and voicing legitimate concern over possible strategies of cultural and economic colonization.

The Bear of Little Brain, But of Deep Pockets: Disney in Terms of Cultural Industry

Exploiting Pooh is a highly profitable business. In 1991, comic book pioneer Stephen Slesinger sued Disney on the act of breach of contract, alleging that the Californian media conglomerate failed to disclose accurate royalty figures for sales of merchandise and that Pooh revenue was intermingled with earnings from characters such as Mickey Mouse. In 2006, Slasinger also filed suit in federal court claiming Disney's exploitation of Winnie the Pooh characters infringed Slasinger's trademarks and copyrights. In one of the longest-ruling civil cases in Los Angeles County, the court finally ruled in favor of Disney, concluding that Slasinger had transferred all of its rights in their 1983 agreement. In 1998, the Walt Disney

¹²²Thomas M. Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From "Gone with the Wind" to "The Passion of the Christ"* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 161.

¹²³Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 20.

¹²⁴Patrick C. Fleming, “Dickens, Disney, Oliver, and Company: Adaptation in a Corporate Media Age,” *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2016), 184.

Company acquired the British rights to A.A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh until 2026 for the tidy sum of sixty million dollars. Even when it buys the rights, it tries to rebrand and *Disnify* the character. The blame can be placed on the culture industry—"publishers, advertisers, merchandisers, and even pedagogues who have capitalized on the mass appeal of the traditional tales and emptied them of their original vigor and truth."¹²⁵ This stripping of original substance to produce palpable playthings for profit in turn, conceals knowledge and perpetuates consumer complacency. From *The Culture Industry: Selected Works on Mass Culture*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer assert that, "the man with leisure has to accept what culture manufacturers offer him,"¹²⁶ speaking directly to those in a globalized capitalist society. They continue, "popular culture is akin to a factory producing standardized culture goods and does so in two ways: 1) systemic manipulation of viewers, 2) institutional structure so consumers are trapped in it." In this study, Disney systematically manipulates its viewers through the catchy songs and brand tactics and establishes a cultural monopoly over its countless Winnie artifacts.

Recognizable products are essential as the toy industry "sell[s] directly to children, by tapping in their imaginations in playthings inspired by characters in the mass media."¹²⁷

Nostalgia also remains a bankable commodity since Disney toys manage symbolically to bridge the gap between the "traditional" and the newer mass culture, despite in fact being themselves absolutely typical of the latter in terms of global marketing and profitability.¹²⁸ When Disney purchased the rights to Milne's Pooh, one of the business decisions called for the removal of

¹²⁵Donald Haase, "Yours, Mine, or Ours? Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and the Ownership of Fairy Tales" in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, 355.

¹²⁶Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, trans. J. M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 2001), 124.

¹²⁷Gary Cross, *Kids Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997), 10.

¹²⁸Dan Fleming, *Powerplay: Toys as Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 37.

hyphens from the original *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Since Disney seeks to ingrain their characters, settings, and fonts as interdependent symbols in the minds of shoppers, where one cannot exist without the other, the marketing tactic made the *Winnie the Pooh* brand more visually catchy, memorable, and not so cheap and compromising. Another way the consumer-oriented marketing of Disney secured its brand was by introducing all of the Winnie characters as early as possible in the animations, and usually all at once. This differs from the book, such as the case of Owl who was not so distinctly present in every situation and instead the other forest animal went to him usually when they sought his advice. This grouping method suggest that all inhabitants of the Hundred Acre Wood are a family or in consumerist terms, a convenient and must-have package.

Conclusion:

The Russian and American adaptations of A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner* are united by the general approach to transforming the original, as they both use the original to lay their own distinctive versions atop it. These relationships between texts (both literary and visual) are at the subject of Gérard Genette's palimpsest modality theory. By definition, a palimpsest is "a written document, usually on vellum or parchment, that has been written upon several times, often with remnants of erased writing still visible."¹²⁹ Monks in the Middle Ages would reuse parchments when publishing books, as resources were limited for this expensive practice, erasing the original text to rewrite a new on top. While the new text would subsume the original, remnants of the original were still visible. This superimposition of one text

¹²⁹Originally published in France in 1982, the eighth volume of Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

upon another or several others is ambiguous and may be “caused by the fact that a hypertext can be read both for itself and in its relation to its hypotext” (Genette 1997: 397), with the hypertext being “Text B” that goes over the hypotext, “Text A”. In the Russian case, there was a hypotext (Milne’s original) layered by its first hypertext (Zakhoder’s retelling) and finally subsumed by the second hypertext (Khitruk’s animations). In the Disney case, the hypotext (Milne’s original) was simplified and revised into the hypertext (Disney animations). While in the Disney version Winnie became the symbol of cuteness, domesticity, and a happy middle class childhood, in Russia, Vinni became the outlet for independence from the collectivist approach, voice of disappointment and individuality, resistance to ideological pressure, and a symbol of free spiritedness. Both visual adaptations had the implied viewer be the adult: in Disney for the purpose of luring the parents to buy Winnie artifacts for their children; in the Russian they served as the intellectual elite who could read/view the subversive messages between the lines. As for the child, the actual viewer, in Disney was conditioned to identify with the Americanized characters in order to build a relationship with them and to create the future consumer; in Russia, the child was used as the necessary tool to mask the hidden dissident message undetected behind the entertainment.

The overall observation of the American consumer society is that it is largely fueled by mass culture that produces desires, hopes, fears, and longings, and thus promotes the unending desire for material goods. This hyperconsumer society signaled “the end of the individual”¹³⁰ as Winnie decor and toys start to inhabit the majority of middle class kids’ bedrooms, not necessarily encouraging them to develop their own distinctive thoughts and tastes. As for the

¹³⁰Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*.

Russian case, it is a culture of the intellectual elite who could read and view between the lines to critique Socialist ideology and its outcome. The dissident message signaled “the voice of an individual”,¹³¹ as the subversive nature of the animation revealed the Aesopian language that was thoughtfully scattered through both the retold story and the visual text. In both cases Milne’s original text was trumped like an old parchment by the new and contrasting symbolic meanings.

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¹³¹Ibid.

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