

Editorial: Potter and Pooh and their Blustery Days

This issue is about popular English children's fiction — specifically Winnie-the-Pooh and Harry Potter — and some of the blusters that they reflect and awaken. Richard C. Davis writes about Chapter VIII of A.A. Milne's famous book, explaining, in fascinating detail, how Pooh's discovery of the North Pole is a mockery of the storm created early in the century over the identity of the first white man to make it to the North Pole. Piecing together contemporary newspaper reports and *Punch* excerpts, Davis leads us to reexamine the complex history behind what we thought was just delightful absurdity. The relationship here between literature and life supports the depiction of Milne as an autobiographical writer who often culls from life the adventures that Pooh and friends embark upon.

In our second paper, "A Defense of Potter, or When Religion is Not Religion," the relationship between literature and life is examined in order to contest the claim that there is such an easy relationship in the Harry Potter books. Julia Šarić looks at the controversy surrounding the depiction of the occult in Harry Potter: does this literary depiction of witchcraft reflect the actual practices of Wicca? Or does it refer to the witchcraft that seems to exist only in Fantasy — and in the minds of some book-banners? Does Fantasy ever refer to life, or just to the lives lived in other fantasies in other books — Sir Ector's castle, Earthsea, Bag End, Narnia? Is the centrifugal model of literature (where literature reaches out to the world, reflecting it and shaping it) an unsophisticated notion belonging to naïve readers, or simply a notion that does not apply to high fantasy? As Šarić articulates answers to these questions, we begin to see that the defense of fantasy must begin with a sure grasp of reality.

Thus, while Davis keeps us close to the link between literature and life and takes us back to a fascinating historical controversy, Šarić tries to show us the breaks in the link between literature and life, shedding light on a current controversy that, like the North Pole controversy, seems, at times, like a blustery bother.

Marie Davis