

The Horror, Piglet, The Horror

Found Footage, Mash-Ups, AMVs, the avant-garde, and the Strange Case of *Apocalypse Pooh*

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The greatest moment in Tigger's screen career is in T. Graham's presumably illegal short *Apocalypse Pooh*: soundtrack excerpts from *Apocalypse Now* are laid over brilliantly edited excerpts from Disney's Pooh films, and Tigger's bouncing first entrance is cut to the dialogue from the "it's a fucking tiger" scene from Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 Vietnam epic. Sadly, nothing in this belated series entry [...] comes up to that mark. 1

Kim Newman

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a sea change was underway in avant-garde and experimental cinema. While many 'old-guard' critics lamented the death of the avant-garde as a meaningful force (Fred Camper's essay "The End of Avant-Garde Film" in the twentieth

anniversary issue of the *Millennium Film Journal* comes to mind as a salient example)², a new generation of experimental and avant-garde filmmakers were re-imagining what the avant-garde could and should become. The arrival of feminist, queer and ideological critiques in regards to both avant-garde theory and practice, along with a newfound concern with popular culture and politics, lead to a radical re-imagining of the avant-garde. Perhaps most (in)famously, this at times Oedipal battle played itself out at the “Experimental Film Congress” held in Toronto in 1989, where the new and old guards vied for control over the direction of experimental and avant-garde film.³ One of the key reasons that the avant-garde was seen by ‘old boys’ (or, less generously, ‘almost-dead white men’) as being embalmed and buried had quite a bit to do with these newfound political and popular concerns, and a concurrent move away from high-Modernist preoccupations with film’s formal elements to the exclusion of all else. One of the key ways this shift was articulated was in the rise and relative popularity of found footage films.⁴ William C. Wees offers an insightful and succinct definition of avant-garde found footage filmmaking:

While the makers of documentary compilation films draw principally upon the resources of archives and stock shot libraries, avant-garde found footage filmmakers range much farther afield to find their raw material in the bargain bins of camera shops, thrift shops, flea markets, and yard sales; in piles of films discarded by film libraries and other institutions; in dumpsters behind film production houses, labs, and television studios. As artist-archeologists of the film world, found footage filmmakers sift through the accumulated audiovisual detritus of modern culture in search of artifacts that will reveal more about their origins and uses than their original makers consciously intended. Then they bring their findings together in image-sound relationships that offer both aesthetic pleasure and the opportunity to interpret and evaluate old material in new ways.⁵

While found footage films can be traced back through the history of the cinema—with works such as Esther Schub’s *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) and Charles Ridley’s *Swinging the Lambeth Walk* (1941)—their emergence as one of the dominant forms of avant-garde filmmaking in the late 1980s and early 1990s points to the fact that the texts and images that inspired this new generation of experimental filmmakers were strikingly divergent from those of their predecessors. Indeed, part of the disdain evinced by commentators like Camper speaks to the move away from the avant-garde auteur as a solitary visionary and a move towards the filmmaker as a cultural worker and critic who is deeply influenced by and engages with popular and mainstream culture. And indeed, this feeling of disdain between the old and the new was mutual. Abigail Child, one of the new generation of avant-garde filmmakers, and who has made found footage films, writes of her first experiences with ‘old school’ avant-garde filmmaking while in college:

I first saw Brakhage’s film work in college, sophomore year: *Dog Star Man* shown along with Len Lye’s *Trade Tattoo* and Arthur Lipsett’s *Very Nice, Very Nice*. For me as a college student, the Brakhage film was the least favorite. For one thing, there was no humor; for another, what did I have to do with a bearded great man with a dog in the snow trying to climb a slope? Surely I was struck with the mythological dimensions of the effort, but put off simultaneously by the maleness, the overwhelming narcissism, or should I say, solipsism, of the work. This aspect, in particular, made a negative impression in contrast to the critical, and the light and deep irony of Lipsett’s and Lye’s work, their ironic worldliness, if you will.⁶

While Child eventually came to admire Brakhage’s work, her early experience speaks to the break between past and present taking place in the avant-garde film world. Indeed, one of

the many liberating aspects of found footage film was that the means of production were fairly easily to obtain, especially with the advent of video. And with this newfound accessibility, the Situationist process of *détournement* came to the forefront of found footage aesthetics. As case in point: filmmaker Todd Graham made *Apocalypse Pooh* (1987) as an OCAD (Ontario College of Art and Design) student in the 1980s. One of the true ‘underground’ films (it has never had any sort of official release), Graham re-edited cartoons from Walt Disney’s Winnie the Pooh series of featurettes, released between 1966 and 1977, drawing his *détourned* images mostly from the first film in the series, *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* (Wolfgang Reitherman, 1966) and the Academy Award winning second short, *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* (Reitherman, 1968). He also drew on the live-action framing sequence from the film that was made for the compilation film bringing together the three featurettes: *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* (Reitherman and John Lounsbery, 1977). Graham then dialectically juxtaposed these images with the soundtrack — along with a few live-action images — from Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979). At key moments, Graham reversed these *détourned* juxtapositions, deploying images from Coppola’s film, and sounds from Reitherman’s animated featurettes. Graham’s choice of *Apocalypse Now* as the source material for his *détournement* is an interesting one, as the image of Coppola as a visionary, high-Modernist auteur positions him, in many ways, as the Brakhage of New Hollywood; the solitary iconoclast on a quest for cinematic purity. This isn’t the only possible connection one can find between Coppola and experimental cinema; for instance, one of the avant-garde movements that manifests itself throughout Coppola’s work is surrealism. In a vast majority of the film reviews of *Apocalypse Now*, the vision proffered by Coppola is described as war as hallucination; indeed, more generally, the genre of Vietnam war films themselves are described as such. For instance, Peter Rainer writes: “The Vietnam movie has often been a species of the horror film [...]. Stylistically, no other genre of war film in the history of movies has been so frenzied, so hallucinatory.”⁷ It therefore stands to reason that ‘*détourned animation*’, a potent synthesis of the radical politics of the 1960s and 1970s with character animation — Hollywood cinema at its most surreal and uncanny — is a ideal mode through which to reconsider representations of Vietnam, its horror and its allure as it came to be represented in mainstream cinema.

The Strange Tale of *Apocalypse Pooh*

As an ‘underground’ film, *Apocalypse Pooh* had two, unrelated audiences in the pre-Internet era, before its envelopment by the digital world: on the one hand, Graham’s film played in some ‘underground’ and contemporary art forums such as Toronto’s Pleasure Dome collective and the Whitney Museum in New York; on the other hand, *Apocalypse Pooh* also had a sizeable fan following derived from screenings at comic book conventions.⁸ In the days before the Internet, *Apocalypse Pooh* was widely bootlegged, passed around and traded on VHS (other films, such as Todd Haynes’ *Superstar: The Life of Karen Carpenter* [1987] or John Greyson’s *The Making of ‘Monsters’* [1991], had similar modes of distribution, but in the first instance were screened at festivals, and only later went ‘underground’ as legal issues ensued). One could see Graham’s film as an instantiation of comic geek, Situationist samizdat.

Yet the film also spoke to a very different audience. *Apocalypse Pooh* was made at a time where the potential convergence of various imaging technologies was seen as opening radical new possibilities for critical representational strategies in the purported age of

postmodernism. As Dot Tuer and Michael Balsler wrote in their program notes for the Pleasure Dome 'High Tech/Low Tech: Bodies in Space, An Open Forum on Film and Video Aesthetics' program, at which *Apocalypse Pooh* was screened in 1992:

Does video have a conceptual affinity to cyberspace? Does film reproduce a dream state? How do the structural and historical trajectories of these two time-based mediums respond to the mutating consciousness of McLuhan's information age? Is there purity to form, a specificity of medium, a difference in community formation? These are some of the questions that have arisen in our conversations. The flickering illusions of cinematic space, the cool simulcast immediacy of telecommunications, the relationship of body to place; these are some of the themes that the work touches upon, some of the ideas we would like to engage in presenting this program.⁹

Here, one can again see the schism between the old guard and vanguard avant-gardes in detail. While much of the 'visionary film' school of experimental cinema was profoundly concerned with purity of form, new avant-garde films and filmmakers examined with a critical glee the interstitial nature of moving image technologies. Barriers between media were seen to be disintegrating and therefore the epistemological issues surrounding images shifted from philosophical questions as to the nature of the 'real' (be it material, psychological or spiritual) to larger questions about the nature of moving images themselves and their intertextuality and interconnectedness. But how did this 'underground' film reconfigure one's understanding of *Apocalypse Now* and become the godparent of today's mash-ups and AMVs? One reason could be that it is expansive in its scope. In its eight minutes, *Apocalypse Pooh* successfully condenses the entire, allegorical, mythological and grandiose narrative of Coppola's film and provides a critical meta-commentary on both *Apocalypse Now* and the Winnie the Pooh featurettes. Therefore, before considering *Apocalypse Pooh* in detail, perhaps some attention should be paid to the films in the Pooh trilogy upon which Graham draws. Disney freely adapted from A. A. Milne's two Pooh books, *Winnie the Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928) into three featurettes: the aforementioned *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* and *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too* (John Lounsbery, 1974). While there are a plethora of other Pooh films in the Disney catalogue (most of which are television episodes and straight-to-video releases), these three films are the ones closest to Milne's work, in terms of both narrative and style, and together comprise the 'canonized' version of cinematic Pooh. To better understand the nature of the critique undertaken by Graham, a fairly detailed analysis of *Apocalypse Pooh* is in order. After opening with images of a Vietnamese village being napalmed from *Apocalypse Now* (with the sound accompaniment of the Winnie the Pooh theme and the sound of Pooh's cuckoo clock), we see Winnie the Pooh dragging a popgun behind him, looking tired. In voice-over we hear: "Saigon, shit, I'm still only in Saigon." Cut to an image of Pooh poking his paw into the side of his head, trying to think. What is Pooh thinking?: "I've been here a week now. Waiting for a mission, getting softer." Cut to Pooh sleeping, his dreams fraught with thoughts of: "Every minute I stay in this room I get weaker. And every minute Charlie squats in the bush he gets stronger." Pooh exercises in the mirror, as The Doors play their schizoid anthem "The End" in the background. Cut to Pooh with his head stuck in a honey jar, floating down a river. He realizes things are dire, as he thinks: "I was going to the worst place in the world and didn't even know it yet. Weeks away and hundreds of miles up a river that snaked through the war like a main circuit cable and plugged straight into Kurtz." Here, Graham returns to live-action footage, and cuts to the image of a reel-to-reel tape recorder playing the voice of Kurtz to Willard. And then, returning to the world of animation, the rest of the cast is introduced: We see Rabbit scared in the

woods, and the voice-over of Pooh/Willard saying: “The machinist, the one they called Chef, was from New Orleans. He was wrapped too tight for Vietnam, probably wrapped too tight for New Orleans.” Cut to an über-young, boyish, innocent Christopher Robin sitting under a tree: “Lance on the forward 50s was a famous surfer from the beaches of South L.A. You look at him and you wouldn’t believe he ever fired a weapon in his whole life.” Then, cut to Roo, the baby boy kangaroo, happily bouncing on a fence: “Clean, Mr. Clean, was from some South Bronx shithole. Light and space of Vietnam really put a zap on his head.” Cut back to a shot of Pooh upside-down in the honey jar, drifting down the river; Owl lands on him, and Pooh/Willard continues: “Then there was Phillips, the Chief. It might have been my mission, but it sure as shit was the Chief’s boat.” Cut to Pooh, being pulled as if by a kite (he’s actually being pulled by Piglet adrift in the air) through the Hundred Acre Forest, to the tune of The Rolling Stones’ “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” (in Coppola’s film, it’s the water-skiing scene, which is about as plausible as Piglet flying through the air). Pooh’s descent (ascent?) to Hell continues, as he floats up into the air on a balloon, Richard Wagner’s “Flight of the Valkyries” is heard, along with the ominous sound of approaching choppers. Cut to Gopher coming out of his hole (in *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, Gopher is the token American character, and does not appear in the original books). Out of his buck-toothed mouth comes the infamous line: “I love the smell of napalm in the morning.” In voice-over we hear Willard/Pooh, describing Gopher/Kilgore: “He was one of those guys that had that weird light around him. You just knew he wasn’t gonna get so much as a scratch here” (perhaps this is because Gopher lives underground). Cut to Pooh stuck in Rabbit’s hole, with Gopher standing on him. There’s the rising sound of rock music in the background, and then we cut to Pooh floating up the river, head still stuck in a honey jar. In voice-over he says: “Oh man, the bullshit piled up so fast in Vietnam, you needed wings to stay above it.” Yes, Pooh is having a bad day, but it is about to get worse. Graham cuts to Pooh in his house, in his night-coat, with his popgun. In the background, there are jungle noises. Then a quick, Eisensteinian montage of Rabbit petrified, and Tigger bouncing into Pooh’s house. When Tigger “attacks”, screams of “Fucking tiger, Fucking tiger!” fill the void. Cut back again to Pooh stuck in a hole. In voice-over, Pooh/Willard is told: “You’re in the asshole of the world, captain!” Then, we cut to Piglet, embodying the unnamed photojournalist played by Dennis Hopper (Hopper’s characters seem to lend themselves to this kind of détournement, as he is also featured in Graham’s follow-up film *Blue Peanuts*, where his character Frank, yelling for Pabst’s Blue Ribbon in David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1987), turns into Snoopy chugging beer by a player piano) who begins with the salutation: “I’m an American! Yeah, American civilian. Hi Yanks.” There is then an extended montage of Piglet sweeping up leaves outside his house, and speaking to himself. He muses: “What are they going to say about him? What, are they going to say, he was a kind man, he was a wise man, he had plans, he had wisdom? Bullshit, man! Am I going to be the one that’s going to set them straight? Look at me: wrong!” He continues to speak, as the leaves blow him around:

He’s a poet-warrior in the classic sense. I mean, sometimes he’ll, uh, well, you’ll say hello to him, right? And he’ll just walk right by you, and he won’t even notice you. And suddenly he’ll grab you, and he’ll throw you in a corner, and he’ll say do you know that if is the middle word in life? If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, if you can trust yourself when all men doubt you—I mean I’m no, I can’t—I’m a little man, I’m a little man, he’s, he’s a great man. I should have been a pair of ragged claws scuttling across floors of silent seas—I mean—don’t go without me, OK?

Piglet doesn’t get the last word, however. Graham returns to live action and cut to images of Marlon Brando as Captain Kurtz, rubbing his bald skull, but from his mouth emerges the

depressive bleating of Eeyore, the donkey, saying, “Thanks for nothing” (to be fair, Eeyore makes far more sense than Kurtz in Coppola’s film). Further usurping Brando’s dialogue is the replacement of Kurtz/Brando’s infamous line “The horror, the horror” with Pooh’s “Oh, bother; oh, bother”, repeated as Graham cuts to an image of Willard’s head emerging camouflaged in the river. Then, he cuts to a final live-action image of a stuffed Pooh bear (taken from the conclusion of *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*), superimposed with the title “The End.” Not only is this surrealist vision an entirely appropriate encapsulation of *Apocalypse Now*, it is also one of the best Pooh films ever made, if not the best, as the détourned characters reveal not only the Ur-text to Coppola’s film, but also of their own animated images. Furthermore, *Apocalypse Pooh* invites one to revisit the Pooh films, which most viewers probably haven’t considered since childhood (after all, they are not a staple of ‘Introduction to Film’ courses), and read them against the grain, through the glass of colonialism, Coppola and Conrad. This project can lead to strange, yet interesting, results: In *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*, we are introduced to Pooh and follow him on his (dark) quest for honey, which leads to him expressing his rather colonialist attitude towards bees (he says: “The only reason for bees to make honey is so that I can eat it”). To get this elusive gold substance, he rolls in the mud to camouflage himself as a rain cloud (looking much like Willard in the river at the conclusion of *Apocalypse Now*), then takes a balloon and rises up to the bees’ nest to feed off the fruit of their labour. Eventually, the bees organize, revolt, fight back and send Pooh flying through the sky on his rapidly deflating balloon, none the wiser as to why his exploitative ways are wrong (he says: “You never know with bees”). His gluttony then leads to him getting wedged in Rabbit’s hole, having to slim down before he can exit, without learning any discernable lesson from his rapacious over-consumption of natural resources. In *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*, Pooh first encounters Tigger in a mock military manner as he patrols his home with his popgun. Before seeing Tigger himself, he hears him prowling in the (dark) forest; Pooh panics as the unknown ‘other’ overtakes his imagination. Later, as a storm passing through the Hundred Acre Forest picks up, Pooh is blown through the woods, pulled by Piglet, whose scarf has become a kite-string. Pooh and Piglet are then plastered against Owl’s house, which then leads to a pastiche of the cabin scene in Chaplin’s *The Gold Rush* (1925)—another film about capitalist greed and the quest for golden substances. Once Owl’s house is destroyed, the storm really picks up, and Pooh and Piglet are swept down the swelling river, only to be saved at the last moment. Eeyore finds a new home for Owl, which turns out to be Piglet’s flooded house, so Piglet graciously gives up his house and moves in with Pooh (Piglet being the socialist of the lot). Another quasi-military party, replete with marching band, ensues. While my (re-)readings of these two films are somewhat tongue in cheek, I shall examine later on how unveiling the Ur-text of popular culture artifacts is no longer solely the domain of avant-gardists, Situationists and academics, but that this DIY aesthetic is now practiced by video jockeys, mash-ups artists and the producers of AMVs in the (quasi-) mainstream digital forum of cyberspace.¹⁰

Détournement and the Nature of ‘Stars’

One of the things that *Apocalypse Pooh* draws into relief is the iconic status of A.A. Milne’s characters. While much of the humour generated by *Apocalypse Pooh* comes from the détournement of Coppola’s film, this Situationist process also foregrounds the fact that the Pooh characters have a star status similar to iconic figures such as Marilyn Monroe or John Wayne (or, for that matter, Marlon Brando and Dennis Hopper). It does not matter that

viewers may not know or recall the narrative of *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day*; instead the film foregrounds the way in which Pooh, Piglet, Christopher Robin, Tigger and the other Milne characters are understood as larger than the roles played in the films themselves. As Richard Dyer notes:

Because stars have an existence in the world independent of their screen/'fiction' appearances, it is possible to believe (with for instance ideas about the close-up revealing the soul, etc.) that as people they are more real than characters in stories. This means that they serve to disguise the fact that they are just as much produced images, constructed personalities as 'characters' are. Thus the value embodied by the star is as it were harder to reject as 'impossible' or 'false', because the star's existence guarantees the existence of the value he or she embodies.¹¹

Animated characters who, in essence, only exist as screen stars and not as real individuals) raise salient questions about what spectators believe stars to embody, and what they project into them, in an often unreflective popular culture. Certainly, despite the fact that Pooh and his cohorts are lines on paper, they have an existence outside of the animated world. As director Chuck Jones notes about the animated 'star' Daffy Duck in relation to his classic deconstruction of the character in his film *Duck Amuck* (1953): "[. . .] Daffy can live and struggle on an empty screen, without setting and without sound, just as well as with a lot of arbitrary props. He remains Daffy Duck."¹² Animated characters exist in the imagination of viewers and in these imaginings have personalities and ideological positions that extend beyond the diegesis of the text. Indeed, the plethora of marketing campaigns that employ animated 'stars' points to their existence as 'personalities' outside of the narratives of their film appearances. Indeed, it is this very excess that makes *Apocalypse Pooh* a humorous film. One is not simply listening to, say, Martin Sheen's voice-over as if spoken by Winnie the Pooh; one is also watching the incongruity of Pooh thinking, "Shit, I'm still in Saigon." Furthermore, while one needs to be familiar with the narrative of *Apocalypse Now* for the film to make sense, one does not have to be a cinéphile on the scale of Godard for the film to work. *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* may not be 'quoted' in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1987-97); this isn't necessary for the viewer to understand the détournement that is taking place. One only needs to be familiar with the 'stars' that populate the Hundred Acre Forest; indeed, Graham's film foregrounds the fact that our knowledge of the characters is greater than our knowledge of the films from which they come. It's this knowledge that allows for us to understand the détournement of both *Apocalypse Now* and *Winnie the Pooh*; it's Graham's ability to make the familiar unfamiliar through humorous dialectical juxtapositions, or as Wees put it, to "reveal more about their [the images] origins and uses than their original makers consciously intended" that uncovers the underlying truths of both films and the way they function in culture in their 'naturalized' forms.

Mash-ups, AMVs and the avant-garde

What is also of interest about *Apocalypse Pooh* is the way in which it blurs the boundaries between the analog and the digital. Which raises the question: To what degree can *Apocalypse Pooh* be seen as the Ur-text or progenitor of today's ubiquitous mash-ups (such as trailer mash-ups, where a film is re-cut into a new trailer, which typically dramatically changes the genre of the film) and AMVs (Anime Music Videos, where animated footage, most often from Japanese Anime films, is re-cut to a new soundtrack)? While mash-ups and

AMVs are now ubiquitous on-line, and made all the easier with the advent of iMovie, Moviemaker, Final Cut Pro and Avid, *Apocalypse Pooh* has taken on the status as the genus of these forms. Indeed, *Apocalypse Pooh* has gained a second life on-line, looked upon as both the progenitor and primitive form of mashups and AMVs. In the digital realm, the 'breakthrough' success of trailer mash-ups as viral videos (videos that spread wide and rapidly through the Internet) can be traced to the 2005 mash-up of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980). Here, video jockey Robert Ryang recuts the Kubrick film into a trailer for a feelgood, family film, where Jack Nicholson is softened and finds a kind of happiness through meeting a young boy, as Peter Gabriel's 'Salisbury Hill' plays in the background. The détournement of the Kubrick film foregrounds the re-narrativization that most often takes place in trailers, and in so doing, also calls into question the ways in which moving images signify and the tenuous relationship between images and the way they are anchored by the soundtrack. Trailer re-mixes and mash-ups also bring to light the fact that film trailers have always been, to a certain extent, found footage films. On sites such as ifilm, there are now a plethora of such trailer mash-ups and re-mixes, such as: 2007's *When Harry Stalked Sally* (*When Harry Met Sally* re-cut as *Fatal Attraction*); Joe Sabia's 2007 mash-up *Good Will Hunted* (*Good Will Hunting* re-cut as a thriller); Chris Rule's 2006 film *Scary Mary Poppins* (*Mary Poppins* as a horror film); Dennis Lyall-Wison's 2006 trailer mash-up *Scary in Seattle* (*Sleepless in Seattle* as, yet again, *Fatal Attraction*); and Chocolate Cake City's 2006 *Brokeback to the Future* (the *Back to the Future* series re-mixed as a queer romance). AMVs have taken the found footage ethos into a DIY, competitive form, with practices such as 'AMV Iron Chef' competitions, where two video jockeys are given the same source material to re-edit or détourne in a fixed amount of time. The transmogrification of avant-garde found footage films into popular forms, such as mash-ups, trailer re-mixes and AMVs is in no way a new development; an interstitial relationship between the avant-garde and the mainstream has existed since the cinema's inception (Chaplin's appropriation by the avant-garde is a key example; *Apocalypse Pooh* itself is another). Much the way the works of Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, Bruce Conner and Bruce Baillie can be seen as key stylistic forbearers to the aesthetic of the music video and MTV, Graham's work, and that of found footage filmmakers such as Keith Sanborn, Craig Baldwin, Peggy Awesh and Matthias Müller—amongst many others—can be seen as the avant-garde precursors to the DIY emergence of found footage mash-ups and AMVs on-line (indeed, in tracing these various Ur-histories, one could also argue that the concluding twenty minutes of Coppola's *The Godfather, Part III* (1990) is a mash-up of the first two Godfather films and Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*).¹³ And, like many found footage films produced by the avant-garde, mash-ups and video jockeys are developing a self-reflexive, participatory, critical and political edge. In a recent article in *The Guardian* on mash-ups and video jockeying Danny Bradbury notes:

Kent Bye, a Maine-based engineer and film-maker, is preparing an Alpha-version of a collaborative on-line editing system for the *Echochamber Project*, a video documentary analyzing media coverage of the run up to the Iraq war. Bye will make the audio of 45 hours of raw footage available on-line. Volunteers are transcribing and tagging the audio with their own descriptions. "Citizen editors" will then be able to resequence the audio to create their own remixes of interviews, which Bye hopes to use as a guide during the final video-editing process. He is also considering Flash-based online editing tools to make video mashups possible. "What I'm really interested in is how you can use a distributed set of people to put that kind of research into a collaborative film-making approach," he says.¹⁴

Instead of arguing that the avant-garde is being appropriated, tamed, denaturalized or otherwise corrupted by its incorporation into the mainstream, perhaps one should instead

celebrate the fact that, like the appropriations made by found footage filmmakers of popular culture, the avant-garde practices undertaken by DIY video jockeys, mash-up artists and AMV producers speak not to a dilution of radical art and aesthetics, but its termite-like function as a means of critique within the quasi-mainstream. If something as honey-sweet as Winnie the Pooh can be détourned and then celebrated by the avant-garde, comic geeks and on-line artists, then perhaps there are still points of resistance against the ideological conformity triumphed as 'realist' in most mainstream image-making. Furthermore, the process of unpacking a text, or re-working it and showing its ideological underbelly becomes the goal of radical cultural production, instead of simply accepting the images rampant in culture, and consuming them like so much honey. And of course, the ever-ubiquitous Pooh has been used to explore these kinds of issues before; Benjamin Hoff writes in his book *The Tao of Pooh*:

The honey doesn't taste so good once it has been eaten; the goal doesn't mean so much once it has been reached; the reward is not so rewarding once it has been given. If we add up all the rewards in our lives, we won't have very much. But if we add up all the spaces between the rewards, we'll come up with quite a bit. [. . .] Each time a goal is reached, it becomes Not So Much Fun, and we're off to reach the next one, then the next one, then the next. That doesn't mean the goal doesn't count. They do, mostly because the cause us to go through the process, and it's the process that makes us wise, happy, whatever. [. . .] What could we call the moment before we eat the honey? Some call it anticipation, but I think it's more than that. We could call it awareness. It is when we become happy and realize it, if only for an instant. By Enjoying the Process, we can stretch that awareness out so it's no longer only a moment, but covers the whole thing. Then we can have a lot of fun. Just like Pooh.¹⁵

Or, one could add, the journey of Willard. Indeed, the above reading of Pooh encapsulates the narrative of both *Apocalypse Now* and *Apocalypse Pooh*, the philosophical issues raised by both films, the critique of dominant culture sallied forth by the avant-garde in its myriad of analog and digital forms.

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Notes

1 Kim Newman, "The Tigger Movie," *Sight & Sound*, June 2000. (return)

2 Fred Camper, "The End of Avant-Garde Film," *Millennium Film Journal* 17/18/19 (1986-87): 99-125. (return)

3 For a survey of the debates surrounding the Toronto Experimental Film Congress and the manifesto written as a riposte to it, see William C. Wees, "Let's Set the Record Straight': The International Experimental Film Congress, Toronto 1989," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 9.1 (2000): 101-116. For an overview of the goals of the Congress, see *International Experimental Film Congress* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1989). (return)

4 While the literature on found footage films keeps growing in its own rhizomatic way, some key texts on the subject are: Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964); Sharon Sandusky, "The Archeology of Redemption: Towards Archival Films," *Millennium Film Journal* 26 (1993): 3-25; William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993); Scott MacKenzie, "Flowers in the Dustbin: Termite Culture and Detritus Cinema," *CinéAction* 47 (1998): 24-29; Michael Zryd, "Found Footage Film as Metahistory: Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99*," *The Moving Image* 3.2 (2003): 40-61 and Adrian Danks, "The Global Art of Found Footage Cinema" in Linda Badley, R. Barton Palmer and Steven Jay, eds. *Traditions in World Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006): 241-253. (return)

5 William C. Wees, "From Compilation to Collage: The Found Footage Films of Arthur Lipsett," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 16.2 (2007). (return)

6 Abigail Child, "Notes on Sincerity and Irony," in David E. James, *Stan Brakhage: Filmmaker* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005): 196. (return)

7 Peter Rainer, "Vietnam Hot Damn" in Rainer, ed. *Love and Hisses* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1992): 470. (return)

8 Daniel Clowes, a leading alternative comix artist, documents this popularity in the letter column of his comic *Eightball* (the basis of the Terry Zwigoff film *Ghost World*), published by Fantagraphics. (return)

9 Dot Tuer and Michael Balser, Program Notes for "High Tech/Low Tech: Bodies in Space, An Open Forum on Film and Video Aesthetics" Pleasure Dome, Toronto, Ontario, July 17, 1992. (return)

10 For a more 'traditional' encapsulation of the plots of these films, see Christopher Finch, *Disney's Winnie the Pooh* (New York: Disney Books, 2002). (return)

11 Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979): 22. (return)

12 Cited in Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons*. rev. ed. (New York: NAL, 1987): 263. (return)

13 For more on the interweaving of these two narratives, see Scott MacKenzie, "Closing Arias: Operatic Montage in the Closing Sequences of the Trilogies of Coppola and Leone," *p.o.v.: A Danish Journal of Film Studies* 16 (1998): 109-124. (return)

14 Danny Bradbury, "Jockeying for Attention" *The Guardian* 20 April 2006. (return)

15 Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh* (London: Penguin, 1982): 111-112 (return)