The Marvelous Land of Oz Short Guide

The Marvelous Land of Oz by L. Frank Baum

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Characters

One of the most fascinating features of this young person's novel—a feature that particularly recommends the book to the serious adult reader—is Baum's creation of certain characters that at first reading seem merely additions to the fantastic cast. From this standpoint, all the others are so weird, that these get lost in the welter of Ozian oddities. The characters referred to here are Tip and the thieving Jackdaws, near whose nest "in a hollow ledge of rock" the Gump and its passengers find themselves after a mishap in landing.

All along, the reader may have surmised that there was something strange about Tip, from birth to the present in the story: a soft, unboyish quality suggesting Sir James Barrie's character Peter Pan. That is to say, a young person who seems to be set apart for a special fate, because of that person's essential nature. Like so many imaginative verbal artists over the long span of time since tales began to be told, Baum availed himself of a literary device that is particularly effective in the right hands, so to speak: the Recognition Scene. Skillfully withholding from the reader the really important defining fact about Tip, until almost the end of the story, Baum saves the best for the last.

But in this revelation there is actually more than a mere shock: there is a shock within a shock.

When Glinda finally caught old Mombi, who had been assuming a series of strange forms in order to escape capture, Glinda insisted on finding out from her why the Wonderful Wizard of Oz had visited her three times, and what had happened to the child left in his care—Ozma—but who had very strangely disappeared. Old Mombi refused to tell, but finally, threatened with death by Glinda, she gave in. The Wizard, who had stolen the throne of the Emerald City from the former ruler, had asked old Mombi to conceal the child (who was, after all, heir to the throne), and in return he taught old Mombi all the magic tricks that he knew. As for what old Mombi had done with this child, she had transformed him into a boy! And since Glinda, the Scarecrow, and the other companions knew that Tip was the child raised by old Mombi, it was big news indeed to discover that their young leader (of sorts), he who was called "Father" by Jack Pumpkinhead, was in reality intended to be Ozma, ruler of the Emerald City.

Tip's reaction to the revelation of his true gender identity was quite negative, and the process whereby he was made to go from male to female suggests, however obscurely, a primitive initiation ritual in a preliterate tribe. Moreover, it also suggests a transsexual operation. (Did Baum realize what he was writing?) Tip protested against losing what had become his second nature. To paraphrase the dialogue, Tip: I'm not Princess Ozma, nor am I a girl! Glinda: You're not right now, since Mombi turned you into a boy. However, you were born a girl and a Princess, and you must go back to your proper figure, in order to be Queen of the Emerald City. Tip: Jinjur can be the Queen; I do not want to change to a girl! After Tip's companions tried to console him, while at the same time trying also to deal with his situation, Tip had a slight change of heart.

He might try being a girl for a time, to get the feel of it, he told Glinda. But he insisted that she promise to change him back into a boy if he did not like the life of a girl. Glinda refused: that would lie beyond the power of her magic. Only an unscrupulous witch like old Mombi could free Tip from the charm he was under, and allow him to be what he should be, a girl. Glinda asked old Mombi to do just that, and after the latter's elaborate disenchantment ritual, which Baum describes in great detail, Tip was transformed into the beautiful, dainty, delightful, wise Princess Ozma. Jinjur and her sister soldiers, who still held the Emerald City, were thoroughly routed by Glinda, and Ozma (Oz-ma?) was restored to her rightful position as ruler.

Well and good, but what lingers in a reader's mind long after reading the book, with its final moral about "the riches of content," is the simple fact that Tip (whatever softness he may have harbored) easily accepted his status as a boy and wanted to remain a boy, but was forced against his will and understanding to become a girl again, because the order of things had only the position of Princess Ozma for him, and come what might, that order would be maintained.

As for the Jackdaws, Baum's detailing of what these thieving blackbirds have made away with represents arguably the most serious and valuable portion of the book, from the standpoint of the world of affairs, as a concerned adult might view it. Involved in the storyline here are matters pertaining to political economy and American history, sociology, and culture. The interested reader wishing to know more about the implications of Baum's book—with particular reference to the Jackdaws, but also to the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman—is directed to an excellent work concerned not at all with Baum's Oz stories, but rather with American politics, economics, and Presidential history: McKinley, Bryan, and the People by Paul W. Glad (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964). Two very important articles necessary for an understanding of the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, in the light of the technical subjects referred to above in connection with the Jackdaws, are: "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism," by Henry M. Littlefield (American Quarterly, Spring, 1964, pp. 4758); and "William Jennings Bryan on the Yellow Brick Road" by John G. Geer and Thomas R. Rochon (Journal of AmericanCulture, Winter, 1993, pp. 59-63). Finally, very relevant background topics—such as: Bimetallism, William Jennings Bryan, Free Silver, Populist Party, and Gold Standard— are explained cogently in An Encyclopedic Dictionary of American History, revised and updated by Howard L. Hurwitz (Washington Square Press Pocket Books, 1974).

There are two matters here for a necessarily brief consideration: 1) How does Baum treat the Jackdaws? 2) How can the Jackdaws be understood, in light of all of the abovementioned background material, as well as one's informed opinion?

As for Baum's treatment of the Jackdaws, he is so explicit in the chapters titled "In the Jackdaws' Nest," "Dr. Nikidik's Famous Wishing Pills," and "The Scarecrow Appeals to Glinda the Good" (particularly the middle chapter), that he seems to have had some special agenda regarding them. What the companions found in the nest, after their crash-landing in the Gump, was a strange conglomeration of odds and ends clearly useless to the birds, but which they had taken over a long period "from the homes of men." The nest high up in a hollow rocky ledge was inaccessible to humans, thus the stolen property was forever lost to the owners. Not all of the loot was useless; valuable jewelry was well represented amid the trivia, and Baum describes a number of costly gems, ornaments, and adornments. Then an ominous sound of jabbering and flopping wings was heard, and the companions knew that they were about to be attacked by the returning Jackdaws.

Tip and a number of the others were afraid they would be killed by the irate birds. One of those was the Woggle-Bug (identified throughout the story with education), who feared death because Jackdaws were "the greatest enemies of my race."

The companions took some precautionary measures. For example, the Tin Woodman removed the Scarecrow's straw from his body (but not from his head), and used it to cover the bodies of Tip and the WoggleBug. The Tin Woodman whirled his axe circularly over his head to beat off the attacking birds, and the Saw-Horse kicked out with his legs, for the same purpose.

Then the birds flew to the Scarecrow's scattered straw lying in the middle of the nest and flew off with it, only to drop it wisp by wisp into the chasm below. After the large birds had finally been frightened away, and the companions could take stock of their present situation, the Scarecrow, who had suffered worst of all, lamented the loss of the vital straw that had previously stuffed his body; his outer clothes alone would not enable him to survive. Suddenly Tip came to the rescue, identifying all the piled up pieces of paper that the Jackdaws had also brought to their nest. What about stuffing the Scarecrow with money? Tip asked.

Here Baum goes into great detail on the huge cache of paper currency the thieving Jackdaws have accumulated: countless bills in various denominations, from one dollar to a thousand dollars, which the birds had long been stealing "from the villages and cities they visited." Acting on Tip's idea, the companions accordingly picked out the best-looking bills (cleanest, newest) and stuffed the Scarecrow's clothes with them, a separate denomination for each major part of the body. As if it were not enough to take all of that money, which would be useless as currency for the Scarecrow and the others, the companions were strongly attracted to the rich fancy jewelry they found about the nest. Baum specifies in a number of instances who took what items. For example, the Woggle-Bug took two goodlooking wrought gold bracelets; Tip chose a watch of fine gold; the Scarecrow, fancying the rings, took one for each finger and thumb.

Regarding the second matter to be considered: who or what were the Jackdaws and what were they really about, having been depicted as the flying thieves and plunderers of the entire land? Because Baum's book represents so much more than a mere fairy-tale adventure, this involved matter can best be dealt with by means of a list of descriptive topic items. The material contained there can be amplified and clarified further, if need be, if one consults the reference materials listed above. The list follows: 1) The plight of the western farmer around the turn of the century, that is, having to contend with bad weather, lack of money to run the farm operation—depressed wages and farm prices for the crops, severe shortage of bank credit for farm loans, etc. 2) The

Scarecrow of Oz as a symbol of the poor, vulnerable, but brainy western farmer. The Tin Woodman of Oz as a symbol of the eastern industrial worker and the laborer in general (logger or whatever), always at the mercy of hazardous equipment or other dangerous working conditions. 3) The cruel hardship imposed on the masses, especially farmers and laborers, by the prevailing gold standard of American currency, which greatly restricted the available money supply and available bank credit. 4) The sore need for "free silver" (that is, the free, unlimited coinage of silver), which would put more money in circulation, thereby raising farm prices and making it easier for farmers and others to pay off their debts. 5) Bimetallism as a compromise between an exclusive gold standard and "free silver," for increasing the money supply: an expedient in effect up to 1873—with governmental purchase of 16 ounces of silver for every one-ounce of gold—and then again in effect from 1879 to 1896.

Given the above facts and well-grounded interpretations of them, it seems quite reasonable to see the predatory Jackdaws as that group of people who greatly diminished the money supply in the United States' economy by using improper or illegal means to take a great deal of money (in all denominations), from all over the country, out of circulation and concealing their ill-gotten gains. Such a group would most likely include the Eastern bankers and financiers who at that time—that is, prior to the Federal Reserve System, established in 1913—played an important part in controlling the available money supply and available amount of bank credit for farm and business loans. But it is not unreasonable to suppose that Baum intended his Jackdaws to also represent others who restricted the amount of available money for the great mass of Americans everywhere: the legislators and businessmen who continually opposed "free silver" or even bimetallism; the railroad barons who caused freight rates for shippers of farm products to rise to unreasonable heights; titans of commerce and captains of industry whose control over those great forces also, in whatever way, worked economic harm on "the little guy," by in effect stealing his money. It is easy to believe that Baum would include among his thieving Jackdaws those bankers-who foreclosed mortgages on farms and homes, impoverishing the poor honest debtors who could not pay their high-interest, fixedterm bank loans.

Baum provides at least two revealing passages in this connection. One is the scene in which the companions had to do something to revivify the Scarecrow, who had been utterly emptied by the Jackdaws when they got rid of his straw. The companions, as stated earlier, then replaced the Scarecrow's lost straw with the only available stuffing: the Jackdaws' stolen paper currency, symbolizing apparently a grand compensation for his loss of inner essence. The second revealing passage is the scene in which the Scarecrow—now the dethroned ruler of the Emerald City—escaped with his companions from the hostile invaders of his domain, and the refugees made their way to the country of the Winkies, to seek help from the Tin Woodman, Emperor of the Winkies. With a joyous exclamation, Nick Chopper, the Tin Woodman, burst in upon them and embraced the Scarecrow tightly and lovingly, creasing him "into many folds and wrinkles," then "surveyed the beloved, painted features."

But there was that other group of grand and petty thieves, General Jinjur and her Army of Revolt, whose invasion and takeover of the Emerald City was (it turned out) motivated by their desire to take possession of the emeralds. There seems to be a similarity here with the Jackdaws' stealing very many jewels, gems, and other glittering ornaments from all over the country, just as they stole very much paper currency.

What connection between the two thieving groups might Baum have intended? One strong possibility is that Baum, with his strong Populist sympathies (that is, the plight of the farmer, anger at eastern financiers, etc.) was exposing, criticizing, and satirizing the needless accumulation of, and ostentatious display of, jewelry and other luxurious adornments. The Jackdaws (predators, victimizers of society) did not need all the jewelry and baubles they had stolen, nor did General Jinjur and her girl soldiers need the emeralds they shamelessly stole from the Emerald City. But jewelry has the power to corrupt anyone, as Baum tells us in the passage where even the Scarecrow is so taken with the finery left by the Jackdaws that he has to place a ring on each finger and thumb.

Social Concerns

The Marvelous Land of Oz was apparently written for children and it takes the form of a long fairy story about nonhuman creatures as well as humans, experiencing a wide range of exciting adventures within a never-never-land framework. But L. Frank Baum seems to have intended this sequel to The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900) to be a great deal more than a wonder tale for the very young. With its action-packed storyline, the book, rich in ideas and humor, contains many elements that can recommend it now—at the end of the millennium—to teenagers and even adult readers, to say nothing of scholars interested in critical analysis of literary works.

There are, for example, a number of social concerns that remain timely, even allowing for "a century of progress" since the book was written. These concerns involve matters of social policy, competing claims or disputes of various kinds, and threats to regional peace and stability—mostly matters embedded in Western cultural and political history. They may be summed up as follows: 1) the question of whether a country should operate on the basis of a single national language or by means of bilingualism; 2) a war between the sexes, provoked in part by a feminist protest against male authority figures; 3) the issue of whether knowledge or an education can be acquired without effort or discipline, and in this connection the problem of pretenders to learning; 4) the conflict between the rule of law and territorial rights, and an invading army's spurious claim to conquered territory; 5) the danger to society of grand theft and petty theft; and 6) a continuous power struggle between forces of good and evil, echoing a fundamental human-experience pattern.

For a proper understanding of these social concerns within the multilevel storyline suitable for young and old, some background material is desirable. In Baum's fantasy-tale the Land of Oz, separated from the outside world by a vast desert, is divided into four color-coded geographic regions, each with its own distinctive population group. In the North (purple) live the Gillikins, in the East (blue) the Munchkins, in the South (red) the Quadlings—under the rule of a sorceress named Glinda the Good, and in the West (yellow) the Winkies, who are currently ruled by the Tin Woodman. The Capital of Oz, the Emerald City (the color of which is green), is presently ruled by the Scarecrow. The protagonist of the story is a small boy named Tip, who has been raised by an oppressive and wicked old sorceress—not a genuine witch, Baum points out—named Mombi (suggesting "Mom be"?). Just as rulers play an important part in Baum's Oz stories, so too do witches, sorcerers, and magicians. The power of magic, and its harmful or beneficial effects, are taken for granted by the characters in the chronicles of Oz. Humans and nonhumans exist on an equal footing, except insofar as their physical limitations and particular function in the plot are concerned.

A rough outline of the story is as follows: a) Tip's escape from Mombi with Jack Pumpkinhead—the stick-and-pumpkin mannikin Tip constructed himself, and which was brought to life by Mombi, by means of some magic powder; b) Tip's exciting travels in the company of others— mostly animated nonhumans—as he makes his way to the Emerald City to see its ruler, the "wise" Scarecrow; c) the all-female revolt against male rule in the Emerald City; d) the escape of the Scarecrow, with Tip and his companions, from the Emerald City, now controlled by the women's army; e) the journey of the Scarecrow with Tip and his companions to the Winkie country to enlist the aid of its ruler, the Tin Woodman, in ousting the occupying rebel forces from the Emerald City; f) the tortured efforts of Tip's party to overcome numerous obstacles and cope with frightful hazards so that the women's army might be defeated; and g) the series of amazing events that conclude their efforts to retake the Emerald City from the occupying female army.

Besides the above-named characters, the roster of other participants in Baum's second Oz adventure story includes the following: the Saw-Horse (brought to life by Tip with the magic powder he had stolen from Mombi), Jellia Jamb, General Jinjur, the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, the Woggle-Bug, the Queen of the Field Mice, the Gump, Glinda the Good, and a flock of predatory Jackdaws. Despite the whimsical names in the dramatis personae, as well as the lively word-play and amusing quips and puns that run throughout the narrative, it should be clear to the mature reader that Baum was not writing a mere conventional fantasy-tale for young children, but was also developing an extended satire and sociopolitical commentary. A closer look at the social concerns mentioned above will make this clear.

The societal issue of a single national language as opposed to bilingualism is admittedly treated lightly, in a hilarious comic interlude; nevertheless, the core idea is serious and timely enough, at the beginning of the Third Millennium. The episode, which includes a little slapstick, involves the encounter between Jack Pumpkinhead and the Scarecrow when the band of travelers reaches the Emerald City. Each is startled by the other's appearance. Jack, feeling obliged to tell something about himself to the Scarecrow, says he does not understand the (local) language, having come from the Gillikins' country and thus being a foreigner. The Scarecrow replies that he speaks the Munchkins' language, which is also that of the Emerald City. In that case, Jack tells him, there will not be mutual understanding. The Scarecrow answers that they will need an interpreter, and now he must explain what that means. Then the Scarecrow dispatches his soldier with the Green Whiskers to obtain an interpreter. While they wait he asks Jack to take a seat, but is told that Jack does not understand him; if he wants Jack to sit down he will have to make an appropriate sign. Accordingly the Scarecrow pulls an armchair behind Jack and shoves him into it so forcefully that Jack is doubled up in a tangled heap. "Did you understand that sign?" he asks politely.

More nonsensical wordplay follows, particularly when the interpreter is brought in. She is a young girl named Jellia Jamb, who is attached to the Scarecrow's royal court. But this interpreter adds greatly to the verbal confusion and misunderstanding that Jack and the Scarecrow are hampered by, especially when she deliberately mistranslates—for her own amusement— what is being said. After this comedy of verbal errors runs its course, the Scarecrow asks her whether she really understands the Gillikins' language and the Munchkins' language. When she asserts that she does, he then wants to know how it happens that he understands them both himself. Jellia Jamb explains: they are actually one and the same language, and the inhabitants of Oz speak only one language. At this piece of news the Scarecrow is quite relieved, and informs the others that he could easily have been his own interpreter. This scene, with its commotion in word and deed, suggesting the antics of performers in minstrel shows, and in stage and screen comedies (Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers, Olsen and Johnson, Abbott and Costello), is clearly not out of place in The Marvelous Land of Oz. Baum was fond of wordplay and his "first love, the forum where his first recognition had been won, was the stage," according to his biographers Frank Joslyn Baum and Russell P. MacFall (To Please a Child, 1961, p. 237). The remarkably versatile Baum seems to have been writing here a comic interlude featuring clown characters, out of their element in a ridiculous, too-demanding situation, and trying to cope but unintentionally talking at crosspurposes.

A major concern in this book is a war between the sexes, led by a girl—General Jinjur—dressed splendidly in an emerald green shirtwaist with four buttons, each in one of the Oz colors (blue, yellow, red, purple), and a skirt with the same four colors. Encountering Tip, on the way to the Emerald City, the girl leader willingly answers the curious boy's barrage of questions about who she is and what she is about. She is in command of the all-girl Army of Revolt—the forces are drawn from all parts of the Land of Oz—in the war against the Emerald City. Those forces are waiting for her arrival, to begin their march on the City. Why do the females want to overthrow His Majesty the Scarecrow, who currently rules the Emerald City? Because men have ruled he City long enough, and also because it is glittering with gorgeous gems which could be put to better use, as adornments ("rings, bracelets, and necklaces"), besides which the royal treasury holds enough money to purchase for every girl soldier in the Army twelve new gowns.

Thus the girls intend to conquer, and to control the government as they see fit. But isn't war terrible, and won't many girls die in the war? No—this will be a pleasant war; no man would oppose and harm a girl, and also, there is not a single girl soldier with an ugly face. But what of the faithful Guardian of the Gate, and the royal Army's attempt to defend the City against the invaders, even if there is no struggle? That Army is embodied entirely in a single man, the Soldier with the Green Whiskers. He is feeble and old; his strength was used in growing the whiskers, more than half of which have already been pulled out by his bad-tempered wife. Thus runs General Jinjur's account to Tip.

Tip and General Jinjur proceed to where the 400 female soldiers are awaiting their leader. The girls are laughing and chatting gaily, as if merely picnicking, though each is armed with a pair of long, sparkling knitting-needles. When the Army goes to the City gateway and informs the Guardian of the Gate that they intend to take over, he becomes intimidated and rings the bell for the Royal Army of Oz. This inflames the girls and they descend upon him, threatening his face at close range with their knitting-needles. Now in a rush at the gateway, they meet the Royal Army of Oz, and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers orders them to halt, while pointing his long gun in General Jinjur's face. Would he "shoot a poor, defenseless girl?" he is asked. No, comes the answer, because he does not have a loaded gun. At this, they all rush him, and being "too much afraid of women to meet the onslaught," he turns tail and runs at top speed in the direction of the palace. The girls' Army floods into the undefended City, in a bloodless takeover.

So complex was Baum's attitude toward females and his treatment of them in his numerous books, that merely on the basis of his writings, he cannot easily be categorized as a dedicated male advocate of women's rights, as a misogynist, or as a male chauvinist. He is certainly a satirist—of females as well as of males. These girls trying to wrest power from supposedly oppressive male leaders are described frivolously, as chatterers, as makers of fudge (after taking over the Emerald City), and at the end of the story, as (reportedly) being "so tired eating of their husbands' cooking" that all of them rejoice at the downfall of their general. Their human male counterparts generally do not appear onstage; altogether, the human and nonhuman males seem pretty harmless. Thus the female-protest war in The Marvelous Land of Oz ought not to be regarded merely as a response to the Women's Suffrage movement, as at least one commentator has suggested. (Women were not given the right to vote until 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified.) Nor does the story offer a plea for women's liberation and a female utopia, as is the case with the writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (e.g., her short stories, 1890-1916, and her novel Herland, 1915). While on a surface level the (female) social protest is clearly in evidence in Baum's novel, the women's war is treated with good-natured humor, suggesting that the author is certainly not taking such a protest too much to heart.

But there is an ominous note in Baum's story that makes it even more difficult to determine his real attitude toward women, and power based on gender. General Jinjur early on enlists the aid of the evil sorceress Mombi to expedite the takeover of the Emerald City. Mombi, with her ability to cast spells, later bedevils Tip and his friends as they attempt to return, in order to defeat the occupying female army. Clearly, in this complex story victims come in both genders, and so do oppressors.

A third concern in the book involves knowledge, on the one hand, and an education, on the other hand: the issue of whether either or both can be acquired without effort and still have genuine utility value for the possessor (exclusive of its providing a basis for bragging) and incidentally for other members of society. Two story characters, the Scarecrow and the Woggle-Bug, assumed their mental powers by irregular means. The Scarecrow had been given brains by the Wizard of Oz, in the form of a mixture of bran, pins, and needles, as described in the first book in the Oz series, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. After this the Scarecrow proudly held himself up as a wise man who had the answers to serious questions that might arise from his subjects or other creatures. Baum says, in the chapter titled "His Majesty the Scarecrow," it was reasonable that the Scarecrow was considered to be the wisest individual in Oz. The other quick learner, so to speak, the WoggleBug, grew passively in knowledge and understanding through a process at least as out of the ordinary as the one whereby the Scarecrow acquired his "bran-new brains" (Baum's punning phrase).

As Tip, the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, Jack Pumpkinhead, and the SawHorse are making their way to the Emerald City, they are approached by a weird-looking giant insect. It greets them politely and presents a calling card with its name: Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E. As this character, who will become a member of their traveling party, tells his story, the H. M. stands for "highly magnified," and the T.E. for "thoroughly educated." He had once been an ordinary insect of his kind, but one day he happened to crawl into a country schoolhouse and made his way to the warm hearth, in front of which sat the schoolmaster, instructing his pupils. Getting used to his new resting place, the bug decided to simply remain there. Over time he absorbed more and more knowledge from this most famous Ozian scholar, Professor Nowitall.

The attentive bug, in the process of gaining new knowledge daily, was spotted finally by the Professor, who wished to show the rare specimen to his pupils. With the aid of a screen and magnifying glass, he presented the now greatly enlarged Woggle-Bug to them. The insect's thorough education led him to behave like "a cultured gentleman," and accordingly he put his hand on his bosom and bowed very politely. But the pupils, not ready for a sudden demonstration like this from such a creature, were shocked and frightened. Two girls fell out of a window, a riot broke out, and soon the bug remained alone in the schoolroom, highly magnified and free to do as he pleased.

The moment seemed ripe for the WoggleBug to escape. His "superior culture," as he saw the matter, now enabled him to fitly associate with any learned person he might encounter. Accordingly, he felt he would be safe wherever in the world he traveled.

Thus, as the Professor was occupied in dealing with his upset pupils on the school grounds, the Woggle-Bug managed his exit from the school without being seen. Ever since, he has been congratulating himself for having escaped while in the highly magnified state. Had he not done so, had he "remained a tiny, insignificant insect," his superfluous knowledge would have been fairly useless to him.

Baum, who in his fictions was sometimes given to handling problem situations by concocting imaginary solutions for them, describes here (whimsically and satirically) the absolutely effortless acquisition of a "thorough" education, and shows an education so obtained leading to cultured behavior. Baum's treatment of the education process, though it is placed within an imaginative fantasy tale, suggests the con artist or innocuous pretender who seeks to parlay a dubious claim to expertise, in some area, into an undeserved gain—utility value for the claimant perhaps, but not necessarily for others. In this story we have a phony enlargement of the self-image, on the part of the Woggle-Bug, which is exposed for all to see and judge. And the insect is chided by his companions, at one point in the story, for speaking as one having authority, while possessing only spurious credentials. The Scarecrow, on the other hand, does not have that problem. Acting circumspectly and being taken seriously by his companions (after all, he had been given [artificial] brains by the Wizard), he is spared the onus of being regarded as a fool who talks too much, as is the case with the Woggle-Bug.

The fourth social concern—the conflict between the rule of law and territorial rights, and an invading army's spurious claim to conquered territory—is a particularly timely one at the beginning of the Third Millennium, that is, after a century which has seen world wars, continuous armed aggression, and the incalculable slaughter of humanity over property, turf, lebensraum, and ideology. Political destabilization (or at the least, instability) in many parts of the globe continues to be a major threat to human life and dignity, to an orderly society bent on sustaining hope and a feeling of security in its citizens. Baum's account of the women's army taking over the Emerald City, with some help from old Mombi, strikingly illustrates the distinction between a simple military coup by insiders, and a coup which includes pernicious forces from the outside. As for a rationale to explain General Jinjur's campaign, Baum brings the matter down to basics. At one point General Jinjur informs the Scarecrow, when he objects to her sitting on his throne, because that means treason, and treason is against the law: "The throne belongs to whoever is able to take it..." She adds that her having taken it makes her the Queen, and all her opponents are thereby guilty of treason and subject to punishment under the law referred to by the Scarecrow. But, the military campaign of the armed women (with their knitting-needles) turns finally into a mock epic on Baum's part, a spoofing of war effort, suggesting Oscar Straus's comic opera of 1908, The Chocolate Soldier, which was considered to have been based somewhat on George Bernard Shaw's 1894 play, Arms and the Man.

Another social concern, the fifth, is the danger to society of large-scale thievery in high places. Two groups are involved in this: one, treated by Baum with an intense seriousness suggesting a personal emotional involvement; the other, treated by him with a levity that renders the issue ridiculous or at least ambiguous. The first group is a flock of Jackdaws. When the Scarecrow, Tip, the Tin Woodman, Jack Pumpkinhead, the Woggle-Bug, and the Saw-Horse find themselves prisoners of (now) Queen Jinjur in the Emerald City palace, they determine to escape by any means possible. Rummaging around the palace, they collect odds and ends of furniture and sundry other items that might be of use toward that end, and bring those pieces up on the roof. From two old sofas joined with clotheslines and ropes, huge palm leaves for wings, a broom for a tail, and an antlered head of a game animal (called a Gump), the Tin Woodman—at the Scarecrow's suggestion, with the others' help—constructs a rudimentary vehicle that might conceivably move through the air. Tip's magic powder, originally stolen from old Mombi, vivifies this Gump or Thing, as it is variously called, the prisoners take their seats, and they attempt to fly to freedom, southward to the domain of Glinda the Good.

The "whopper flying machine"—to borrow the Wright Brothers' nickname for their 1903 airship (as mentioned by Walter J. Lord in his 1960 survey of the twentieth century's first decade, The Good Years)—is ordered by Tip to make a landing, so that the aeronauts can get their bearings and the unwieldy contraption can turn around properly when that becomes necessary. In the process of landing, however, the Gump misses its desired site, "a table of rock ...

[standing] between two cliffs," and comes to a bad end: breaking off its two right wings, "tumbling over and over down [one of] the cliff[s]," and dumping its passengers out. As it happens, the party has landed close to a nest of Jackdaws, which are presently away but may return at any time.

In the nest Tip and his companions find an enormous amount of rubbish and plunder left by the large black birds, "useless things as well as valuable ones": jewelry and supposedly worthless paper—which they later discover to be bona fide paper currency.

Baum's treatment of the Jackdaws and their ways is so curious that it will be dealt with below.

The second group includes General (then Queen) Jinjur and her girl soldiers, who, the Scarecrow complains, conquered him simply to rob the Emerald City of the emeralds it contains. As the Scarecrow later tells Glinda the Good, "a crowd of impudent girls with knitting needles" have overrun his Emerald City, "enslaved all the men, [and] robbed the streets and public buildings of all their emerald jewels," besides taking over his throne. Baum's treatment of the Jackdaws' thievery had more serious implications—which will be dealt with below—than that of his treatment of Jinjur's Army of Revolt. It is as though in the latter instance Baum's purpose was simply to satirize or even ridicule American women as being domineering (or wanting to dominate), vain, predatory, self-indulgent, and frivolous. Far from describing a feminist protest against male chauvinism, as a literal-minded reader might now hypothesize from the story, Baum's account of Jinjur's Army of Revolt actually gives us a picture of wild women off on one big lark.

The last social concern, which permeates the entire book, is the continuous power struggle between forces of good and forces of evil—admittedly, the fundamental pattern of experience for much of humankind.

Rather than offering a survey of every instance of witchcraft or sorcery in the story, wherein good or evil is wrought, it is preferable to discuss only one character's mistreatment at the hands of others, that character being at least quasi-human, not a product of fabrication such as the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, or any of the other animated characters.

Tip, the youth who plays a very important role in the story, is depicted at the very beginning in terms suggesting the young victim-figure in a novel by Charles Dickens. He had no recollection of his parents, having been put in the hands of the wicked old Mombi when he was very small. Though when he grew older the cruel and heartless wizardess made him do all manner of demanding chores around her hut in the woods, he seized every opportunity to amuse himself among the trees and small animals in the woods, a regular nature boy.

But when Tip discovered that old Mombi, whose abusive treatment he had endured over the years, intended to turn him into an ornament for her flower garden, he was obliged to flee for his life. (Very late in the story Tip again comes under heavy constraint, an ordeal of sorts though perhaps not technically evil, and is obliged to face up to it, as will be discussed below.)

Techniques

Baum's Marvelous Land of Oz exhibits a diversity of literary techniques. There are strong elements in it of the fairy tale, the quest tale, the fantasy tale, the children's adventure novel, the beast epic, the political allegory, the social satire, the horror story (old Mombi), and the thinking person's joke book (gags, jokes, and wordplay in general abound here—at one point there is even an analysis of the pun and punning). Baum is strong on symbolism, social criticism (the Jackdaws; the girls' Army of Revolt—which seems more like a chiding of flighty young women lacking self-understanding, who overextend themselves, than like an attack on the suffragist movement or on a serious feminist protest), and contemporary happenings (the Wright Brothers' flying machine). In many ways, this particular Oz book is suited to a wide range of readers, in terms of age, taste, and maturity level.

Themes

Though there are a number of thematic elements in the social concerns discussed above, certain themes per se may be found in Baum's second Ozian adventure story: 1) breaking down boundaries and barriers; 2) establishing legitimacy of rule; and 3) the use of air power in escape and pursuit, and in warfare. As to the first, animals (even an insect) and hand-made figures are seen participating actively, almost on equal terms, with humans, in human concerns. Another aspect of this human-nonhuman interrelationship is the active involvement of wonder-workers (sorcerers, witches, and wizards) in the affairs of the human-nonhuman group. Though the human-nonhuman dichotomy was breached over two thousand years ago in Greek and Roman fables, Baum's treatment of the matter is only one part of a more complex whole. What were, at the time Baum wrote the book, conventional gender roles (involving a "separation of powers,") were reversed by General Jinjur's military takeover of the Emerald City; then this reversal was itself canceled when Glinda the Good helped Tip, the Scarecrow, and their companions retake the Emerald City. A more striking gender reversal, however, awaits the reader at the end of the story. In a sense Baum (doubtless under the influence of the Wright Brothers' achievement in 1903) also tells of the breaking of the gravity barrier, by describing the Gump, that fairy-tale "lighter-than-air" flying-machine. More subtly than any of the above instances, is Baum's politically-based boundary-breaking, to be discussed under Characters.

Regarding the matter of establishing legitimacy of rule, the application here is to the Emerald City, the Capital of the Land of Oz. The Scarecrow, who had originally been placed on the throne of the Emerald City by the Wizard of Oz (as described in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz), when he confronted the usurping General Jinjur, demanded to know how she dared to sit on his throne. Did she not know she was guilty of treason and that treason was against the law? he asked her.

Eating from a box of caramels and seemingly "entirely at ease in her royal surroundings," she replied that "The throne belongs to whoever is able to take it ..." And, turning the tables on the Scarecrow, Jinjur pointed out that as she has taken the throne, she is now Queen; thus, her opponents have become guilty of treason and are punishable under the law he referred to.

But near the end of the story the Scarecrow, Tip, and the others flew in the Gump to the South Country (red), for an audience with the sorceress Glinda the Good (also referred to as Queen of the Southland), to tell her of the usurpation of the throne of the Emerald City by Jinjur and her Army of Revolt. Then, thanks largely to Glinda's questions and explanations, the real truth about the line of succession was revealed at last. The Wizard had originally stolen the throne from the former King of the Emerald City, Pastoria (now dead). The throne rightfully belonged to Pastoria's daughter, named Ozma. But the Wizard had also stolen the girl, and hidden her away somewhere to prevent her being found. [Note: In this book Baum seems to describe a bad wizard, in absentia; in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz we have, despite his being a humbug, a good wizard, whose people "remembered him lovingly" after he left them.] Glinda herself, despite her powers of sorcery, had not even been able to locate the child's hiding place. Thus, although legitimacy of rule was now clarified, legitimacy could not be actualized until Ozma was rescued and her inheritance was restored.

Next, there is the matter of the use of air power in escape and pursuit, and in warfare. In the story much is made of the companions being prisoners of Queen Jinjur in (her) palace, her stated intention to return Tip to old Mombi and destroy the others (as not being human), their retreat to the roof of the palace, their assembling the Gump from odds and ends, their using it to fly away from Jinjur's palace, and later their flying away from the predatory Jackdaws (whose nest they had discovered). Near the end of the story, when Glinda the Good confronted old Mombi, the latter transformed herself into a huge Griffin and fled— causing Glinda to pursue her and causing our companions to attempt to assist Glinda, by mounting the Gump and joining the pursuit. When Glinda confronted Jinjur herself and demanded that she surrender, Jinjur refused. This led to Glinda's "declaration of war" and the Gump's direct participation as a vehicle of war to transport Glinda, her guard (three soldiers and a Captain), the Scarecrow and the other companions into the closed palace grounds, to force the besieged Jinjur's capitulation.

Baum's descriptions of the use of air power in escape and pursuit, and in warfare are necessarily prophetic. First a backward glance. Human air flight began with the hot-air-balloon experiments of the Montgolfier brothers, Jacques and Joseph, who in 1783 sent two courtiers of King Louis XVI sailing over Paris for almost half an hour. Since that time numerous balloon flights took place in various countries, and the very idea of this mode of travel (highlighted by drawings and illustrations) became firmly entrenched in the popular imagination and in popular culture. Edgar Allan Poe wrote three tales dealing with balloon travel: "Hans Pfaal" (1835), "The Balloon Hoax" (1844), and "Mellonta Tauta" (1849). Jules Verne's Around the World in Eighty Days (first published in French in 1872) added enormously to the public's fascination with balloon travel. But Baum actually made hot-air-balloon flight an important part of the storyline of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: the Wizard, who had come to the Land of Oz by balloon, used hot-airballoon travel to attempt a return to the United States. As to the actual process of air travel, a further advance was made possible in 1900, when Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin designed a motor-driven dirigible balloon of rigid-frame construction. Then followed the Wright Brothers' "whopper flying machine" in 1903, and—in the realm of fiction—Baum's magical contraption, The Gump, in The Marvelous Land of Oz (1904).

The potential use of the airship in warfare and related functions such as escape and pursuit may or may not have been given much thought by Baum. In any event, experience has shown that after 1903 military applications of winged aircraft were not slow in coming. In 1907 the U.S. Army Signal Corps called for proposals for the construction of a flying machine. Orville and Wilbur Wright won the bid and began work on the project. In his report, "The Wright Brothers' Flights," in the Independent, June 4, 1908, an engineer and aeronaut, Octave Chanute, surveyed the brothers' accomplishments. Chanute noted that the Wrights had opened negotiations "for the sale of their invention to various governments for war purposes " Under their contract with the Government of the United States they had been testing their machine with satisfactory results, when a mishap occurred and the machine was wrecked.

At the time this article appeared, it was expected that they could rebuild their machine and exercise complete control over it, before the deadline for fulfillment of their government contract.

But for another slant on the deeper implications of the Gump material in Baum's story, the famous English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy, an ardent opponent of war, expressed very grave concern over the possibility of aerial warfare. In the second volume of his quasi-biographical record, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy: 1892-1928 (1930), it is noted that Hardy "signed, with many other well-known people, a protest against the use of aerial vessels in war; appealing to all governments 'to foster by any means in their power an international understanding which shall preserve the world from warfare in the air.'"

Adaptations

A 1981 stage adaptation, entitled L. Frank Baum's The Marvelous Land of Oz, written by Richard Carey and directed by John Clark Donahue and John Driver, was recorded for television by the Television Company, Inc. and the Children's Theater Company and School of Minneapolis. Otherwise, adaptations of The Marvelous Land of Oz, for all its value as a literary resource, are extremely hard to find. Whether this book will receive anything remotely like the innumerable adaptations of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz in the future is impossible to predict.

Key Questions

Despite its reputation as a fantasy/adventure story, The Marvelous Land of Oz examines matters of social and political policy embedded in Western cultural history.

1. What is the utility value of this Oz book for the thoughtful adult reader of today? What might be the value of this book for young children of today, when the Harry Potter books and Pokemon materials are all the rage?

2. What instances of irony (as apart from humor in various forms) can you find in this book? Do the numerous instances of humor in the book fall into a consistent underlying pattern? Explain.

How really "American" is the book?

Explain.

3. Is this book superior to The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, or inferior to it in any way? Explain.

4. What do you make of the curious mandatory sex change of Tip in this book?

Can you relate it to any other actual sex changes in literature (not a mere transference of sexual attitude, such as, a man's mind in a woman's head or vice versa), such as the one in Virginia Woolf's short novel Orlando (1929)?

Explain.

5. Discuss the merits of, or arguments against, the female revolt of Jinjur and . her Army. Given the inconsistencies in the girls' attitudes (explain), what did Baum seem to be getting at, in giving that gender revolution so much attention?

6. For readers familiar with The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, what might have been the reason for Baum's leaving out entirely Dorothy Gale of Kansas and the Wizard himself (who is only a memory here)?

Literary Precedents

As indicated above, The Marvelous Land of Oz might fit into so many genres and subgenres that specifying its literary precedents seems almost superfluous. Baum apparently drew his materials from a wide variety of sources (the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen, to suggest only two), but in the final analysis the Oz books' American "slant" or "feel" in addition to their heterogeneity of content makes them unique. A very prolific writer, Baum wrote several non-Oz fantasy tales before the present work, for example Dot and Tot of Merryland (1901) and The Enchanted Island of Yew (1903).

Related Titles

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, the first in Baum's series of fourteen Oz books, is most closely related to the present work. The remaining twelve Oz books by Baum himself are less closely related. As for the numerous Oz books by various continuators down almost to the end of the twentieth century, they are distantly related.

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