

## Stephanie Lee, 4.1 Oz Book and Film

TE 838

L. Frank Baum's full text of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is the delightful children's story that inspired *The Wizard of Oz* film of 1939. There are a number of major differences between the text and the film which alter the story's events and create a unique spectacle for audiences.

In the book, Dorothy puts on the Wicked Witch of the East's silver shoes herself while the Witch of the North appears. The witch, who is unnamed, is not Glinda as Glinda is the Witch of the South. The film changes this scene in a few ways. In the film, Dorothy stands near the dead Wicked Witch of the East, who was wearing ruby shoes, and the shoes are magically placed onto Dorothy's feet. Then, Glinda appears by way of a magic bubble and identifies as the Witch of the North. There is no Witch of the South in the film. In fact, the South is never addressed. This complicates the complete compass that Baum purposefully includes in the book. He wants to show readers that there is a complete world in Oz with all four directions, disparate and coexisting. The film changes that theme by only including three directions making Oz only a world with north, east, and west. It would be fair to argue that this makes Oz an imbalanced and incomplete place. Quite evidently, Baum intentionally wrote in two good witches of the north and south and two bad witches of the east and west. By having only one good witch of the north and two bad witches of the east and west, the film portrays Oz as a more evil society than the book originally indicates. Moreover, the film complicates the color red, which is inherently inclusive of ruby, by making it an evil color. In the book, red was the cheery color of the Quadlings of the South, Glinda's geographical area and thus a "good" color. Changing the color of the shoes from silver to red seems unwarranted unless filmmakers considered red a more exciting color for the screen. In which case, that would mean that likeability took priority over fidelity to the text.

The book and the film portray the Tin Woodman, the Lion, and the Scarecrow very differently. In the book, the Tin Woodman was a very active character as he was constantly required to cut down trees and make wood to fashion structures and vehicles for the journey. His contributions such as a raft and a tree bridge were imperative to the success of the group's travels. Furthermore, Baum writes in Tin Woodman's back story about the loss of his heart and how he came to be a tin covered person without a heart. The Tin Woodman's role in the book was much larger and more important than it was in the movie. The movie portrays him as a bothersome character that always rusts, needs to be re-oiled, and finds himself bent or damaged. In a similar vein, the Lion is the quietest member of the group in the book, yet he is portrayed as an over chatty, pathetic, whiner whose dialogue ranges from incessant complaining to solo songs. The Scarecrow's role in the film was elevated as he demonstrated a much closer relationship to Dorothy. This added an unusual dimension to the camaraderie between the four as the book shows them all on an equal level of friendship. By making changes to the dramatization of the three Oz characters, the film changes the relationship dynamics of the group. The book focuses on the group's impressive teamwork to battle through the challenges they face, while the film shows a group of desperately needy individuals who dawdle forward.

Of the adventure challenges depicted in both the book and the film, one scene of particular significance is the poppy field scene. The book provides a lucid description of the poppy field setting. It exists en route to the west and the four must cross through it to get there. When the group becomes aware of the sleepy scent of the flowers, Dorothy and Toto, fall asleep and the Lion races ahead to try to beat the fatigue. The Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow carry the girl through the field to the other side. Later, Tin Woodman fashions a cart out of wood and successfully elicits the help of the queen of the field mice to tie the Lion to the cart and pull the cart to the next area. In total contrast to what was written, the film shows the Wicked Witch of the West putting the field there on purpose to hinder the group's travels. Glinda who appears by the same magic bubble then saves the group members. Glinda triggers instant snowfall, which covers the poppy field's sleepy scent and allows the group to proceed with their journey. The changes that the filmmakers make to this scene completely change the meaning of the event. The book shows how listening to and cooperating with strangers is essential to life. There is an underlying message here that says that we cannot survive without the help of others and that we must not be reactionary without first understanding. Initially, the Tin Woodman wanted to kill the Queen, but then they started talking and that is how they agreed to work together to save the warm-blooded members of the group. What's more, the book's poppy field setting was naturally occurring, something beautiful with added mystery, which connected Oz and the characters to the natural world. The natural world, then, can be problematic as we learn, but such requires regional knowledge and teamwork with others unlike ourselves. The film conveys none of this as every aspect is controlled by people, or witches rather.

Moreover, the book provides back stories for many of the characters in the story including the winged monkeys and how the Golden Cap came to be. The film does not include monsters such as the Kalidahs. There are no battles not induced by the Wicked Witch of the West signifying that the four are always intentionally targeted. The challenges of the journey, therefore, are not naturally occurring. The book's various challenges bring about different strengths in the characters as well as new and mysterious settings such as the river and the delicate china country. There were Wicked Witch of the West induced challenges such as the black bees, crows, and wolves; however those events occurred in whichever setting was present at the time. A new setting was not required for such to take place. By changing the role of the Wicked Witch of the West in the film, the group experiences directed evil thus setting up a war-like relationship between the two sides. In the book, the Wicked Witch of the West has one eye and one eye with telescopic strength. For commands, she blows a silver whistle that hangs around her neck. When she wishes to summon the winged monkeys, she must wear the Golden Cap. By contrast, the film shows the Witch of the West using a crystal ball to give directions and commands. The image of a crystal ball is tricky as we often consider crystal balls as windows to the future. With the crystal ball, the Witch of the West is capable of seeing, determining, and changing the future which imparts a much more powerful characteristic to the crystal ball itself.

The events that occur at the Emerald City in the book are dissimilar from those in the film. In the book, the guard and the group mates do not wear special spectacles (that make everything green) inside the City walls. Once inside, the characters spend a whole sequence of shots freshening up. Even still, the scriptwriters did not write in Dorothy's

dress change, which was crucial to her adhering to the green conventions of the Emerald City. It is unnerving to think that a detail like that is overlooked as unimportant while screen time is spent adding a red ribbon to the Lion's hair. Nevertheless, all four group mates meet the Wizard of Oz together rather than individually. The book's meetings were individual, over the course of four days, as the Wizard would only meet one person per day. By changing this detail of the story, the film gained speed by condensing the events but lost the mystery of the various forms the Wizard took on. There were no images of a monstrous five-eyed rhinoceros or delicate lady so the surprising realization that the Wizard was actually a man behind a curtain was less surprisingly after all.

The critical death scene of Wicked Witch of the West is significantly altered from the book to the movie. As the book explains, the Wicked Witch of the West trips Dorothy while she is her servant so that her silver shoe would fall off. At that point, the Wicked Witch of the West snatches one shoe and puts it on her foot. In reaction, Dorothy throws a bucket of water at her out of anger. This results in her melting and death. The film, however, changes a great deal of the details leading up to the death scene. For instance, Dorothy is locked up in the witch's tower alone with Toto. Toto then escapes, finds the other three, and leads them to Dorothy's location. If we pause here, let us consider how different a role Toto plays in the book and in the film. Toto is strictly a companion dog in the book whereas he is an unsung hero in the film. The rationale required to make this alteration is immense as it gives essentially magical competences to the one character that did not originally have any. Because it was a Hollywood movie, that decision may have been justified. Moving on, the Scarecrow, Lion, and Tin Woodman break into Dorothy's room, rescue her, and try to out run the Wicked Witch of the West and her green-faced guards. They fail to do so and the Witch grabs a torch and starts burning the Scarecrow. In reaction, Dorothy throws a bucket of water on the Scarecrow and unintentionally splashes on the Witch. The Witch then melts and dies. The colossal difference was intent. Dorothy intended to wet the Witch in the book, but did not intend to wet her in the movie. Although Dorothy did not understand the capacity of her actions either time, it is important to note that the direction of action be underlined. In the film, the Witch's death was the consequence of bad aim; while in the book, the Witch's death was the result of good aim. The film, therefore, softened the Witch's death scene by making it more accidental than the scene in the book. What we learn about Dorothy is complicated by these changes. The book shows us that she is Oz's hero and that out of one small rebellious act came triumph. Meanwhile, the film shows us a clumsy girl who reaps the rewards of her gracelessness.

The film provides an array of special effects for 1939. The film is a less detailed about the events of the text and more showy with elaborately designed sets and costumes. There was exceptional attention paid to visual effects and the enhancements of sound effects. In particular, the addition of song and dance numbers added a musical dimension to the original text. By spending a great deal of energy developing musical sets, the filmmakers were able to establish mood and affect the pace of the film. Dorothy's iconic "Over the Rainbow" nearly pauses the movie as the sequence of shots evoke audience empathy for her dreamy thoughts of a better place than Kansas. The film extends the story of Dorothy's life in Kansas to show viewers her frustrations and unhappiness. Although Baum writes about Dorothy's gray life in Kansas, the tornado strikes by the

third page. The recurring song line, “We’re off to see the wizard, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz,” created a hopeful mood and speeded up the pace of the early parts of the film. In addition, the song pays tribute to the original title of the book as the film takes out “Wonderful.”

Songs were used to for different purposes. A unified choral setting was used to sing “Ding-Dong! The Witch is Dead” which joined the main group with the local Munchkins. Meanwhile, “If I Only Had a Brain” established an individual experience to express the Scarecrow’s inner thoughts. Directorial decisions such as these show how perspective can be established through music. Each shot type was linked to the perspective of the song. Most of the camera shots during “Ding-Dong!” were high angle or wide shots to show how everyone was singing in unison. In contrast, most of the camera shots during “If I Only Had a Brain” were close up and near to the Scarecrow.

The visual effects of the film were impressive and perhaps even timeless for the year 1939. At the opening, the filmmakers proudly state that the film was, “Photographed in Technicolor.” Although the film starts in two-tone color in the beginning scenes in Kansas, the viewer is quickly taken for a ride in the cyclone spinning and tossing with Dorothy and Toto. The cyclone effects were advanced for the time period. After the house lands in Oz, the viewer is rewarded with the gem-like vibrancy of Technicolor. The colors all around are bright and brilliant allowing viewers to relish the rainbow fairyland. Unmistakably aware of this, the filmmakers contrast such vivid colors with the black-caped, green-faced Wicked Witch of the West. This dark color contrast is plainly a demonstration of a viewer’s visual cue for evil. Also worth mention is the impressive burst of red smoke of which the Wicked Witch of the West appears in the scene. If that were not enough 1939 visual effects for one sequence of shots, Glinda then floats in on a computer-generated bubble. The filmmakers dazzled audiences with such enriched visual images that even if viewers disliked the movie, at least they were impressed by it.

Without a doubt, the songs and script lines from the film have been appropriated into contemporary culture. People who paint their brick pathways yellow make local news headlines and later films have referenced *The Wizard of Oz* with lines such as, “I’m melting! I’m melting!” It is not uncommon even now to list animals in a way such as, “Lion and tigers and bears,” and be interrupted by someone who chimes in, “Oh my!” The extraordinary aspect of the script is that so much of it is memorable. One line anywhere can instantaneously be a recognizable reference to the film. The combination of speech, sound, and music was highly effective in sustaining the movie’s popularity.

The movie and the book are not represented equally in pop culture. The movie has been viewed millions of times by generations from 1939-2013 while the book has garnered no particular fame. It would not be surprising to find that many people do not even know that the film was inspired by a book. Because the book and the film were written by and for Americans, it is interesting to understand how the film has been so tightly incorporated into American pop culture. The film portrays Dorothy’s whole experience in Oz as a dream which she wakes up from in the same bed where she sleeps during the tornado. Yet, the original text described the experience as a reality. Thus, it can be reasoned that the American public has responded better to the works of a dream-like scenario than to the idea that something so bizarre and fantastic could happen in reality.

The additional difference of media form must also be considered when analyzing how the film's sustained popularity reigns forth. The film is a film and the book is a book. The pastime of watching television and films is a real American enjoyment. In America, there is, and has been for generations, a greater emphasis on the public amusement of the motion picture screen over reading books. In the decades of the film's career, Americans have endured World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Bay of Pigs, the Persian Gulf War, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is possible that the happy dreamscape of entertainment that the film projects has provided a much needed visual diversion for the American public. Even the costumes are captivating and allow audiences to take part in the whimsical affairs "somewhere over the rainbow." Thus, the time of production and release has greatly affected the film's success. In the 1940s, the film may have provided a platform for American familiarity at a time when the country needed to be unified during the second round of the World War. The film's family friendly themes emphasized the importance of home and going home after a long time away. These overarching ideas could certainly be alluding to the experience of U.S. soldiers in WWI and how American families could cope with the upcoming WWII experience.

Because the book has not achieved the same level of popularity as the film has, the American public rarely knows Baum's depictions of the group's rough adventures. Baum wrote the book to provide a story for children at a time when fairy tales were all adapted from Europe and translated into English. He wrote an adventure story packed with lessons and morals for American children hoping that they would learn his story for generations. Baum's modern fairy tale resulted in a film which has, in fact, carried on for generations. With alterations that both enhance and detract from the original text, Baum's story lives on through the screen, the stage, and other inspired texts.