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CAVALIER TREATMENT
WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE ANALYST
LEE SPETH

Things have changed since my youth when psychology tended to disparage fantasy literature, especially for the young. The psychologist no longer anathematizes, which is good, but today's pontifical sobriety is not necessarily better than the old days when the fantasy reader was viewed as a raucous outlaw. There's a limit to how respectable one wishes to be, and when, at last, a serious attempt is made to co-opt, the warm-blooded book-lover must raise a protest.

Dorothy and the Lizard of Oz is a pedantic little desecration newly available from Creative Therapeutics, Inc. in Cresskill, N. J., a tightly-bound hardcover, aggressively suitable for libraries. The author, Edward Gardner, M. D., is a practicing child psychologist who has also given us Dr. Gardner's Modern Fairy Tales and Dr. Gardner's Fairy Tales for Today's Children, along with more clinical works like The Child's Book About Brain Injury. In the preface he allows that renovating an established classic like The Wizard of Oz may smack of impropriety, but his motives, predictably, are of the loftiest:

"I have tried to retain what is healthy in the Baum and MGM versions and to omit what I consider to be unhealthy and contributory to inappropriate and maladaptive ways of looking at and dealing with life." He has been moved to revision because "There are the magic solutions that instantaneously solve the most complex problems ...."

"... Although Dorothy does finally return to Kansas, the problem with Miss Gulch is not dealt with at the end of the story. Dorothy fled Kansas and then flees Oz. The problem that originally caused her flight from Kansas is not resolved."

But this won't do, for the original book and the movie differ. It is unjust to arraign the author, L. Frank Baum, for the misdemeanors of MGM. True, at the end of the movie Dorothy has not resolved her problem with Miss Gulch; the audience has merely forgotten it. But this is no fault of Dorothy's creator, for in the book Miss Gulch did not exist. The original Dorothy's problem is to return to her home - a home she never willingly fled - and since the entire book is taken up with her efforts toward this return, at frequent peril of life and limb, her success cannot fairly be called "simple", nor can the book be denounced for offering "easy answers". Magical, yes, but not easy.

It may of course be objected that lots more contemporary children have seen the movie than have read the book - which is probably true - and that Dr. Gardner may justly seek to compensate for harm he feels the movie is doing. Even so, I would hold, he owes Baum the courtesy of a distinction he does not make. And this excuse will not cover his handling of Dorothy's three companions:

"The attraction of the Straw Man, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion is that they provide children (and, to a lesser extent, adults) with vicarious gratification of needs that are central. But the Wizard, by his symbolic gifts, makes it all too easy: 'The Scarecrow earns his degree in less than a minute.' This capacity to love and be loved is suddenly acquired, merely by wearing a little ticking clock .... The cowardice problem is instantly cured ...."
"Just then they noticed some strange looking
things in the sky. At first they looked like little
black dots. Then they grew bigger and bigger and
toward them. As the things flew closer they
could not recognize what they were. They were
weird looking creatures, and they had never seen
anything like them before. Then, when they got very
close, they saw that they looked like monkeys.

The true hero is the Wizard-Lizard who, oddly,
displays no magical powers at all. He resembles the
illustrator shows a bespectacled classical philosopher and by
the text he is clearly an analyst, leading his cli
cents with gentle Socratic questions. "He never gave
simple solutions." It seems an odd taboo; we cry
like the crew of the Pinafore. "What, never?" After
all, some backaches are cured by just changing
shoes.

There is no real chance that Gardner will de-
light or thrill the young as Baum has; there is a
real danger of his misleading them. It is not just
that his Analyst-Wizard-Lizard is never wrong; a
man will boost his own profession. But there lies
at the heart of this didactic little book a sin-
gularly lethal untruth, that has, in my experience,
brought pain and frustration to my fellow creatures.

"The best thing for you," the Wizard counsels
Dorothy, "is to talk to the sheriff yourself and see
if you can convince him to change his order" (that
given to Miss Gulch for the confiscation of Toto).
It works.

"You're right," the sheriff said. "I really didn't hear your side of the story
and I should have before giving her that
order. I'm sorry."

Of course children should be taught to be
reasonable. But to teach them that they can count
on the world to respond reasonably is abominably
wicked. They can count on no such thing.

In a passage that occupies four pages, Dr.
Gardner's Dorothy is led through a verse by verse
recantation of the lyrics of "Over the Rainbow",
But then he replaces the lemon-drop MGM never-land
with the rationalist Utopia of the Enlightenment, a
Utopia no less unreal for being deadly earnest in
conception.

"She never had any more trouble with Miss
Gulch. She and Toto stayed away from her high fence
and somehow gave her a reason to complain." Lord
above, has Dr. Gardner really never met Miss Gulch?
The Miss Gulches of the world require no reasons to
complain.

Dr. Gardner is invited to attend an Oz conve-

tion. I've been to three and find the people gener-
ally cheerful, well-adjusted, not much wrecked by
divorce, drugs, drink or break-downs, economica-

tally functional, perhaps somewhat gentler than the norm.
I contrast the unhappiness I have known among
people who grew up expecting life to be fair. There
is much to be said for books that tell children,"Life is unexpected."

But the issue here is larger than a slur upon
Oz fandom. The psychologist has a legitimate inter-
est in fantasy, as in anything else that enters the
mind. But that interest should be expressed in ways
that do not demean both the psychologist and the
materials. I dare say a psychologist might write

For The Wizard of Oz, why fix what isn't broken?

MATTERS OF
GRAVE IMPORT

GRACIA FAY ELLWOOD

ANDERSEN: JOY, SORROW AND THE JOKE PROPER

Recently the Mygdard branch discussed Hans Christ-
ian Andersen's two novellas The Snow Queen and The
Marsh King's Daughter. The sense of the meeting
was that here are treasures that need to be dusted
carefully, cherished anew. This column will therefore
be a branch discussion report, so to speak. As it
were.

Most of us had not read The Snow Queen for years,
and had not heard of the other story at all before
this; we were surprised by the density of the mate-
rial. One luminous image after another appeared,
more or less integrated in the story, exemplifying
many basic motifs of Romance. Paradisal childhood
innocence, capture-and-rescue, snow and ice as sym-
blems of dehumanization, talking flowers and animals,
the Wicked Woman in her woebegone novel, the talis-
man, the warm, life-renewing tear, the ailing king
and his languishing land, the Quest for the Grail-
like marvelous object, the shapeshifting protago-
nist, the seizure of the maiden by the King of the
Underworld, the dual-natured child of light and
darkness, the life-giving sacrifice of the innocent,
the return of the dead, the miraculous recovery of
the king, the moment in paradise that takes up many
decades on earth.

Another feature of Andersen that we had largely
forgotten was his humor. Having long associated
him with the sufferings of the ugly duckling, the
little match girl, the little mermaid and others,
we were surprised that these matters of grave im-
port were often so cavalierly treated. The Marsh
King's Daughter is told largely from the point of
view of a pair of married storks, who discuss the
ordeal and joys of the human protagonists amidst
 petty domestic cares and uncomplimentary comments
about mouth-watering Nife frogs.

One element in The Snow Queen that is bound to
interest Lewis enthusiasts is of course its influ-
ence on the Narnian tales. The snow queen found
her way nearly intact into The Lion, The Witch and
The Wardrobe, even to the sleigh, the reindeer,
and the seduction of the duped child of light and
darkness. The submerged sexual motif is more
noticeable in Andersen's story, where Kay is kissed
by the Snow Queen, and although he is described as
a child, he is confused not long afterwards with
the young man who courts (and presumably marries)
the clever Princess.

Andersen's icy queen differs from Lewis' in that
the former is identified with rationality. As Kay
is carried off in his sleigh, the storks pray, but
finds that all he can remember is the multiplication
tables. Later, in her arctic palace, she sets him
to working out a cerebral puzzle. She is almost im-
personal—she destroys by virtue of what she is, in
contrast to Jadis, who is gratuitously cruel and a
betrayer. And correspondingly, she is not destroyed
at the climax; she is simply absent when Gerda comes
for Kay. Rationality cannot be slain.

Lewis uses the image of cold and snow again in
The Silver Chair, a quest to the North, and a simi-
lar female figure abducts a young man. He is
nevertheless saved by a young hero, though the tone is
rather different in that Jill shares the honors with Rst-
ace and Puddleglum.