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MOVIE REVIEW

The Wizard of Oz

by Monty Tyson

Even though it's only our second, this may as well have been called the Anniversary Issue: for not only is it the 20th anniversary of Woodstock (in August) and of the Moonwalk but it's the year of Batman's 50th anniversary, and...*mirabile dictu* most psychedelic of all it is the 50th anniversary of the theatrical premiere of *The Wizard of Oz*, also a babe of the August moon. MGM is issuing a special commemorative video of the *Wizard* complete with out-takes, interviews and an improved color processing; though this is undoubtedly a welcome "new lease" for those who've loved the *Wizard* but are close to burnout after the umpteenth-millionth annual t.v. exposure, it would be premature to announce exhaustion of the *standard* contents of this classic on the basis of mere repetition. There's always a lot the ol' Charlatan can show us—but first of all it would be wise to affix to our forehead the crystal ball of the Dream Eye, in commemoration of the fact that L. Frank Baum, the *Wizard's* author, received the saga as a dream delivered whole and recollected next morning. Coming, as this classic then does, directly from the dream mind, we first refer you to a refresher-course in the implication of such Origin (cf. *MOVIE AND DREAM: THE QABALAH OF STAR WARS* at the beginning of this review section) and then suggest quick plunge without compunction into the sea of the Symbolizing Psyche, the well-stocked waters of archetype.

In our less-familiar *psychic* snorkeling through the tides and turns of *The Wizard* this time 'round, we first encounter *Toto*, the efficient cause of the whole adventure. It's our love of the *Dog*, the irrepressible yapping little vital aspect of our Being after all, that lands us into our life-situations from the callow end of the Pool. Freud might humorlessly pursue the suggestive analogy that vitriolic "Ms. Gulch" (doubling, through marvelous Margaret Hamilton, as the Witch in the fantasy sequences) functions as the repressive "anti-cathexis" of the super-ego, inhibiting the lap-happy id and forcing it to pop-up in a flight of displacement to another level carrying the ego (Dorothy) pell mell along with it.

Since Dorothy is knocked unconscious we can literally assume we're skrying terms of the deep mind, when the screen bursts into the hallucinatory colors of Oz. The funnel of sleep has dropped her down inside a set of swirling conditions rendering their own extensive World of implication, of which moreover she's a central participant, a key figure—even though she's apparently an Innocent born of mere accident, fresh on the scene without prior complicity. Exactly as in the Dream of Life Itself, the protagonist-innocent utterly ignorant of the whole affair and simply wanting to go home, is nonetheless informed she's responsible for a *death*; not a second in Oz and she's already violated taboo ground...she's slain the sister of the most sinister element in the whole Land, the wicked Witch of the West—and all because the *very vehicle* by which she came to Oz seems to have set plunk on the pate of the devilish daughter of the East. If the *Eastern* witch could be considered "bad", Glynda the Good Witch informs Dorothy helpfully, then her surviving sister (sure to be out instantly for revenge) is twice the trouble at the very least.

A Slippery Situation

May we assume here the general attitude of helpfulness of the Good Witch and gently suggest that, dreamwise, the East represents the occult dimension of reality, the inner planes, the nonmanifest worlds of the so-called Unconscious from which Dorothy had just "materialized" in her "flying house"—i.e. the prototype body pattern of the astral-flight Soul Vehicle. Therefore the unknown "threat" posed by that mysterious Dimension of Being has already closed on her, before-the-fact, precisely in conjunction with her waking up to this new incarnation in the Land of Oz.

The Witch of the West therefore signifies, as does the West itself, the field of *exteriority*, the overt/manifested planes of matter and all the potential mischief of which the *material* phase is capable. By simply opening her eyes to the color and surreal texture of the "manifest" field of reality (which, remember, is but the *dream* of another, scarcely remembered but deeply-longed-for Existence) Dorothy seems to have "escaped" the implied perils of a Being about which she wasn't even aware; but *only* to be delivered up to the characteristic perils of this materialized plane proper, signified by the Western Witch of Oz. In very Kafka-like fashion, Dorothy has awakened wide-eyed to an unknown world wherein, by that *very awakening*, she's already responsible for having "occulted" an entire Being—and apparently has to answer for that inadvertent impropriety to Another. The key at once to her protection and her imperilment, (and ultimately to her Return) seems to lie in her possession of the curious Ruby Slippers—a style of footwear the Western Witch appears for some reason to particularly covet. And what, in the lexicon of dream-logic, could the Ruby Slippers possibly be? If we remember that, having imprisoned Dorothy in her castle the witch tries avidly to tear away the slippers only to be startlingly *burned*, we have all the clue we need. Red is the color of fire, and of blood. These "slippers" represent then the very, fiery energy and Lifeforce of the *spiritual current* that becomes ensouled (or en-soled, you know) as the nuclear code of physical polarization at the perineum, and by extension through the legs *and feet*: the *Sakti* or *Sekinah* (see the *Star Wars* review) in either Hebrew or Hindu traditions is referred to as the *Divine Footstool*. The feet are, in these and many other esoteric teachings, powerfully charged centers correlated with the nestling force of the *serpent-fire* (invaginated, at the basal *chakras*, into a self-enfolded "lock-in" of mirroring multidimensional fields and patterning currents holding the compound focal grid of the "physical"—or earth dimension—in place). Thus the "feet" represent and functionally *embody* the creative power of the Worlds, through the action of which the energy-psyche of physical cognition is grounded. (Note that the "slippers" appear and come into Dorothy's possession at the precise moment the flying vehicle—the Soul-housing—in which she's transported *drops to the ground*. And they belonged, formerly, to the *Eastern* witch—i.e. the principle of nonmanifestation, the "occult" or hidden side of things—notice we don't *see* the face of the Eastern Witch, only her feet or the *lowest* form of her semi-manifestation.) And Dorothy is continuously cajoled to "surrender" the Ruby Slippers to the Negative (i.e., succumb to the conventional threats and enticements of physical existence by allowing the precious Lifepower to be engaged in the spells and distractive delusions of that realm). The Witch, it is obvious, wishes to use the magical potency of this twinkle toe-power toward her own self-serving ends. Of course it would be a lot *easier* for Dorothy to surrender—if it wasn't for the fact she's propelled onward by an unremitting purpose, a potent recollection: she *has to return Home*. And, as it turns out, she *needs* the Ruby Slippers to be able to do this. *This* is why the slippers couldn't be given into the hands of the Negative being, and monopolized toward the "material"

purposes to which the fiery force as a *down/lowing* (magical, manifesting) power is put. The same energy "locked up" in grounded/actional modes of *ih&feet* or vital extensions-of-being is instrumental in effecting that ultimate Awakening to the true Home—which was all along the "purpose" of the unceasing Going of those rubious walking-shoes.

No Parking-Validation In The Tow-Away Zone Of Oz

As in the proper *gestalting* of any good dream, the supplementary characters and supporting cast can be considered aspects of the protagonist, in this case the "dreamer" Dorothy. Thus the tin man, scarecrow and cowardly lion represent not only emphasized traits drawn through specific personalities from the general spectrum of psychic types and tendencies; they mirror significant portions of the subject-mind through which the experience of Oz is narratively reflected. Keeping this in mind, do you know how the tin man got his heart, the scarecrow got his brain, and the cowardly lion his courage? Why of course! we hear some of the readership leap brightly at the recollection: the *Wizard* gave those things to them, in the respective forms of a ticking clock, a diploma from a diploma-mill, and a medal-of-honor. If in fact you quickly answered this way, we must beep the null-buzzer; in truth **the Wizard's little token awards were trinkets of a parody quite telling of human psychology**, if we but look a little closer. For such clearly superfluous baubles were precisely *not* the means whereby the trio acquired their longed-for traits.

They had already *achieved* those coveted attributes, brought them to blossom from their earlier absention in the seedbed of simple potential. (It's not so much that one doesn't "possess" the desired traits as that one hasn't *drawn them out yet* in the only way they can be accurately "tested for", i.e. in actual trials, tribulations, dangerous effort and unremitting *work*.) Having *passed through* those trials and succeeded out of love for Dorothy, the group had *manifested* the respective traits most coveted—which is the sole way the presence of such traits may be secured, i.e. *in actual expression*. The Wizard's "awards" come as parodic anticlimax, and point out the distinct difference between the way in which the ego seeks to *ratify* the presence of idealized traits projectively presumed to "fulfill it", and the manner in which such values are *actually* realized and fulfilled.

The ego looks at some such value as "courage", "brains" or "heart" as *possession* to which it would ideally correspond by consensual validation; thus the ego's basic project is *to be ratified*, to be confirmed by the general domain of Other in the form of a significant Authorization Astute analysis shows that, underlying everything, this is the *whole* of what comprises the ego's compelling project, its continuous drive through the hollow self-tunnel of "incompletion" or existential inadequacy. And yet the domain of Other (the totality-of-the-world that seems beyond the personal "prehensibility" of willed regulation) is in fact quite powerless to confer the required values, in the very way the Wizard was exposed in his perfect ineptitude. The developed values of the Soul are *not agratis* boon of "Saktipat", of some wizardry conferral of energy-amplification; nor are they obtainable as correct answers to a catechistic recital.

"I'm a very good man", says the Wizard, "it's just that I'm not a very good Wizard." Yet in a sense he performs his function perfectly: he *is* a very good Wizard indeed, he *is* the wonderful Wizard of Oz: for when Dorothy and the companions come to him to inquire how

to obtain what they want (with Dorothy's desire to *return home* foremost) the Wizard imperiously "refuses" to confer their aims as *gratis* gifts but instead sends them off with an insistence that *they fulfill conditions*; he commands that they *do the impossible*, go right into the heart of what they were scrupulously trying to avoid and obtain the wicked Witch's *very broomstick*. And it's only through this most severe of trials, concerning matters of no less moment than Life and Death, that the little group finds the courage, heart and intelligence in compassionate camaraderie to face what they just couldn't face, and accomplish what—without a *Wizard's* ensorcelling help—they just couldn't accomplish. Glynda the Good Witch, don't forget, reveals the secret of the Ruby Slippers; it is through them that Dorothy could have returned home any time she wished! Indeed, it's through her experience that Dorothy is subsequently able to exclaim to Aunt Em and the hired hands "if it isn't here, right here at home, it isn't anywhere." Do we hear a distinct spiritual reverberation? Do we hear a persistent if paradoxical refrain, reiterated down the halls of time from Saints and Roshis right through to Krishnamurthi, Ramana Maharshi and "Wei Wu Wei" to the effect that reality is already Whole, Being is complete-and-perfect before the fact and there is nothing we can do to "complete" it, nothing we can add to it or subtract from it that will make it anything other than what it eternally Is?

Befooled By A Dream Alarmclock

It's precisely this declaration, delineating the "awakened" point of view, that has led to the sorry spectacle of quite ordinary egos attempting to capitalize on the apparent effortlessness of the Illuminated Refrain by forthwith "dropping everything", proclaiming their own purchase on sublime Completion and then (still suffering of course from full commitment of Identity to all the partial/preferential profiles of ego-identification cast in the cliched psychological mold) laboring in the pseudo-spontaneity of a queasy "freedom" to elicit some secret confirmation, some tacit or extravagant validation from the displacing field of Other for that "awakening" which tosses in persistent self-deluding sleep. Even many *teachers* of such a spiritual "truth", precisely those such as Krishnamurthi et al., have *not* clearly noticed an inbuilt trick of that truth, i.e. the refractory fact that the complexes of common ego-consciousness characteristic of human psychology at this stage of development are instances of the overspreading Tree of that Truth in *seed-form*. The *seed* can't arbitrarily drop the conditions of its encapsulation and proclaim itself equivalent to the oak. It must be *planted in* the whole Ground of that Truth, fed and watered, tended and nurtured, cultivated and cared for. A *process* of germination has to take place, and the mode of *time* is precisely the device Eternity employs to draw that sapling presence into Conscious continuity with the "absolute instantaneity" of Its own all-pervasive Being. Yes, *technically* Dorothy could have "gone home any time", for "home" is the Present In-dwelling of Consciousness. It is immediate/unmediated Awareness of the absolute conformance of everything with the Self-presence of Consciousness—the intimate "hearth-and-home" identity of everything in smooth unity with and as the Occasion of Conscious Self-presence.

Yet to really know that Truth as its *Living Expression* (i.e. in order to really "wake up" back in Kansas rather than experience a pseudo-awakening only to find you're still in the bewildering Oz of your ordinary, excruciating psychology) you have to have employed the *shoes properly*. You have to have been tested in the persistence with which you valued and protected them, honored them and enlisted them steadfastly in a dedicated movement toward home; you can't have misused them, or surrendered them in a trade of convenience to the Negative call. It's through that steadfast *persistence* and focused

undissuadable *direction* in your employment of the Ruby Slippers (i.e. the fiery life-force of the mind/body pattern effectively focusing and "locking in" Conscious Whole-being to the partial perspective of the material Mystery, the manifest Land of Oz) that you develop those values, cultivate the required qualities whereby the *deflective Negative may be overcome*. For you cannot simply plop down and arbitrarily declare you're home. This much we *do* learn from the *Wizard of Oz*; the Negative stands effectually in the way. The "evil" is in effective control of the Land in the same way the negatively-polarized psyche of common ego psychology *lays exclusive claim* upon the magical powers and spiritual properties locked in those Ruby Shoes! When however the very demanding and even "impossible" work is done, the necessary values of Soul will have been developed and demonstrated: the lion will indeed be courageous; the scarecrow will indeed be intelligent; and the tin man, yes, the tin man will have a heart of which he can be certain, for it will most certainly be broken.

When the Being is thus integrated, vivified and drawn to an intensification through which it's capable of facing the Negative on its own soil for the sake of "another", *then* it may be that the Ruby Slippers (always *technically* capable of Restoring Dorothy to her Home since they continuously stand on unific Ground) will in fact *befunctionally* fit to effect that Recovery. And no "magical conferral" in authoritative Validation by the Other-expertise of a Wizard, is at all needed to accomplish this ultimate feat of Sublime Magick.

Here then is the Way in which one merits the longed-for, Motherly care of that One who awaits, Who is There all along, the gracious Aunt Em; for Aunt Em (Em is full spelling of the letter M) is simply A.M. The morning, the dawn, the natural or spontaneous awakening of the Sunrise. And it is also of course AM, the declarative Presence of that which Is, i.e. Eternal Being.

One last interesting thing: since this reviewer is now forced to confess he's never actually read the *Wizard*, he must ask on the basis of his viewing of the movie just who had been so curiously prescient, so perfectly predictive? Was it L. Frank himself, or the screenwriters or LeRoy or Garland or Victor Fleming? For take a closer look: the Witch seems to prefigure the foul design of a diabolic intelligence visited some decades later upon the real world; she issues her plague upon the lowering skies of Oz, carried by winged monkeys—and listen carefully! there's a curious line that simply hangs there in the movie like a severed nerve, for there is no followup or further reference in the story: the allusion seems to stand alone, an almost uncanny insertion (perhaps there were scenes of continuity that were simply cut out for "time"; but the allusion itself was then curiously preserved, as if by oversight). For as the monkey-emissaries of the green witch loft into a sky progressively darkened with their proliferating presence, she cryptically commands- "send my insect ahead to take the fight out of them"(!). In light of such unprecedented modern plagues as AIDS (alleged to have originated with the African green monkey) and the concomitant general weakening of the immunology system, the Witch's declaration seems to shadow a far-reaching design for a kind of Negative conquest. Hmmmmm...(see next month's Halloween Issue when TNTC takes on Spook Central).

The Wizard of Oz *****