Dehumanization in Oz: The Scarecrow and Tin Man Mimics, the Lion Cannibal

Introduction

In the summer 1997, an Oz festival was to be held at L. Frank Baum’s hometown of Aberdeen, South Dakota. This celebration upset locals because seven years prior, a Cornell University sociologist found that Baum, the “Royal Historian of Oz”, had called for “the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians” (qtd. Johansen) when he was the editor for the Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer. The timing of the article’s publication could not have been worse, since this 1890 editorial debuted days after Sitting Bull’s assassination and weeks before the Wounded Knee Massacre. In response to this revelation, current Aberdeen citizens wrote a petition that demanded festival organizers to make Baum’s xenophobia known (Johansen).

After learning about L. Frank Baum’s unseemly reaction to the Sioux’s tragedy, one must wonder if The Wonderful Wizard of Oz sublimates its author’s racism. It is important to look into Oz’s potentially racist undertones because Baum’s work has generated numerous cinematic, literary, theatrical and musical adaptations and served as an allegory for American economics, race relations, gender politics and foreign policy. Needless to say, Oz’s allegoric power and pop appeal has infiltrated American discourse. Specifically, The New York Times’ Chief Military Correspondent, Michael Gordon, has described the Second Iraq War era Bush administration as “the ding-dong-the-witch-is-dead school of regime change: We go in, we kill the wicked witch, the munchkins jump up, they’re grateful, and then we get into a hot air balloon and we’re out of there.” (qtd. in Funchion, 251). Thankfully, Gordon is sensitive enough to critique the Bush administration for likening Iraqi citizens to pint-sized, helpless and “grateful” munchkins. Nevertheless, the implication that Oz’s tropes influence the ways in which Americans perceive and interact with the Other, such as Iraqis in the 2000s, is unsettling.
Likening groveling Munchkins to Iraqis is offensive. What is more alarming though, is Oz’s beloved trio - the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Cowardly Lion - may covertly propagate Baum’s imperialistic myths. The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman resemble the subservient, generous Natives from U.S. Thanksgiving lore. On one end, the Cowardly Lion reflects Baum’s scathing depictions of Native Americans in his Saturday Aberdeen Pioneer periodical. On the other end, the Lion resembles laudatory, exotic depictions of Sitting Bull. Since the trio and Dorothy strike up such a warm camaraderie in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, it is hard to believe that their friendship could be less than ideal. But after re-reading Oz alongside Baum’s earlier journalistic writings, the unrealistic racist ideals and phobias that the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Cowardly Lion perpetuate become evident.

Exhibition

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is the first book of Baum’s lucrative series. Most likely, contemporary readers have already encountered Baum’s story through Victor Fleming’s iconic 1939 filmic adaptation of the book: The Wizard of Oz. For the most part, the plots are similar but there are discrepancies. Baum’s original Oz centers on Dorothy, an orphan who is being raised by her Uncle Henry and Aunty Em in impoverished, isolated rural Kansas (they lack farmhands and neighbors). A cyclone sucks up Dorothy, her beloved dog Toto and her farmhouse and plops them into the fantastical land of Oz. Oz denizens tell Dorothy that if she wants to get home, she must see the Wizard at the Emerald City. In her travels, Dorothy encounters and befriends the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Cowardly Lion, who want a brain, heart and courage. In order to have the Wizard grant their wishes, the foursome slay the tyrannical Wicked Witch of the West. When the Wizard turns out to be an ordinary man and fails to take Dorothy back to Kansas, the
party makes a second journey to the Land of the Quadlings and implores Glinda the Good Witch for help.

The *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was a best seller upon its release - Baum and his family lived comfortably off its royalties - and generated a fourteen volume series that spanned Baum’s life (F.J. Baum 123). Even after Baum’s death, prolific writers like Ruth Plumly Thompson expanded the *Oz* universe with new books. While Baum was alive, he produced several theatrical and filmic *Oz* adaptions (F.J. Baum 10). In 1939, Fleming brought forth his *Oz* movie, which flopped at its release but gradually became one of the most viewed films of all time. Sidney Lumet directed a movie based off *The Wiz* Broadway musical in 1974. Gregory Maguire’s 1995 novel, *Wicked* and its ensuing Broadway musical are now pop culture sensations. In 2013, Sam Rami brought forth *Oz the Great and Powerful*. Over century after *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s initial publication, the book has spawned many adaptations and continues to be a popular and beloved story itself. Charming as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is though, Baum approached the Wounded Knee Massacre so callously just years before writing his novel. Because his text has exhibited lasting artistic and socio-political influence, Baum’s background and work ought to be scrutinized in order to detect of and, in turn, prevent readers’ internalization of his implicitly xenophobic writings.

It would help to look into Baum’s biography and the historical framework in which he produced his novel before analyzing *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s racist implications. *To Please a Child* (1961), a biography written by Baum’s eldest son, Frank J. Baum, may provide the most valuable insight to his father’s creative psyche and Gilded Age context. Throughout the history, the junior Baum shows how turn-of-the-century events and trends influenced his father. For example, he demonstrates how Baum could afford pursuing his eclectic printing, chicken
breeding and acting interests since his family prospered in banking and the oil business like many Gilded Age elites (F.J. Baum 20).

It is particularly interesting to note the junior Baum’s account for his father’s problematic views on Native Americans and the white colonization of the Dakotas. While pursuing his less-than-successful career as an actor and playwright, Baum met and married Maud Gage. After the death of Baum’s father in 1887, the couple moved to the small town of Aberdeen in the Dakota Territories (the USA annexed South Dakota in 1889) so they could be near Maud’s family (F.J. Baum 57). The “promising”, “open” Dakotas, which were “so recently wrested from the Sioux” (F.J. Baum 58), attracted young, Northeastern Anglo-American families. While in living in Aberdeen, Baum ran a small convenient store, “Baum’s Bazar”. He had to close it during Dakota’s economic downfall in 1889 (F.J. Baum 63). Shortly thereafter, Baum inherited the weekly Dakota Pioneer newspaper from family friend, John B. Drake, and renamed it The Saturday Aberdeen Pioneer (F.J. Baum 63). Alone, Baum “collected and wrote the news and editorials, solicited advertisements and set the paper’s type by hand” (F.J. Baum 64). In 1890 he started writing his Our Landlady column, a fictive dinner table dialogue featuring a landlady, Mrs. Bilkins, and her tenants (F.J. Baum 65). The series poked light fun at Aberdeen’s social functions and wryly commented on economic hardships, federal legislature and tensions with the displaced Sioux. The junior Baum extensively cites one his father’s controversial Our Landlady columns published during the Lakota Ghost Dance movement.

To put Baum’s Pioneer writings into a clearer historical context though - it would be important to examine the Lakota Ghost Dance and events that implicitly and explicitly inspired it. At this point in American history, Native Americans were desperate: ever since Europeans first colonized North America, war and foreign illnesses like small pox nearly obliterated entire
demographics. Ninety percent of the Native American population had “died from imported
diseases” in New England (Butler, Whacker, Balmer 286). In the late 1800’s, the Dakota
Territories’ resident Sioux (a.k.a. Lakota) had to deal with a huge influx of white, westbound
settlers – in the 1850’s newly discovered gold and precious minerals attracted prospectors and
miners, agricultural inventions (e.g. barbed wire) encouraged farmers and ranchers to settle the
prairies and the Homestead Act of 1862 offered cheap “unappropriated public land” for young
settlers (Mintz). Overhunting on the white settlers’ part robbed Plains Indians of the buffalo, a
food source and an animal with great symbolic and material significance (DeMallie 323). In face
of widespread starvation (spanning America’s entire Midwest), Wovoka, a 28-year-old Paiute
Indian from Nevada, instigated the Ghost Dance Movement – a communal response to the
depletion of a crucial Native food source and white encroachment on Native territory and
culture. Wovoka had a vision where the Indian dead rose back to life and taught him a dance that
would peaceably and quickly dispel the whites, bring back the buffalo and restore the Plains’
natural beauty (Butler, Whacker, Balmer 287). Wovoka’s nonviolent message caught on with the
Plains Indians. The dance’s sheer intensity frightened settlers like Mrs. Z.A. Parker, who lived
near the Pine Ridge reservation. She describes how the Ghost Dancers “set up the most fearful,
heart-piercing wails” and how one Lakota woman danced so hard that her face became “purple,
looking as if the blood would burst through” and fainted soon thereafter (qtd. in Mintz). When
the Sioux leader, Sitting Bull - who was infamous for obliterating General Custer’s forces at the
Battle of Little Bighorn - took on the Ghost Dance, Anglo Americans grew especially anxious
(Butler, Whacker, Balmer 288).

In 1889, the Seventh Calvary was ordered to protect white settlers from potentially
violent ghost dancers in the Dakotas (Mintz). When the Calvary tried to arrest Sitting Bull on
December 15, 1890, a battle involving 150 ghost dancers and 43 US servicemen broke out. Sitting Bull was shot and killed within minutes (Mintz). Afterwards, US troops detained and escorted fleeing Sioux Indians to a camp at Wounded Knee. L. Frank Baum almost presaged the ensuing massacre when he wrote about Sitting Bull’s death. Below is Baum’s Dec 20, 1890 Pioneer editorial:

The proud spirit of the original owners of the vast prairies… lingered last in the bosom of Sitting Bull. With his fall, the nobility of the Redskin is extinguished, and what are left are a pack of whining curs who lick the hand that smites them… The Whites, by law of conquest, by justice of civilization, are masters of the American continent, and the best safety of the frontier will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians… Why not annihilation? Their glory has fled, their spirit broken, their manhood effaced, better that they should die than live the miserable wretches that they are (qtd. in Johansen).

Nine days after Baum wrote this, December 29, 1890, someone fired a gun while soldiers disarmed Sioux detainees at Wounded Knee. Machine guns mowed down the crowd, killing at least 146 (possibly 300) Indian men, women, elderly and children (Mintz). Baum’s only response was that General Miles was “weak and vacillating” for trying to court-martial those who set off the massacre (qtd. in Johansen).

Baum’s talk of the Indians’ “proud spirits”, “vast prairies”, “nobility” and “glory” set against the whites’ “law of conquest”, “justice of civilization” and “mastery of the American continent” is so wildly romanticized and hackneyed that some scholars have been led to believe that Baum was joking. In their “The Ethics and Epistemology of Emancipation in Oz” Jason and Jessica Bell assert that Baum’s controversial Pioneer editorials published during the Wounded Knee Massacre “mocked those [whites] that destroyed the native peoples” (243). Not once citing Baum’s statements, the Bells paraphrase that the author made a “loud and bitterly ironic denunciation of the racist genocide of Native peoples… [and] in his journalism, hollered as witness at the scene of the crime” (Bell and Bell 243). Nowadays, Baum adorning “whites” with
the “laws of conquest” and “justice of civilization” while demoting “Redskins” to “a pack of
whining curs” (Johansen) is so odiously bigoted that it can be taken as a joke. It is more likely,
however, that Baum was being serious and that his readers took him seriously during the Gilded
Age. Even Nancy Tystad Koupal, who criticizes how “textbooks and the popular press berate”
Baum for “racism” (Koupal x) in the preface to her complete, annotated *Our Landlady*
collection, can only defend Baum on the basis that his racist “opinion was not unique” in his time
(Koupal 189). Koupal cites a December 27, 1890 *Aberdeen Daily News* (a rival of Baum’s
*Pioneer*) editorial that gloats “Indians who were not ‘good’ would be few and far in between” if
the US government armed Dakota settlers (Koupal 189). *The Daily News* finds humor in
reworking General Sheridan’s “the only good Indian is a dead Indian” quip. Euphemizing the
fact that white settlers desire to shoot and kill “not good” living Indians is the punch line.

When confronting Baum’s views on the Wounded Knee Massacre, Koupal cites Baum’s
morally ambiguous January 3, 1891 *Pioneer* editorial, in which he declares:

> Our only safety depends upon the total extermination of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries we had better... [the Whites should] follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth (qtd. in Koupal 147).

Baum’s hyperbolic phrases - “only safety”, “total extermination”, “centuries”, “face of the earth” - are side-splittingly theatrical. His logic is doubly hilarious. Solving “centuries” of White “wrongs” by simply “exterminating” Indian victims rivals Clever Han’s literalism. Why not put an end to Indian sufferings by putting an end to Indians? What is tragic, however, it that Baum’s admission to white atrocities evinces a chilling seriousness. Rhetorically, self-effacement makes the speaker seem reasonable and more persuasive. Rather than scapegoating “Indians”, he implicitly blames the Whites for failing to tame these “untamable creatures”. Again, the fact that the Whites must resort to “total extermination” is the White’s fault. The so-called “Indian
creature” has no agency in Baum’s melodramatic, self-reveling apology: the “Indian” is not killed for being a threat, but a lack of one. The notion of powerless Indians does not bother Baum. As confident as Baum seems to be in Anglo-American might though, the editor took it upon himself to count all the guns in Aberdeen and was dismayed to find only “fifty rifles, some of them unusable” in November 1890 (Koupal 143) – the height of hysteria for European settlers, US troops and the Lakota Ghost Dancers. Judging from Baum’s precautious counting, he is not pointing fun white fears but partaking in them.

Hardly a joke, Baum’s December 20, 1890 Pioneer editorial seems to follow the logic of social Darwinism. Of course, “the Whites” deserve to live “by law of conquest” because they managed to “master” the “American Continent” (qtd. in Johansen). Not only are “the Whites” inherently strong to Baum, they are biologically infused with “the justice of civilization”. Ironically, Baum censures remaining Indians, who he demotes to “a pack of whining curs”, for not fighting back. Baum actually takes pride in likening Whites to “hand that smites” the “cur” Indians. Here, Baum is radical, even for the Gilded Age: while his more liberal contemporaries liked to believe that they helped Native Americans by uprooting their “savage” pasts and assimilating them into white society, Baum owns the violent aspects of American colonization.

Baum earnestly believes that Sitting Bull was the “last”, “original” “Redskin”. Ever aggressive, Baum lauds his archenemy, Sitting Bull, because he believed the Sioux leader was a righteous warmonger like the “conquering” Whites. Keeping up the image of the fearless, superior “White”, Baum decrees the Indians’ “total annihilation”, not protect white settlers, but to put “miserable wretches” out of their misery. Since existing Native Americans are aberrations of Baum’s ideal Indian, it is “moral” to kill the “curs” and preserve the memory of the “original”, “glorious” Redskin race. L. Frank Baum harbors the twisted belief that “whites” are obligated
relegate races, to eliminate entire peoples when they stray from a desired model – as with the Lakota who did not emulate Sitting Bull.

In order to engage with the imperialist sympathies and racist imagery implicit within Baum’s Oz, it is first necessary to study the more explicit statements about imperialism and race that he made in his other, contemporaneously produced texts such as *Our Landlady*. The column came to be at a point where Anglo Americans were still settling the Dakotas and feeling threatened by the Lakota Ghost Dance movement. Baum entertained his target audience, white settlers, by having his Mrs. Bilkins character demonize and demean the Sioux.

### The Our Landlady Columns

When he was the editor of *The Saturday Aberdeen Pioneer*, Baum wrote a weekly short story starring the simple, plainspoken Mrs. Bilkins - *Our Landlady*. Baum’s narratives consist of conversations made between Mrs. Bilkins, with all her charming colloquialisms, and her somewhat more levelheaded tenants: Tom, the Doctor and the Colonel. Since *Our Landlady* was geared towards Baum’s fellow Aberdeen inhabitants, it satirized current events in the town and the Dakota territories. Often, Mrs. Bilkins would tell her clients long stories about her week. The December 6, 1890 *Our Landlady*, which the junior Baum includes in *To Please a Child*, has Mrs. Bilkins recall an encounter she had with a cowardly, greedy, chauvinistic, “giverment” dependent Indian named Hole-in-the-Face (qtd. in F.J. Baum, 66-67).

The Junior Baum’s citation starts at the point in which Mrs. Bilkins tells Tom and the Colonel how she “fiercely” demanded that Hole-in-the-Face stop “running away” from her and “explain” himself, just after her cowardly “driver boy” abandoned her amidst a Sioux riot. At first, the “Injun” caricature begs for Mrs. Bilkins not to “hurt” him. He elaborates that the
“whites is all risin’” because they are “starvin’” and politicians like “Candidate Afraid-of-his-Pocketbook” will not give whites “rations” as they do for “Injuns”. Hole-in-the-Face says he fears that whites will “swoop down any minit” and “rob Injuns o’ all [they] posses” since “Injuns has been drawin’ rations from the giverment an layin’ by [their] savings ‘til [they] got in pretty fair shape”. On top of boasting that the US “giverment” is more generous towards “Injuns” than “whites”, Hole-in-the-Face taunts, “We Injuns can vote and you wimmin can’t”. When Mrs. Bilkins asserts that it is actually the whites who are afraid “o’ [Indians] swooping down on them”, Hole-in-the-Face gets bold and takes the last word. He exclaims, “What have they go we want? Nothin! But the Injuns has got lots that the giverment has give ‘em that the whites would like to have for themselves” (qtd. in F.J. Baum, 66-67)

Baum’s text blatantly slams the Lakota peoples through this odious, all-encompassing stand-in. For one, Hole-in-the-Face is an unattractive name. Real Native Americans, like Sitting Bull or Red Cloud, have names that refer to nature. Baum’s fabricated name suggests a mutilation or deformity - immediately making Hole-in-the-Face incomplete, grotesque, sub-human. With no voice of his own, Hole-in-the-Face slavishly praises to the “giverment” that “gives” only to “Injuns”, seeks refuge in “Candidate Afraid-of-his-Pocketbook” (a white politician Baum disrespected so much that he smeared him with a ridiculous, mock Native American name), chauvinistically brags about the “Injuns’” right to vote over “wimmin”, and yet fearfully “runs away” from Mrs. Bilikins because he thinks she is a “risn’ white”. Baum’s desire for a “brave” Indian is evident when Mrs. Bilikins laments that the spineless Hole-in-the-Face was supposedly “one o’ the bravest Sioux” (qtd. in Koupal 145). Like her creator, Baum, she is taken aback when “braves” do not emulate the stoic, “noble savage” typecast. Rather than being rounded, individuated, Hole-in-the-Face puppets Baum’s frustrations with US politics: the
government grants financial aid to Native Americans, not whites, and grants suffrage to Native Americans, not white women. Hole-in-the-Face is the nasty, lazy, undeserving Indian Baum that wants to believe in. As junior Baum writes, his father “clowns Aberdeen’s bitter feelings” about fiscally “hard times” and the “Messiah War” (F.J. Baum 65). The image of a mealy-mouthed government official feeding ill-tempered bums instead of “starving whites” – a complete demonization of the individuals to whom Baum took offense to - must be gratifying for him and his frustrated white readers. Worse, the fact that Hole-in-the-Face enjoys being in “pretty fair shape” and refuses to share his plenteous “savings” and “rations” with whites (qtd. F.J Baum 66-67) makes Baum’s Dec 6, 1890 Our Landlady a grossly inverted representation of the Plains Indians’ bleak reality. While Baum and his family may have been admirably reckless to scrape up “enough money for a family celebration” when their “purse was lean” on that 1890 Thanksgiving (Baum 63), the Sioux, along with all Plains Indians, were holding fast to tradition despite starving to death.

“The Ethics and Epistemology of Emancipation in Oz” may attempt to distance Baum from Sheridan’s brand of humor by stating that the author “jokes at everyone’s expense”, the way a “Jew tells Jew jokes, Nazi jokes, Irish Jokes, Black jokes and Polish jokes” (Bell and Bell 243). In actuality though, Baum wanted readers to exclusively relate to Mrs. Bilkins, never Hole-in-the-Face. Perhaps Baum makes light of Mrs. Bilkin’s colloquialisms (e.g. she pronounces little as “leetle”) and gullibility in his Our Landlady columns – but in the end, Baum’s plucky “literary persona” trumps her misgivings with country values, sweetness and “common sense” (Koupal xi). Hardly an equal opportunity offender, Baum does nothing to redeem his “Injun” Hole-in-the-Face caricature. Mrs. Bilkins cutely describes the man as “sourkastic”, relays his cynical “religion is free as water” jibe, and pretty much puts words in his mouth (F. J. Baum 65-
Moreover, Mrs. Bilkins’ emotionalism and rough intonations are counteracted by the normal-speaking Tom, the Doctor and the Colonel – as a white character, she is allowed to be a delightful anomaly. Meanwhile, Hole-in-the-Face is the only speaking “Injun”. With no other “Injuns” to oppose and / or agree with him, Hole-in-the-Face becomes the repellent representative of all Lakota. It may be significant to add, moreover, that the Bells exemplified a hypothetical Jew, not Baum himself when talking about all-encompassing racial humor. Baum is nothing like a marginalized Jew, he held an untouchable Anglo American stance in racial, Gilded Age humor. The Bells avoiding Baum’s whiteness suggests their insecurities about his privileged position as a white male. None withstanding, the Bells neglecting to cite Baum directly and conjecturing in order to support their “honest comedian” (Bell and Bell 243) characterization of the author is makes their claims all the more spurious.

Reading the fictive interaction between Mrs. Bilkins and Hole-in-the-Face in the December 6, 1890 Our Landlady helps us understand how prejudices informed Baum’s call for the for the “total annihilation” of the “few remaining Indians” in his Pioneer editorial written but two weeks later. More importantly, knowing that the junior and senior Baums have openly demeaned Native Americans proves invaluable when it comes to investigating how the depiction of Oz’s supporting characters, which wield cultural currency to this day, implicitly uphold Expansionist myths.
Oz and the Human – the Scarecrow and the Tin Man

As Baum’s *Our Landlady* columns make clear, the author considered Native Americans to be a separate, and decidedly subhuman, race that was inferior to the Anglo-American race with which he himself identified. Given the bluntness and stridency of Baum’s statements in his *Saturday Aberdeen Pioneer*, it can be assumed that his racism might carry over (if only implicitly or unconsciously) into his children’s fantasy text.

When analyzing Baum’s development of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s secondary characters—specifically, the Scarecrow and the Tin Man—one might see the same imperialist logic that structures his depiction of Native Americans in the *Our Landlady* columns.

Vivian Wagner’s examination of “meaty” Dorothy and Toto’s relationship with the “odd-body” and “nonmeat” characters in her essay, “Unsettling Oz: Technological Anxieties in the Novels of L. Frank Baum”, can be used to contemplate how Baum imagined the indigenous Others that Anglo Americans encountered when settling the West. Specifically, Wagner zeroes in on how *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s “odd body” characters sublimate the fancies and fears surrounding technological progress. Wagner explains how the Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman, who are essentially robots, do not tire, hunger or feel pain (Wagner 32) and then unpacks “meat” and its Upton Sinclair style connotations. “Meat” is a commodity, a food item, a signifier of repressed cannibalism and the “queasy” medium that “animates” conscious beings (Wagner 31). From a metaphysical standpoint, an ethereal mind shedding its flesh and assuming a pure, unfeeling cloth or tin body would eliminate woes about perishable, consumable meat body. However, Wagner points out that the Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman want “fleshly” organs, a
brain, a heart, in order to make their “odd / non-meat bodies whole” (Wagner 32). Wagner implies that flesh may tire and decay, but something to being made of “meat” in Oz is wholesome. Perhaps fleshly bodies are desirable because flesh, not straw or tin, makes one human.

Wagner applies her comparison between “meaty” Dorothy and Oz’s “odd-bodies” to Fordism, and the questionable humanity of industrialism. When read under an imperialistic lens though, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman’s “non-meat”, non-human bodies are also crucial.

Dorothy, the American Oz explorer readers are meant to relate to, is more human than the Scarecrow and Tinman, the foreign Oz denizens readers vicariously encounter. Although he was made in the image of a Munchkin farmer, the Scarecrow was an artificial, manufactured being from the get-go. The Tin Woodman, on the other hand, was born human but ultimately accumulated enough prostheses to be qualified as a robot. These fleshless characters are never a threat to Dorothy. As a matter of fact, the helpless duo is indebted to her charity. Dorothy lifts the Scarecrow off the pole “stuck up his back” and saves him from a “tedious”, sedentary life of scaring away crows all “night and day” (Baum 27). Dorothy oils the Tin Woodman’s joints which “had rusted so badly he could not move” (Baum 41). It is Dorothy, not the Tin Woodman himself, who wields the oilcan, the Tin Woodman’s movements are entirely dependent on Dorothy.
When it comes to physically possessing human flesh, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are incomplete. What is more troublesome though, is that the duo feels that their interior qualities, intellect and compassion, are inferior too – despite displaying quick thinking and sensitivity. The “brainless” Scarecrow is smart - it is his idea to destroy the tree bridge to send the Kalidahs plummeting to their deaths (Baum 63). The “heartless” Tin Woodman is caring - he weeps after accidentally squashing a beetle (Baum 56). Still, the two desire a brain or a heart for validation because acquiring such organs will make the Scarecrow human, and Tin Woodman regain his humanity. The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are innately “good” but still ask Dorothy, a foreigner, for help. Better for Dorothy, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman strive to be like her. The Scarecrow feels inadequate next to Dorothy, upon meeting her he states, “if my head stays stuffed with straw instead of with brains, as yours is, how am I ever to know anything?” (Baum 28). Likewise, the Tin Woodman laments “You people with hearts… have something to guide you… but I have no heart, and so I must be very careful” (Baum 56). Readers are charmed by the Tin Woodman and Scarecrow because they ingratiate themselves before Dorothy.

Also, these “non-meat” characters are relatable because they anatomically resemble Dorothy. Like the native Munchkins, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are “not as tall as the grown people [Dorothy] had always been used to” but seem “about as tall as Dorothy… a child” (Baum 10). To add, the Scarecrow is chronologically infantile because he informs Dorothy that he “was made only a day before yesterday” (Baum 33). The Scarecrow and Munchkin’s pint-sized stature is significant because post-colonial theorist Franz Fanon noted how imperial powers likened colonized people to “children” with “adorably expressive faces” in Black Skin White Masks (Fanon 132). Imperialists view native cultures the way adults view children: immature and impressionable. In turn, readers view Oz’s fantastical foreigners as children, or worse,
childhood playthings. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* describes the Scarecrow as a “stuffed man” multiple times (Baum 51, 178): he is nothing but a big doll. In *To Please a Child*, the Junior Baum writes that the “Tin Woodman is essentially a mechanical toy, so dear to the heart of every gadget-minded American boy” (Baum 127). While Dorothy is a child herself, her toy-like companions, Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, impress upon her as if she were a parent or owner.

Hence, scholars who believe Baum and his protagonist Dorothy champion the cause for all sorts of “minorities” - Native Americans, Chinese immigrants and African Americans at home, Hawaiians, Filipinos and Cubans abroad - unintentionally fall victim to perpetuating the “white messiah” trope. Dorothy is very much like Gordon Scott and Vera Mile’s characters in the 1950 *Tarzan* movies. It is surprising that the Tufts sociology professor, Peter Dreier, makes this parenthetical claim in a 1997 book review: “Baum even displayed an early sympathy for native Americans of the plains, symbolized in the story of the Winged Monkeys in the West” who lived “happily in the great forest, flying from tree to tree, eating nuts and fruit” (Drier). Earlier Dreier is sensitive enough to state that the 1978 cinematic adaptation *The Wiz*, “exploits” black characters (Dreier), but nonchalantly equates Native Americans to brachiating primates. The fact that those arguing that Baum is a racial progressive tend to overlook Baum’s (and perhaps their own) Social Darwinist thought patterns makes the position that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is xenophobic work more convincing.

Jason and Jessica Bell’s essay, “The Ethics and Epistemology of Emancipation in Oz”, expands on the spirit of Peter Dreier’s latently racist aside. Surprisingly, it has been considered pertinent enough to be included in the 2011 anthology, *The Universe of Oz: Essays on the Series and its Progeny*. The Bells argue the way that Dorothy defeats “oppressors” like the Wicked Witch of the West resembles the Abolitionists’ strides against slavery in antebellum America.
Dorothy liberates the Munchkins, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, Cowardly Lion, Winkies, even herself from “servitude”, “bondage” and “enslavement” (Bell and Bell 225-226). The two then emphasize the significance of Baum’s “Bleeding Kansas” setting. Kansas was a hotspot for radical Abolitionists like John Brown and a critical, anti-slavery swing state just before the American Civil War (Bell and Bell 226).

Jason and Jessica Bell’s presentation of Dorothy and Oz’s ensuing heroines as singular “champions” and “emancipators” is problematic (Bell and Bell 225). For one, the characters whom Dorothy saves are inanimate, animal and subhuman. Likening African slaves to creatures while keeping Dorothy, the white little liberator, human falls into the very racism the Bells oppose. Worse, the duo makes the blundering remark that Dorothy can “make loyal friends no matter their color: blue, black, yellow, tin, patchwork” (Bell and Bell 245). African Americans and Asians, represented by “black” and “yellow”, should be unquestionably human but are lumped together with the Tin Woodman, who questions his humanity since he has been made into a robot, and the Patchwork Girl (the title character of Baum’s 1913 Oz book, The Patchwork Girl of Oz), who has always been a fabrication. The way in which the Bells pair skin color with the Woodman and Patchwork Girl’s incomplete bodies implies Dorothy is exceptionally virtuous to befriend the similarly pitiful, crippled “blue, black” and “yellow” characters. Moreover, the Bells fail to confront Baum’s blatant, distasteful allusion to Asian immigrants through the elfish “yellow” Winkies.

As far as their analysis of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz goes, Jason and Jessica Bell do not seem to find anything problematic about the Munchkin, Scarecrow and Tin Woodman’s passivity. The Munchkins do not liberate themselves, rather, they “rejoice” when Dorothy “accidentally” kills their “tormentor”, The Wicked Witch of the East (Bell and Bell 225). The
Munchkins may not agree with their condition, but they are so inert about the Witch’s occupation that it takes a meteorological fluke to save them. Dorothy’s “accidental” liberation of the Munchkins evinces the Divine. A miraculous cyclone slays the Wicked Witch and brings Dorothy, the Munchkins’ savior, to Oz. She then goes on to intentionally save her fantastical friends. To give the Bells credit, Abolitionists looked to God in their fight against slavery. Still, it is wrong to only focus on how the Divine guides Dorothy, not the Munchkins, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, Lion, Winkies, etc. Not granting these supposedly lesser characters with miracles renders them into Dorothy’s successful, self-ratifying projects. The Bells do not stress that the Munchkins, Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Lion helped “innocent, harmless” (Baum 11) Dorothy by providing her food, shelter and protection.

The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are the ideal Natives for the “champion” Dorothy: they start out helpless, but after minimal aid, turn out to be incredibly helpful. Before grounding The Wonderful Wizard of Oz’s racial sublimations into its Gilded Age context, it may help to look at how white settlers overblew positive historical events, such as the Iroquois peaceful conversion to Catholicism, in order to deemphasize assimilation’s cruel tactics. The Catholic Moravians had sincere religious motivations, took the time to live with the Iroquois and adapted to their culture. Missionaries realized that Catholics consuming the Body of Christ was not too different from the Iroquois consuming the bodies of righteous warriors (Butler, Whacker, Balmer 97-98). By realizing the Eucharistic theology’s cannibalistic aspects, Moravians made Catholicism attractive enough for the Iroquois to adopt. Sadly, bigots took accounts of successful conversion and boiled them down to the quip that Natives were naturally “Christian” - not in the religious sense, but in the assimilative, good-and-civilized-like-Americans sense. Prison commander Richard Pratt, who oversaw an Indian re-education center in the 1870’s, reasoned
that the “Indian” should “lose his identity” the same way the Anglo American ancestor
supposedly lost his European identity (qtd. in Clark). Tales about missionaries drawing out the
beseeching Indians’ true, natural “civilized” selves just sugarcoated the fact that Anglo
Americans forced Native Americans to learn English, wear “normative” garb and use U.S.
dollars (Clark). In extreme cases, mission schools abducted American Indian children from their
families (Clark).

The same way that successful Indian conversion stories obscure assimilation’s cruelty,
Baum’s narratives - in which Mrs. Bilkins peaceably tells off Hole-in-the-Face and Dorothy
helps her “odd-body” friends become human - repress the fact that the U.S. government
answered tensions between Anglo settlers and Ghost Dancers with military action. Dorothy
helping the eager Scarecrow and Tin Woodman realize their inborn humanity resembles the rosy
stories in which white “emancipators” help Native Americans realize their proper, innate civility.
Although Baum seems to embrace the idea whites were the “American continent’s” violent
“masters” in his December 20, 1890 Pioneer editorial, he could create the benevolent, non-
violent Dorothy character to sustain his imaginings of the “just” and “civilized” white.

As far as Gilded Age America’s advance on indigenous territories, submissive, self-
effacing characters like the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman could channel Baum’s desires for
compliant, inhumanly hospitable natives of any sort. The Tin Woodman and Scarecrow are ideal
natives because neither needs food, water or rest and generously
offer Dorothy every “fruit, nut, tree” and “stream” in sight. It is very
convenient that Dorothy and Toto do not have to share bread with
the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman who are “never hungry” (Baum
32, 48). The pair is very much like the generous Indians of U.S.’s
Thanksgiving lore. In actuality, the America’s natural resources (e.g. the Plains Indians’ buffalo) were dwindled by the whites’ irresponsible practices (e.g. overhunting). The Thanksgiving story and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* both have Others, natives, share their countries’ endless resources with white protagonists. These narratives are attractive because they gloss over the U.S.A.’s tendencies to harm the environment and take advantage of indigenous populations. Wagner implies Baum is wary of such characters, since they seem to fit perfectly in Ford’s rigid, mechanistic “worker’s morality” (Wagner 41). However, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* narrator seems beguiled by the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman’s tireless hospitality. The Scarecrow frets that eating food will “spoil the shape” of his head (Baum 32), and then, like the industrious Munchkin farmer he was made after, supplies Dorothy basketfuls of “nuts” along with “peaches” and “plums” that would suit a “princess” (Baum 58, 67). The narrator notes that Dorothy “laughed heartily at the awkward way in which the poor creature picked up the nuts… his padded hands were so clumsy” (Baum 58). Not at all efficient or machinelike, the Scarecrow “drops as many nuts” as he “puts in the basket” (Baum 58). The likewise hospitable Tin Woodman “clears a passage” in the overgrown forest (44), “chops a great pile of wood” so Dorothy can build a fire (57) and builds a “raft” (65). While he is a highly proficient chopper, the fact that tears or a rainstorm can rust the Tin Woodman solid (Baum 47) counters romantic concerns that industrialism squelches human emotions and nature. The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are imperfect but genial - not quite Gramsci’s “rational”, “stable” and “skilled” Fordist laborers that Wagner compares them to (qtd. Wagner 43) – so they do not embody fears of a rigid, dehumanized workforce. However, the two eagerly retract to their farmer / lumberjack occupations to serve Dorothy and, since they do not eat or drink, they literally do not enjoy the “fruits” or their labor. Therefore, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are not Ford’s “excessive”,
“no good” workers either (qtd. in Wagner 43). Unhesitatingly, the duo offers up Oz’s natural resources and water routes, alters Oz’s natural landscape and constructs entirely new infrastructures to accommodate Dorothy and her quest. Instead of resembling blue collar Americans, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are like Oz’s earlier “uncivilized” inhabitants who were bamboozled by the Wizard’s (who is really an Omaha circus man) hot air balloon long ago. Like Dorothy’s compliant, newfound friends, Oz inhabitants “willingly” (without pay) built a city and palace just to “amuse” the Wizard because he “came from the clouds” (Baum 158).

Theorist Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather*, which theorizes that that “family, sexuality and fantasy” has as a “place in the critique of imperial modernity” (McClintock 8), helps one realize the parallels between Dorothy and the Wizard’s settlement of Oz and colonial powers’ (America and Europe) grand narrative of Third World conquest. McClintock observes that European explorers pushed preexisting peoples into an “anachronistic” realm the moment they discovered them so that they could feel the New World was uninhabited, “virgin”, and up for grabs (McClintock 22). Similarly, Baum has denizens balk at the Wizard’s balloon (Baum 58) and marvel that Dorothy’s “home”, Kansas, is “civilized country” free of “wizards”, “sorceresses” and “magicians” (Baum 15). Like European explorers, Baum places Oz into an “anachronistic” realm laden with primitive technologies and magic. McClintock then states that “Enlightened” explorers tended to deify themselves when confronting Natives. She uses Jan van der Straet’s drawing, “America” as an example. In the drawing, an indigenous woman reclines as she “invitingly” stretches her arm out to a European man, which “visually echoes” Adam’s submissive gesture towards God in Michelangelo’s “Creation” (McClintock 26). Deified all the same, L. Frank Baum’s Dorothy and Wizard fall out of the sky – which is traditionally associated with the Heavens – and are adored by Oz’s anachronistically superstitious inhabitants. As far
geography and infrastructure, McClintock explains how Europe’s “Enlightenment metaphysics presented knowledge as a relation of power between two gendered spaces” (McClintock 23). In Western discourse, the European continent was enlightened, orderly and masculine while unexplored continents, such as Africa and South America, were backwards, chaotic and feminine. While Dorothy is a girl, the way her party axes paths through tangled forests corresponds with the macho trope in which a male figure dominates and manages a passive, formless feminine landscape. Notably, Wagner states that Oz’s “uncanny” features, such as the “Fighting Trees” (Baum 189), qualify the land as “Heimlich”, a womblike space that is “familiar, but also dangerous and secretive” (Wagner 26). Even when the Oz landscape resists Dorothy, it is presented in a misogynistic fashion. Oz’s inhabitants, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, also fit the misogynistic, “Enlightened” European mindset. Baum bends Gilded Age gender norms by situating a female protagonist, Dorothy, in his Oz adventure novel (adventure novels usually featured male characters, since they catered to boy audiences). Meanwhile, Baum does not liberate Dorothy’s companions when he twists their genders. The “padded” Scarecrow, who is soft enough to “spoil” his “shape” and clumsily “drops nuts”, is a maternal food provider. The industrious Tin Woodman is weepy and sentimental. Where Dorothy gets to prove her femininity’s worth by assuming a typically masculine role, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman endear and revolt readers by shedding their masculinities and regressing to demeaning, stereotypical female roles. For readers with imperial sympathies both are ideal, effeminate natives. To be the devil’s advocate, the Scarecrow’s and Tin Woodman’s fleshless, immaterial bodies may evince that, on some level, Baum realized such generous natives could only exist as rosy, wish-fulfilling figments.
It can be assumed that Baum treated Native Americans so cruelly in his editorials and *Our Landlady* columns because they did not match his imperialistic fantasy. As stated before, the Scarecrow and Tin Man, who freely share their land’s bounteous, luxurious, resources with Dorothy, are very much like the Indians who presented the Puritans, who had fled religious prosecution in England (yet again, a “higher” cause), with fat turkeys, pumpkins and corn in Thanksgiving mythology. In his November 29, 1890 *Our Landlady* column, Baum does not directly reference the myth, but has his title character, Mrs. Bilkins, gripe – perhaps sardonically - how the threat of “Injun tommyhawks” kept her from enjoying her Thanksgiving festivities (Koupal 141). Embittered by the fact that Native Americans were scarcely the generous characters from popular fables, he went on to present them as greedy dependents through Hole-in-the-Face in his December 6, 1890 column. In Baum’s mind, the paltry “givernment” (qtd. in F.J. Baum, 66-67) rations Native Americans received, indirectly “starved” the “whites” who were paying taxes but not receiving rations of their own.

To be sure, the binary that Baum sets up between Dorothy as imperialist and the Scarecrow and Tin Man as colonial subjects is not at all new: in fact, the logic on which he draws is observable in a much older, but equally colonialist text, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. The Junior Baum notes how his father could have been inspired by Christopher C. Cranch’s forgotten adventure book, *The Last of the Hugger Muggers* (F.J. Baum 126). He also writes the “New England boy” protagonist was “somewhat like Gulliver or Robison Crusoe” (F.J Baum 127). Where Dorothy can be a female version of Crusoe, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman loosely resemble Friday, Crusoe’s converted-cannibal sidekick. Like Friday, who is freed from an oppressive, savage culture, learns English and adopts Christianity, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman are rescued from meaningless lives in Oz and only feel validated after the
Wizard (an American) endows them with a trinket brain and heart. In addition, Crusoe and Dorothy journey back their “perfect” homes, England and Kansas, while their foreign, supporting characters seek self-improvement. Dorothy is exceptionally flawless - the little Kansan is “innocent”, “brave” and “heedless of danger” all by herself (Baum 11, 25, 51). Dorothy’s only dilemma is being separated from her “civilized” Kansas home (Baum 15). Meanwhile, the Scarecrow the Tin Woodman, residents of the “uncivilized” Oz that Dorothy longs to flee, stay behind to fix themselves and their country.

Even after the Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman provide Dorothy and Toto food, shelter, transportation and protection throughout their entire journey – the Wizard does not reward the Scarecrow with a real brain or the Tin Woodman with a real heart. Both never really become human, they only “imagine” that they are complete (Baum 167). The Wizard implants “sharp”, “bran-new” brains composed of “bran mixed with a great many pins and needles” into the Scarecrow’s head (Baum 164). He places a “pretty heart, made entirely out of silk and stuffed with sawdust” (Baum 165) into the Tin Woodman’s chest. Doubly dissatisfying, the Wizard grants the Scarecrow with” sharp” puns, literal answers to his high-minded request, and the Tin Woodman with a heart stuffed with sawdust, the waste of his mechanized toil. Worse, the Scarecrow seems to have lost his smarts after receiving his “bran-new” brain - the Scarecrow thinks “so hard that his pins and needle begin to stick out of his brains” (Baum 180) when asked a simple question and at one point he runs out of ideas and proclaims, “let us call in the Soldier with the Green Whiskers and ask his advice (Baum 181). When the Tin Woodman receives his new heart, he does not “go back” and “marry” the
Munchkin girl as he said he would (Baum 47) – instead, he forgetfully muses, “I… am well pleased with my new heart; and, really, that was the only thing I wished in all the world” (Baum 178). Upon receiving their gifts, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodmen become lesser “men” than they initially were. After his trickery, the Wizard states,

> How can I help being a humbug, when all these people make me do things that everybody knows can’t be done? It was easy to make the Scarecrow and the Lion and the Woodman happy, because they imagined I could do anything. But it will take more than imagination to carry Dorothy back to Kansas (Baum 167).

Again, Dorothy is made to be superior because she is not as gullible as Scarecrow and Woodman. It can be read that the Wizard is discrediting his own abilities when he says instilling brains into the Scarecrow or heart into the Tin Woodman “can’t be done” (Baum 167). However, the Scarecrow and Woodman’s lackluster behavior suggests that they were impossible projects for Dorothy and the Wizard – not dissimilar from the “untamed and untamable” Indians Baum lamented about in his January 3, 1891 *Pioneer* editorial (qtd. in Koupal 147). The Wizard subtly indulges on self-pitying, self-aggrandizing white guilt – he is unable improve the state the pathetic subjects he looks after.

The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman’s inability to become human and failures to achieve their personal goals recalls the “mimic man” that theorist Homi Bhabha brought up in his book, *The Location of Culture*. In his “Of Mimicry and Man” chapter Bhabha observes that colonial powers “desire a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86). Because the imperialist believes that white, European looks and mannerisms are correct he/she strives to fix the colonial subject by making him/her look and act white. However, the imperialist does not allow the colonial subject to exactly like him/herself -that is, equal - in order maintain a privileged position. The “colonizer” Wizard endowing the “Other” Scarecrow and Tin Woodman with “not-quite” brains of “bran” and a “not-quite” heart
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of “sawdust” performs assimilation as Bhabha describes it. The fact that the Wizard is unable to make the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman like Dorothy, who cannot be fooled by “imagination” fits Bhabha’s comment that being “Anglicized is emphatically not to be English” (Bhabha 87). Moreover “the phobic myth of the undifferentiated white body” (Bhabha 92) can account for the Scarecrow and Woodman’s stitched-together, mutilated “odd-bodies” – the undifferentiated white body myth “split” “black skin” into “displaced signs” of “grotesquery” before (Bhabha 92). Baum reassures readers, who most likely identify with Dorothy, by keeping the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman different from her. Baba explains the colonizer intentionally makes “mimicry” fallible in order maintain his / her “narcissistic authority” (Bhabha 90) over the colonized subject (the colonized “mimic man” is “not quite” equal to the colonizer, but still comforts the colonizer by seeming “whole” to the colonizer when he adopts dominant clothing and behaviors) and in order to avoid defining the complete white “presence” (Bhabha 90). Baum exhibits the desire for a comfortably subordinate “mimic” by having the bran-brained Scarecrow, who could have been a real competitor of Dorothy’s once he felt “wise” (Baum 166), embarrass himself by asking the Soldier for advice. Like colonizers who maintain that “mimic men” are “not quite” English because the colonizers themselves do not know what it means for themselves to be English, the generic, every-man nature of Dorothy evinces Baum’s reticence when it came to defining the American. Moreover, the fact that Baum spends chapters describing Oz’s fanciful geography, fauna, people and culture but tacitly describes the “flat”, “dull and gray” Kansas (Baum 2) in six pages is telling. Although The Wonderful Wizard of Oz has been lauded as “a fairy tale of a strictly American kind with a deep appeal to the best of America characteristics” (qtd. in F.J. Baum, 127), America is scarcely featured in the Oz. The little bit “good Kansas dirt on [Dorothy’s] shoes” (F.J. Baum 127) gets stomped off on her trek down the
Yellow Brick Road and although Dorothy “is blown into Oz by a real Kansas Cyclone” (F.J. Baum 127) it take a whole lot of adventure in Oz and the fantastical silver slippers to transport her back. Rather than being in an American setting, Baum’s characters enact “American characteristics” in the Land of Oz which is “incomplete”, like the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman “mimic men”. The closest definition of Kansas that we get from Dorothy is that Oz is not quite Kansas, or in her own words, “no place like home” (Baum 33). Even though Dorothy and her “odd-body” comrades “domesticate” (Wagner 45) the Land of Oz to her liking, Oz never rivals her “home”. In the end, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, travel alongside Dorothy but are never “quite like” her. Seeing that Dorothy is a questionable, undefined “champion”, perhaps that is a good thing for the duo.

The Lion as Cannibal and Rival

Of course, the Scarecrow and the Tin Man are not the only companions who join Dorothy in her Oz adventure: the Cowardly Lion also accompanies our heroine-explorer. Notably, however, the Lion does not share the same distinct features as the Scarecrow and the Tin Man. Unlike the former characters, the Lion is not an automaton but a fleshly being. As such, he poses a threat to the equally corporeal Dorothy (and her canine companion, Toto) that the Scarecrow and Tin Man do not. The Lion’s sameness and potential equality seemed to have threatened Dorothy, suggesting anxieties imperialist sympathizers such as Baum had to grapple when acknowledging their Native adversaries’ troubling humanity.

Apart from the Wicked Witch of the East, who Dorothy haphazardly slayed, the Lion is the first antagonist Dorothy confronts directly. He starts out truly horrific – he dwells in a
nameless “thick wood” and is introduced as “a deep growl from some wild animal hidden among the trees” (Baum 49). Ferociously, the Lion springs out and “sends the Scarecrow spinning” with “one blow of his paw” and “strikes the Tin Woodman with his sharp claws” (Baum 50). Then “the great beast opens his mouth to bite” Toto (Baum 50). Nevertheless, Dorothy who is “heedless of danger” slaps the Lion and calls him a “big coward” (Baum 51). The Lion takes Dorothy’s charge to heart and says “I know it… I’ve always known it” (Baum 51). Despite his furious attack, the Lion is tamed the moment Dorothy names him “Cowardly”. The Tin Woodman and Scarecrow may have been immobile, but their histories did not meld to a preconception of Dorothy’s. Meanwhile, the fleshliest, most powerful character, the Cowardly Lion, only becomes approachable when he fits Dorothy’s infantilizing insult.

The Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow seem to hold their own, because their characters innately fit the American Expansionists’ desired preconception for the native: submissive. Meanwhile, the Lion initially resembles the Expansionists’ nightmarish native – savage and cannibalistic. The Lion starts out as a fearful character because he, like Dorothy, is “not made of tin or straw”, but meat, and in being meat “could not live unless [he] is fed” (Baum 48). The Lion’s threat and perversion is doubled because, he will not only eat Dorothy’s food, but dine on the “meaty” material he himself, Dorothy and her beloved pet are made of (Baum 53). Moreover, the Lion resembles the “whining cur” (Johansen) figure that L. Frank Baum likened to the remaining Lakota in his Dec 20, 1890 Pioneer editorial. The Lion, who is literally “smitten” by Dorothy agrees with her and “whines” about his sorry state. Perhaps cowardliness is pinned onto the fierce Lion to dull cannibal phobias.

In many ways, the Cowardly Lion functions like Hole-in-the-Face in Baum’s Our Landlady column. Very much like the Lion’s fearsome introductory attack (Baum 50), Hole-in-
the-Face and his people’s dancing scare Mrs. Bilkins’ “driver boy” and fellow “settlers” silly (Koupal 146). Just like Dorothy, who pluckily slaps the Lion, the “King of the Beasts” (Baum 53), Mrs. Bilkins is courageous enough to confront the Hole-in-the-Face, the “Indian chief” (F.J. Baum 66). Hole-in-the-Face, who first attempts to “run away” from Mrs. Bilkins, ruefully swears “we’ll [Indians] never do it [the Ghost Dance] again”, begs her not to “hurt” him and simpers that she ought not to fear Indians, because it is actually Indians who are “skeert” of the “risin’ Whites” (qtd. in F.J. Baum 66-67). In a similar fashion, the Lion “rubs his nose with his paw where Dorothy slapped him”, backs down and proclaims that he “didn’t bite” Toto and tells Dorothy and her comrades that they should not fear him because he is “such a coward” (Baum 53). These *Our Landlady* and *Oz* interactions both feature a strong, American heroine who scolds a fearsome, savage, authoritative male who proves to be a “coward” and subsequently implodes to her demands. These self-conflicting Hole-in-the-Face and Cowardly Lion characters could have appealed to L. Frank Baum. For one, the Chieftain and Lion’s violent, imposing facades fed into Baum’s paranoia that the Sioux would “scalp” the good people of Aberdeen as quoted in his November 29, 1890 *Pioneer* editorial (qtd. in Koupal 140). All the while, Hole-in-the-Face and the Cowardly Lion’s comical, craven natures allay the very fears they represent.

And what fears does the Cowardly Lion embody? To return to *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock observes that European cartographers “ritualistically feminized borders and boundaries… filling blanks seas on their maps with mermaids and sirens”, labeling “unknown lands” as “virgin territory” (McClintock 24). She adds, “Geographers traced the word ‘cannibals’ over blank spaces on colonial maps” (McClintock 27). McClintock argues the anxieties that Enlightened European males faced when entering a new, “virgin” land and making contact with indigenous people resembled the anxieties they experienced during sexual intercourse:
“boundary loss”, not knowing whose body or identity starts or stops and “cannibalistic engulfment”, being reduced to an essential state (e.g. an embryo or dead meat) in the vagina (McClintock 24). In the colonial scene, “boundary loss” pertains to Europeans losing a sense of geographic borders by opening up political and economic relationships with foreign lands, as well as losing a sense of identity through intermarriage and cultural exchange. Meanwhile, “engulfment” or “cannibalism” pertains to the European’s dread that the feminized native will not submissively imbibe Enlightenment ideals, but revolt and literally devour him.

The Lion dwells in an unnamed, “thick woods” that have overtaken the yellow brick road, the one sign of previous exploration, with “dried branches and dead leaves” (Baum 49). The Lion and his wild abode recall the monstrous cannibals Enlightenment cartographers doodled onto uncharted wildernesses. After Dorothy reprimands the Lion for “striking a stuffed man, like the poor Scarecrow” (Baum 51), the Lion asks what the Tin Woodman and Toto are made out of. When explaining Toto’s composition, Dorothy stutters, “He’s a – a – a meat dog” (Baum 53). Perhaps Dorothy is stammering because she realizes that her dear Toto is a “commodity”, that his body is “food” to the Lion (Wagner 31). Opposed to the Scarecrow, a “good mother” who provides food, the Lion is a “devouring mother”, who is liable to eat Dorothy and Toto. Rather than submitting and feeding Dorothy like the Scarecrow, the Lion can revolt and eat Dorothy – epitomizing Western explorer’s “engulfment” anxieties. All the more disconcerting, Dorothy and the Lion are also “meat” - opening up some horrific, cannibalistic potential. “Meaty” Dorothy can be eaten by the Lion, and like the Lion, she can also eat her “meat dog”, Toto, if need be. Dorothy’s gristly epiphany, that
the Lion may have eaten Toto the way she may eat beef, can be one of Baum’s “barely recognized anxieties” (Wagner 42). This quiet, relativistic contemplation empathizes with the Lion – he too “could not live unless” (Baum 48) he eats. Dorothy’s identification with the Lion’s corporality and his fleshly needs, along with her implied revelation that she is made out of food, which can be eaten, ingested and infused to the Lion, viscerally embodies “boundary loss”.

Being the xenophobic text that it is, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz hurriedly makes the Lion’s eating habits taboo. When Dorothy, Toto, the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow “supper” with the Lion for the first time, the Tin Woodman threatens to “weep” when the Lion offers to “kill a deer” for them (Baum 58). Essentially banished, the “Lion went away into the forest and found his own supper” (Baum 58). The narrator adds, “no one ever knew what it [the Lion’s supper] was, for he didn’t mention it” (Baum 58).

When he keeps the Lion’s diet secret, Baum is not “eliminating all the horrible and blood curdling incident” for his “modern child” readers, as he states in his introduction (Baum xix). Rather, he is repressing the Lion’s potential humanness. To counter the point that Baum avoided meat eating in order to shield young readers, the Tin Woodman decapitates a “fiery-eyed” wildcat (Baum 78) and renders forty “great, shaggy” wolves into a “dead heap” with his trusty axe (Baum 117) later in the book. Even the “padded” Scarecrow “twists” and “breaks” forty crows’ necks (118). In Oz, a land where crows, storks, tigers, wolves and the Lion speak, there is little distinction between humans, humanoids and animals. Hence, Oz morality sanctifies the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman for killing anthropomorphic animals in order to defend Dorothy while it condemns the Lion’s need to feed himself “meat” as unspeakable.

Perhaps the Lion’s diet disturbs Oz’s narrator because by eating, he is indirectly depleting Dorothy’s resources. The Lion is cannibalistic in the way Baum sees that Hole-in-the-Face and
his Sioux comrades are cannibalistic. While the whites decimated the buffalo population and drove the Sioux into depending on government rations for sustenance, people like Baum fantasized the Sioux decisively lived off the whites. Hole-in-the-Face is exceptionally dastardly because he recognizes that tax-paying whites are “starvin’” and still wants to keep rations to himself. Opposed to literally fattening himself on his fellow man’s flesh, Hole-in-the-Face is cannibalistic in the way that his nourishment depends on white settler’s starvation. In Baum’s logic, poor white settlers paid taxes to have their monies tossed to ungrateful Indians. Baum extends the settlers bodies into their food, so when Hole-in-the-face gobbles up resources paid for by the whites, he might as eat the whites – he is gnawing on foodstuffs that could have been eaten by settlers and become their flesh. This extension of the body into food is also present in Dorothy’s comment that Toto is a “meat” dog (Baum 53). Just because Dorothy and Toto are “meat”, the Lion eating meat of any sort – even a deer’s – is cannibalistic (Baum 58). When Dorothy and the gang eat at the farmer’s house just outside the Emerald City, Dorothy gets to eat “scrambled eggs” while the Lion eats “some of the porridge” which “he [does] not care for” (Baum 90). Having animal products touching the Lion’s lips is deplorable - even eggs could trigger nightmares of the cat’s carnivorous, “cannibalistic” appetite.

The “great, yellow wildcat” with “red eyes that glowed like balls of fire” and “two rows of ugly teeth” (Baum 78) from previous chapters, could have been a nightmarish reiteration of the fears that the Cowardly Lion initially struck up. Since “yellow” is a slang for cowardly and a lion is a type of “wildcat” – the un-capitalized “yellow wildcat” may be the “Cowardly Lion” in his nonspecific, de-individuated form. It is also worth mentioning that “yellow” has been a
racial slur for Asians too. When applied to skin, the color others individuals. To add, Denslow depicts the Lion with a manicured mane, haughty half-closed eyes and frown. Not only is the Lion more regal and human-looking than the yellow wildcat, his lion kind symbolizes the Anglo American’s homeland: England. Meanwhile, Denslow draws the wildcat with tufted ears and spots – it resembles a common pest: the North American bobcat. The Lion is a noble savage because he has a place in orientalist lore: English imperialists and their Anglo American descendants adopt the African Lion because it is “King of the Beasts” as they are mankind’s “masters”. The yellow wildcat is despicable because it is recalls an inglorious, local pest that preyed on settlers’ livestock. In racist imaginings, the yellow wildcat is not a far cry from Baum’s “Indian curs”.

Because the wildcat is more animal than the Cowardly Lion, the clash he has with Dorothy and her friends is vivid and frightening. Where Baum simply wrote that the Cowardly Lion “opened his mouth to bite” Toto (Baum 50), he writes that the wildcat’s grotesque “wide open mouth” is lined with “two rows of ugly teeth”. The Cowardly Lion “opening” his mouth “to bite” foretells a potential danger, while the yellow wildcat’s “wide open” mouth, “lined” with “two rows of ugly teeth” luridly embodies engulfment paranoia. Where the Cowardly Lion’s title alludes to his abstract, interior qualities the yellow wildcat’s namesake frankly references his hide. All the more meaty, the wildcat’s “fireball” eyes emphasize his power of sight and visceral presence. The yellow wildcat’s “red” eyes are raw, like blood, and purposeful – they hone in on its prey, a little “field mouse”. Meanwhile, the Scarecrow’s eyes are false and “painted” (Baum 35), the Tin Woodman’s eyes weep and rust his joints (Baum 56) and
the Cowardly Lion’s eyes are never described. Baum’s “balls of fire” simile strengthens the wildcats’ presence with heat. The wildcat’s intense physicality, not the fact that it is pursuing a “little gray field mouse”, “a pretty, harmless creature” (Baum 78) - which is an afterthought and almost a relief - is terrifying. If the Cowardly Lion’s eyes were to be described explicitly as the yellow wildcats, he would lose his spot as an idealized, emblematic animal and become an unredeemable, nightmarish pest too. Any being that is real or as visceral as Dorothy is dangerous.

What really is shocking though is the Tin Woodman’s reaction to the wildcat. The Tin Woodman, who previously forbade the Cowardly Lion from killing a deer for himself and Dorothy to eat (Baum 53), is repelled by the wildcat. It is intriguing that the Tin Woodman is repulsed by the wildcat’s carnivorousness the same way Dorothy had been repulsed by the Cowardly Lion’s diet because the Tin Woodman was also “meat” once. Rather than quietly observing a cat getting its meal, the text asserts that the Tin Woodsman “knew it was wrong” for the wildcat to “kill” - not eat but “kill” - the field mouse (Baum 78). Unluckily for the wildcat, it does not have the sense to hunt out of the Tin Woodsman’s sight and gets decapitated. Being a compliant native himself, it makes sense that the Tin Woodman would defend the field mouse, the “harmless creature”. The imperiled Field Mouse Queen’s “pretty” “littleness” qualifies her as “damsel in distress” - the positive, submissive, feminized native McClintock describes in Imperial Leather. As mentioned before, the Tin Woodman can be seen as a “damsel in distress” because he weeps and Dorothy oils his joints and saves him from an immobile existence (Baum 41). An indigenous policeman of sorts, the otherwise pacifistic Tin Woodman squelches the negative “savage”, “cannibalistic” Native in order to protect the positive “helpless”, “little” Natives like himself and the Field Mouse Queen.
After eliminating the Cowardly Lion’s insatiably hungry, other, savage side by killing off the yellow wildcat, Baum allows the Lion to become almost equal to Dorothy and assume his role as “King of the Beasts”. Unlike the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman, who seem to lose their figurative brains and heart upon gaining the Wizard’s trinket organs, the Lion turns out to be genuinely courageous. For one, it took some minor courage for the Lion to accept the Wizard’s gift – the Lion dislikes the smell of the mysterious liquid he is presented with (unknown substances can imperil fleshly beings) but “drank till the dish was empty” after the Wizard told him it would become courage once it went “inside” him (Baum 168). Later, the Lion courageously slays a giant spider that had been terrorizing his animal comrades and, in doing so, becomes their rightful King (Baum 202). To add, the fleshy, Cowardly Lion loves the “disagreeable country, full of bogs, marshes” and “rank grass” (Baum 199) that the foursome cross on their way to the Land of the Quadlings. The land suits his wildness and houses hordes of fellow “beasts”. The Lion’s love for the “disagreeable marsh” could be something like the rugged, superior loyalty that Dorothy finds in her fleshly, human kind. To the Scarecrow, who balks that Dorothy would ever want to leave beautiful Oz for Kansas, she boasts, “we people of flesh and blood” would rather live “home”, “no matter how dreary and gray” home may be (Baum 33). In Oz, only those with “meat” bodies see the potential in seemingly shoddy, “barren” lands – not brainless “odd-body” Scarecrows.

In similar fashion, Baum idealizes Sitting Bull because, in his mind, the Sioux Chief was a “noble”, “proud”, “original owner” of the “vast prairies” very much like pastoral, bleary-eyed whites. Like many Native cultures, the Sioux did not believe in land ownership, but the sameness that Baum projected onto Sitting Bull made him admire the exotic, authoritarian figure. Despite
his showy respect for Sitting Bull, Baum called the “rest” of the Sioux “curs” and “untamable creatures”, and pinned the ideal “Redskin” to the wilderness and the “vast prairies”. Scholar Peter Drier inadvertently notices Baum’s dehumanizing tendencies when he likens the Native Americans to Oz’s “Kings of the forest” – the “Flying Monkeys”. It is feasible to say that the Lion is equal to Baum’s imagined Sitting Bull: a noble sub-human who ruled the wilderness. Baum is thrilled by figures such as Sitting Bull and the Cowardly Lion because they are fantastical “mimic men” that ever-so-closely resemble the ideal Anglo American. Like the “just”, “civilized”, “masterful” White, Sitting Bull is the “proud”, “noble” “owner of the vast prairies” (qtd. in Johansen). While Baum is tantalized by these perceived similarities, he also is pleased by the fact that Sitting Bull is dead and that the “nobility” of all the “Redskins” had been “extinguished” with him (qtd. in Johansen) because he gets to maintain the White Superiority. Concerning Oz, the Lion is at first skeptical of the liquid “courage” the Wizard gives him (Baum 168), somewhat like Dorothy who cannot be duped by her “imagination” (Baum 169). Additionally, the Lion feels validated when he acts courageously, not just when he receives an object that will purportedly make him courageous. The Lion’s need for action is also like Dorothy, who is not content until she actually returns to Kansas. Introducing the ferocious Lion as a coward, and then to having him live up to his “King of the Beasts” with Dorothy’s help title must delight Baum. Something like Hole-in-the-Face’s logical next step, the Lion does not remain a disappointment, like Mrs. Bilkins parasitic, craven, purportedly “brave” Chief, but actually becomes “noble” and “proud” like the Siting Bull paragon. The Scarecrow and Tin Woodman may be Baum’s pragmatic, subservient Natives, but the Cowardly Lion is his perfect rival. Since creating mimic men requires a mirroring of sorts, even if it is “partial” (Baba 88), the Lion is ideal for the narcissistic Baum because he most closely reflects his perceived superiority.
Conclusion

By and large, Dorothy’s domination over the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman and her competition with the Cowardly Lion reflect the ways in which Baum perceived the Other, specifically the Sioux he both feared and venerated while living in Aberdeen, South Dakota. Since *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* takes place in a strange, distant land, Baum’s book resembles imperialistic adventure novels such as *Robinson Crusoe*. The parallels between Baum’s *Pioneer* editorials, his *Our Landlady* columns and *Oz* are disconcerting because Baum’s explicit racism could permeate his children’s text in less detectable implicit forms.

Because *Oz* is steeped in implicit racism, it is especially helpful to incorporate Anne McClintock and Homi Bhabha’s heavily psychoanalytical theory to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s portrayal of secondary characters. The theories not only exhume Baum’s thought process and motivations, but help readers investigate how and why they themselves may absorb imperialist myths. Postulating how the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman function like ideal, submissive “mimic men” and how the Lion begins as a nightmarish cannibal then becomes a “Noble Savage” hints at the imperialistic fantasies that drove Baum to make such hateful, callous statements shortly before and after the Wounded Knee Massacre.

More alarmingly, the trio’s popularity suggests that current readers are still responding to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* because it is still satisfying stilted idealism and racist fantasy. While sustaining imperial sympathies for some, *Oz* can introduce racial arrogance to new, unaffected readers. Just by identifying with the “innocent” Dorothy, readers regard her self-valorizing interactions with degraded Others in an inappropriately positive light. Perhaps reading *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* just once may not transplant Baum’s racism into the reader, but *Oz*’s faithful TV spin-offs, home videos, cinematic remakes, prequels and toys barrage
consumers and present them with countless instances in which they can internalize the original’s dehumanization of the Other.

Today, Oz’s Other may not be the Sioux, since the United States has snatched the entire American Continent, but groups with which the States are currently at odds. For instance, the Iraqi citizens in whom Michael Gordon proposes the Bush Administration desired to be “grateful” Munchkins. The Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Cowardly Lion are all-the-more unnerving because they are so close to Oz’s protagonist, Dorothy. As Baum’s whimsical trio is introduced and re-introduced to child and adult readers, the three inform preconceived scenarios, hopes and fears readers may experience when meeting someone new.

Specifically, the benevolent-seeming “voluntourism” trend, in which Americans, Europeans and Australians “vacation with purpose” at impoverished areas in Africa, South Africa or Asia, resemble Dorothy’s self-help sojourns in Oz. Let us use the portrayal of the Duggar family, famed by the TLC’s reality TV show 19 Kids and Counting, as an example. The 8th episode of the spring 2011 season, “Duggars Make a Difference”, documents the Duggar Family’s “mission trip”/vacation in the Honduras. Throughout the course of the program, TLC has made the rural, good-natured bunch out to be the ideal “All-American” family – not too different from Baum’s “All-American” tot, Dorothy. Undoubtedly, the show’s success funded the Duggar’s travels to the U.K., Israel, Japan, China, El Salvador, etc. and renders the family into America’s pop-culture representatives. This is not dissimilar from Dorothy, who the Good Witch of the North formally decrees as a dignitary of the “civilized” Kansas (Baum 15). The “Duggars Make a
“Difference” is so off-putting because the Duggars assume Dorothy’s white savior role. After handing grateful, smiling Hondurans some rice and beans, the Duggars enjoy Honduran cuisine that their beneficiaries could not afford and explore Mayan ruins (“Duggars Make a Difference”). Likewise, Dorothy offers her friends minimal help, gets to eat their food and have them level Oz’s forests for her needs. The Duggars’ real-life interactions with impoverished Hondurans and Dorothy’s fictive interactions with the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and Lion perpetuate the myth that Americans can entertain themselves while “making a difference” for amiable foreigners in the tropics. If a voluntourist like the Duggars (not the actual family per se, but TLC’s representation of them), can only have a positive experience in the Honduras if they meet people that fit the gracious food-providing Scarecrow and path-making Tin Woodman tropes, or recognize some un-foretold similarity in an Honduran, as Dorothy did with the Lion, there is something terribly wrong.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz may not be the only story prolonging lore about the compliant, innately “similar” Other, but it is a popular tale that masks and buys into a damaging, patronizing outlook. If ingested, Oz’s “help Others to help my American self” platform threatens the formation of genuine friendships across classes and nationalities by poisoning the (supposedly) privileged reader’s mind with dehumanizing pity, exploitative pleasure-seeking and unwarranted self-righteousness. Becoming aware of Oz’s harmful sublimations will not rub out all the awkwardness that may come when meeting somebody different, but at least initiate a relationship with a cleaned slate.
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