

# INTRODUCTION TO *TAKING OZ SERIOUSLY*, A SYMPOSIUM ON LAW & LITERATURE

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It is in the AND that Law and Literature takes a stand. It is for the AND, the in-between, that these essays are fighting. It is in the space in-between that the Others live. It is the space of the Others because it is a space that has to be taken, never given. It is this search for and commitment to the space in-between that gives Law and Literature its political compass.

– Maria Grahn-Farley  
*Astrid AND Me*<sup>1</sup>

My daughter Astrid and I spent two years exploring Oz and its neighboring fairylands. We followed the writings of L. Frank Baum, the “Royal Historian of Oz,”<sup>2</sup> from 1900 to 1920, from Astrid’s fourth year to her sixth, from the time of my-reading-to-her to the time of her-reading-to-me to the time of our reading side-by-side and independently. Fairylands, as any communitard can tell you, are real.

If time is the space of human development, then it is a space. We start somewhere, somehow. Once upon a time we were not, and then we were. Two people become three. To be two is one thing. To be three seems quite another. It is almost impossible to imagine. But it happened like magic. It happened just like magic. It seems as if only yesterday we, Maria and I, entered the hospital as two and, within fifteen minutes, became three: Astrid, Maria, and me:

My daughter’s expected arrival had been enthusiastically described by friends as the beginning of a new life and sometimes, by the same friends, with traces of sadness, as the end of an old life. It might be called a “cut” or a “break” away from normalcy. At first, life seemed utterly and definitely changed by this little baby of 6 lb. 5 oz., with her hair that insisted on standing straight up on her head, defying all laws of nature. Every minute was a time of amazement over having her with us. Our “old” lives returned to us at the same moment we understood that Astrid’s arrival had forever changed our lives. Our old lives returned when we understood that

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Grahn-Farley, *Astrid AND Me*, 17 CARDOZO STUD. LAW & LITERATURE 269, 271 (2005).

<sup>2</sup> KATHARINE M. ROGERS, L. FRANK BAUM: CREATOR OF OZ, A BIOGRAPHY 149 (2002).

there was space for Astrid in-between what used to be two. As with the AND in Law and Literature it is an AND that had no space before it was filled. It is an AND that had to have meaning before it could be.<sup>3</sup>

It seems like yesterday, but it was not yesterday. We were not then what we are now. We are never now what we were then. Development is what goes on between here and there. Oz was new to me, like parenthood. The miraculous became an everyday experience. It changed my understanding of time. Time is created, not spent. And Astrid and I were in Oz for many days and weeks and months, far more than the fourteen novels and one collection of short stories. I do not yet know what to make of it all. *Taking Oz Seriously* was an attempt to think about that journey:

Maria Aristodemou, *Home Is Where the Law Is: A Humbug Reading of The Wizard of Oz*

Zanita E. Fenton, *No Witch Is a Bad Witch: Commentary on the Erasure of Matilda Joslyn Gage*

Phyllis Goldfarb, *Teaching Metaphors*

Emily Albrink Hartigan, *L'Oz*

Anthony Paul Farley, *Conferring with the Flowers: History and Class Consciousness in L. Frank Baum's Land of Oz, A General Theory of Magic and Law*

Bekah Mandell, *Feasts of Oz: Class, Food, and the Rise of Global Capitalism*

Josephine Ross, *From Slavery to Prison in Rinkitink in Oz*

Geiza Vargas-Vargas, *Articles of Ornament and Bric-a-Brac: A Commentary on Diversity Initiatives*

Donna E. Young, "To the Stars Through Difficulties": *Legal Constructions of Private Space and The Wizard of Oz*

Reginald Leamon Robinson, *Trauma, Creativity, and Unconscious Confessions: The Lost Childhood History Behind L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Athena D. Mutua, *Valuing Difference, Exercising Care in Oz: The Shaggy Man's Welcome*

This symposium was originally to be called *A People's History of Oz*. This introduction was originally conceived of as *History & Class Consciousness in Oz*. Plans change. My own essay sufficiently covered those plans. *Taking*

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<sup>3</sup> Grahn-Farley, *supra* note 1, at 271.

*Oz Seriously* seemed the best invitation. The invitation I extended had much to do with the magical feeling of the inauguration of Barack Obama as the forty-fourth president of the United States. My comrades joined *Taking Oz Seriously*, I suspect, because they also felt a utopian possibility in our out-of-joint time. Of their initial curiosity in this project, I wrote: “‘That proves you are unusual,’ returned the Scarecrow; ‘and I am convinced that the only people worthy of consideration in this world are the unusual ones.’”<sup>4</sup>

As I encouraged my comrades to join *Taking Oz Seriously*, I used the following passage to represent everyone’s happiness:

There were no poor people in the Land of Oz, because there was no such thing as money, and all property of every sort belonged to the Ruler. The people were her children, and she cared for them. Each person was given freely by his neighbors whatever he required for his use, which is as much as any one may reasonably desire. Some tilled the lands and raised great crops of grain, which was divided equally among the entire population, so that all had enough. There were many tailors and dressmakers and shoemakers and the like, who made things that any who desired them might wear. Likewise there were jewelers who made ornaments for the person, which pleased and beautified the people, and these ornaments also were free to those who asked for them. Each man and woman, no matter what he or she produced for the good of the community, was supplied by the neighbors with food and clothing and a house and furniture and ornaments and games. If by chance the supply ever ran short, more was taken from the great storehouses of the Ruler, which were afterward filled up again when there was more of any article than the people needed.

Every one worked half the time and played half the time, and the people enjoyed the work as much as they did the play, because it is good to be occupied and to have something to do. There were no cruel overseers set to watch them, and no one to rebuke them or to find fault with them. So each one was proud to do all he could for his friends and neighbors, and was glad when they would accept the things he produced.

... .

... They were peaceful, kind-hearted, loving and merry, and every inhabitant adored the beautiful girl [Princess Ozma] who ruled them, and delighted to obey her every command.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, as we reached the writing phase of the symposium and the iron doors of publishing deadlines began to close, I shared one of my favorite passages:

Ojo was much astonished, for not only was this unlike any prison he had ever heard of, but he was being treated more as a guest than a criminal. There were many windows and they had no locks. There were three doors to the room and none were bolted.

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<sup>4</sup> L. FRANK BAUM, *THE MARVELOUS LAND OF OZ* 188 (1904).

<sup>5</sup> L. FRANK BAUM, *THE EMERALD CITY* 30–31 (1910).

He cautiously opened one of the doors and found it led into a hallway. But he had no intention of trying to escape. If his jailor was willing to trust him in this way he would not betray her trust, and moreover a hot supper was being prepared for him and his prison was very pleasant and comfortable. So he took a book from the case and sat down in a big chair to look at the pictures.

This amused him until the woman came in with a large tray and spread a cloth on one of the tables. Then she arranged his supper, which proved the most varied and delicious meal Ojo had ever eaten in his life.

Tollydiggle sat near him while he ate, sewing on some fancy work she held in her lap. When he had finished she cleared the table and then read to him a story from one of the books.

“Is this really a prison?” he asked, when she had finished reading.

“Indeed it is,” she replied. “It is the only prison in the Land of Oz.”

“And am I a prisoner?”

“Bless the child! Of course.”

“Then why is the prison so fine, and why are you so kind to me?” he earnestly asked.

Tollydiggle seemed surprised by the question, but she presently answered:

“We consider a prisoner unfortunate. He is unfortunate in two ways—because he has done something wrong and because he is deprived of his liberty. Therefore we should treat him kindly, because of his misfortune, for otherwise he would become hard and bitter and would not be sorry he had done wrong. Ozma thinks that one who has committed a fault did so because he was not strong and brave; therefore she puts him in prison to make him strong and brave. When that is accomplished he is no longer a prisoner, but a good and loyal citizen and everyone is glad that he is now strong enough to resist doing wrong. You see, it is kindness that makes one strong and brave; and so we are kind to our prisoners.”<sup>6</sup>

*Taking Oz Seriously* was a magic moment. Everyone responded with such brilliance at the symposium and over dinner in our home before and after the symposium. It was nice to share adventures in the Land of Oz with Astrid and Maria, with each other, and now, thanks to the *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, with you.

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<sup>6</sup> L. FRANK BAUM, *THE PATCHWORK GIRL OF OZ* 198–200 (1913).