

The Wonderful Eyeflash of Oz, part 1

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 Jan 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1347>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

William H. Ansley — 29 Jan 1999, 00:00

This posting could be considered to be my way of volunteering to answer the FAQ: What are the Oz references in "The Eyeflash Miracles"? except that I doubt it is a question asked very frequently. It is one that interests me, however.

When I first read "The Eyeflash Miracles" I noticed that it had many references to Oz in it as well as many other references, including (not at all surprisingly) a great deal of Christian symbolism. I am not very qualified to discuss the Christian aspects of the story (especially as there are so many others on this list who are), but I am fairly well qualified to discuss the Oz aspects.

As most of you, if not all of you, know _The Wonderful Wizard of Oz_ was just the first of many Oz books that L. Frank Baum wrote, although, because it was made into the very well known film[1] of almost the same name (_The Wizard of Oz_), it is by far the most famous of his books (he also wrote many non-Oz books, which are even less well known).

The movie version differs from the book in several significant ways. I mention this because Wolfe refers to details from both the book and movie versions of _The Wonderful Wizard of Oz_, as well as _The Marvellous Land of Oz_ (the second Oz book), _Ozma of Oz_ (the third) and _The Road to Oz_ (the fifth). I have recently reread the first six Oz books[2] so I can be pretty sure about these. There may be references to other, later Oz books (in fact I think there is at least one) but not many. Since characters, places and situations recur throughout the Oz series, it certainly would be possible to include more books, but I am trying to only include the first occurrence of each reference.

The most interesting thing to me about the Oz references in "The Eyeflash Miracles" is that even though many of them are so explicit as to be quite obvious and wholly unambiguous (which is unusual for Wolfe) the boy in the story, George Tibbs (usually referred to as Little Tib) never recognizes any of them. Now, I am willing to accept that, because of his unusual background, Little Tib never saw the _Wizard of Oz_ movie or read any of the Oz books, but then why does he see characters from the Land of Oz in his dreams and visions? I don't have any answer to this question beyond "It is the kind of thing Gene Wolfe likes to do."

I will get to the actual references in my next installment.

William Ansley

[1] I am, of course, referring to the 1939 movie starring Judy Garland. There were several other films with the same name more or less based on the same book.

[2] If you want all the titles, they are:

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
The Marvelous Land of Oz

Ozma of Oz

Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz

The Road to Oz

The Emerald City of Oz