

The Wonderful Eyeflash of Oz, part 4

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Feb 1999

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William H. Ansley — 18 Feb 1999, 00:29

Here is my fourth posting on the Oz references in The Eyeflash Miracles.

Little Tib, Nitty and Mr. Parker are picked up while hitchhiking by the driver of an old school bus which has been converted into a temple of the god Deva. The driver's name is Dr. Prithivi. He is a "Doctor of Divinity of the University of Bombay."

The bus stops at a "road-side park" which has a "lookout point" from which you can see "parts of seven counties." Dr. Prithivi comments on how he once saw a leopard at a summer cottage his family rented in the Himalayas.

Hearing this, Little Tib tries to remember what a leopard looks like but cannot. He then tries to visualize a cat. At first he cannot, but then he succeeds and an image appears in front of him. But it is not a cat, but a lion standing on its hind legs with a red ribbon knotted in its mane. It is dancing and Little Tib joins it in the dance. After he has danced for some time he is grabbed from behind by many hands. He realizes that he has been dancing in the air over the lookout point, with a very long drop below him.

I am counting this event as the third miracle. The lion Little Tib sees is almost certainly the Cowardly Lion from the movie The Wizard of Oz, at least in part. The lion's face starts out as a "kindly blur" and as they dance it becomes "clearer and clearer" until "it was a funny, friendly, frightening face." This certainly could be a description of Bert Lahr's lion makeup in the movie. After he got spruced up in the Emerald City, the Cowardly Lion did have a ribbon in his mane[12]. The Cowardly Lion in the books also wore one or more ribbons but he was always described as walking on all fours like a real lion, so the dancing lion seems closer to the movie version. However the dancing lion never speaks and the Cowardly Lion doesn't dance much, if at all, in the movie (or the books, for that matter) so the fit is not perfect.

When Little Tib described what he thought was happening when the other people at the lookout point (there was a small crowd of them) saw him dancing on the air, Dr. Prithivi decided that the lion might be Vishnu in his lion-headed form. There was a picture of Vishnu portrayed this way, destroying the demon Hiranyakasipu, painted on Dr. Prithivi's bus. Since Little Tib's lion was dancing to Indian flute music, this also seems to be a valid interpretation. Dr. Prithivi goes on to list other "significations" of the lion: among the Jews, an emblem of the tribe of Judah; in Islam, the son-in-law of Mohammed was known as the Lion of God; in Christianity, a winged lion is the badge of St. Mark and one without wings indicates the Christ.

This is a convenient place to stop. I am sorry about the length of time that has passed since I posted the previous part of this series; I caught a nasty cold which threw me off my game and then I got distracted for a while. I hope to finish the series quite soon now.

William Ansley

[12] In the Oz movie, the ribbon in the Cowardly Lion's mane was red. In the book *_Ozma of Oz_* the Lion had a blue ribbon tied in a bow in his mane. Somewhat surprisingly, the color of this ribbon has no significance in the book.