

from Hop on Pop: the Politics and
Pleasures of Popular Culture Duke 2002

- 15 Macdonald, *The Sociology of the Professions*, 26.
- 16 Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 155–56.
- 17 Macdonald, *The Sociology of the Professions*, 79–85.
- 18 Warren Berger, "Childhood Trauma Healed While-U-Wait," *New York Times* (January 8, 1995): 33.
- 19 See Janet Maslin, "In Dirty Laundryland," *New York Times* (October 10, 1993): 7; and John J. O'Connor, "Defining What's Civilized and What's Not," *New York Times* (April 25, 1989): C18.
- 20 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 13.
- 21 P. Carpignano et al., "Chatter in the Age of Electronic Reproduction: Talk Television and the 'Public Mind,'" *Social Text* 25/26 (19xx): 33–55.
- 22 Ibid., 53.
- 23 Janice Peck, "Talk about Racism: Framing a Popular Discourse of Race on Oprah Winfrey," *Cultural Critique* (spring 1994): 94.
- 24 Ibid., 118.
- 25 J. B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 112.
- 26 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffery Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 5.
- 27 Ibid., 9.
- 28 Maria Koundoura, "Multinationalism: Redrawing the Map of the Intellectual Labor in the Age of Post-coloniality," Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1993, 26.
- 29 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 10.
- 30 Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 67.
- 31 Other talk shows debuting in 1995 were *Danny!*, *Gabrielle*, *Charles Perez*, *Marilu*, *Shirley*, and *Mark*. Other shows that were launched in the early 1990s included *Bertice Berry*, *Vicki!*, *Les Brown*, *Jane Whitney*, *Leeza*, *Dennis Prager*, and *Rolonda*.
- 32 There is even a suggestion that talk shows are going to return the *Mike Douglas*-style of the sixties as the light entertainment of celebrity talk of the 1960s as represented by the success of the *Rosie O'Donnell Show*.
- 33 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 9.
- 34 Thomas McLaughlin, *Street Smarts and Critical Theory: Listening to the Vernacular* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 5.

"MY BEAUTIFUL WICKEDNESS":

THE WIZARD OF OZ AS

LESBIAN FANTASY

Alexander Doty

Like many of you reading this, I have a long and tangled history with *The Wizard of Oz*.¹ For the past thirty-five years or so, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *I Love Lucy*, and *Oz* have been the popular culture touchstones for understanding my changing relationship to gender and sexuality. It all started in the 1960s with the annual televising of *Oz*. Watching as a kid, I loved Dorothy, loved Toto, was scared of, but fascinated by, the Wicked Witch, felt guilty for thinking good witch Glinda was nerve-gratingly fey and shrill, and thought the Tin Man was attractive, and the Scarecrow a cringy showoff. But I was really embarrassed by the Cowardly Lion. The supporting cast in Kansas was boring, with the exception of the sharp-featured spinster Almira (which I always heard as "Elvira") Gulch. Only the cyclone could equal this grimly determined bicyclist and dog-snatcher for sheer threatening power.

Looking back, it all makes sense. I was a boy who had a girlfriend who I liked to kiss and to play Barbies with, while also looking for chances to make physical contact with her older brother through horseplay in the pool. I was in love with and wanted to be Dorothy, thinking that the stark Kansas farmland she was trying to escape from was nothing compared to the West Texas desert our house was built upon. The Tin Man might stand in for my girlfriend's older brother (and subsequent crushes on older boys): an emotionally and physically stolid male who needed to find a heart so he could romantically express himself to me. During my first phase with the film, I saw Dorothy's three male companions (on the farm and in *Oz*) as being like friends or brothers. Well,

maybe my heterosexual upbringing had me working to construct some sort of love interest between Dorothy and the showoff Scarecrow. But Dorothy and the Tin Man? Never. Hands off girl, he's mine! Without my being aware of it, these latter responses to Oz were signs that I was moving into what would become my initial place within straight patriarchy: as straight woman rival and wannabe.

Then there was that Cowardly Lion, who was teaching me self-hatred. From between the ages of five and fifteen, I was actually far less disturbed by the Wicked Witch than I was by the Cowardly Lion. When he sang about how miserable he was to be a "sissy," I cringed. Because I was a sissy, too. At least that's what certain boys at school and in the neighborhood called me when I'd play jump rope or jacks with the girls—or even when I'd go over to talk with them during recess or after school. At this stage, "sissy" seemed to be a gender thing. It meant being like a girl, liking what they liked. However, in my case, this included boys. But I also liked a girl. While watching the film each year, my gender and sexuality turmoil reached its peak when Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion emerged from their Emerald City beauty treatments with nearly-identical perms and hair bows. And then this ultra-sissified lion dared to sing "If I Were the King of the Forest"! I would sit in front of the television set paralyzed: my desire for and identification with Dorothy battling my loathing for and identification with the Cowardly Lion.

Between my late teens and my early thirties I found my desire for Dorothy cooling as I became a "Friend of Dorothy." Early on in this process of identifying as gay, I was still embarrassed by the Lion. I hadn't come out to anyone, and he seemed to be too out: flamboyant, effeminate, and self-oppressive. Not a very good role model, I thought, even though in the privacy of my room, cocktail in hand, I would dramatically lip-synch and act out "Over the Rainbow" with Dorothy. Dorothy

newly endeared herself to me by her concern about the big sissy she was saddled with. She became my first image of the friendly, caring straight girl/woman. Later someone told me these girls/women were called "fag hags"—a term I thought was mean. I was also told all about Judy Garland. The story of her career and personal struggles intensified my identification with Dorothy as a heroic figure.

Some time in my twenties, I became aware of butches and of camp, both of which fed into my developing "gay" appreciation of *The Wizard of Oz*. Camp finally let me make my peace with the Cowardly Lion. He was still over-the-top, but no longer a total embarrassment. Oh, I'd get a little nostalgic twinge of humiliation now and then (I still do), but by and large I found him fabulously outrageous. King of the Forest? He was more like a drag queen who just didn't give a fuck. Because of this, he seemed to have a bravery the narrative insisted he lacked. Camp's appreciation of the excessive also led me to reevaluate Glinda. She wasn't just *like* a drag queen, she was one! Artifice surrounded her like that pink (but of course) gossamer gown she wore. Who better to guide Dorothy along the road to straight womanhood, I thought. I saw this as a great ironic joke on all those straights who claimed the film as theirs.

And who better to try and prevent Glinda's plans for Dorothy than some horrible, predatory butch dyke? At this point, the only lesbians I could (or would?) recognize as lesbians were butches. To be honest, sight recognition was about as deep as my interaction with butches went, as the gay society I was keeping from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s did not encourage gay and lesbian mingling. You would have thought that Stonewall, with its frontline drag queen and butch dyke fighters, had never happened. So I enjoyed the Wicked Witch of the West as a camp figure: she was just another scary, tough butch dressed in black whom I could laugh at.

The more extensive political and social coali-

tions formed between gays and lesbians beginning around the mid-1980s, in large part in response to the AIDS pandemic, gave me opportunities to get to know lesbians beyond the tentative looks and "hellos" we'd exchange at bars and on the street. Needless to say, what I learned from them gave new meaning to many popular culture texts. Besides recognizing butches, I might also be on the lookout for femmes—and butchy femmes and femmy butches. And just like gay leathermen, I learned that not all butches are tough and scary. And not all femmes dressed or behaved as they did in order to "pass" in straight culture. Add to knowledge like this my encounters with academic gender and sexuality theory and criticism during the same period, and you have someone who was beginning to see many of his favorite pop culture "classics" in a very different light. Not that all of the ways in which I understood these texts previously were wiped out. Aspects of certain readings and pleasures I let go, but other parts remained to complement or supplement my later interpretations. It now seems to me that heterocentricity and sexism limited and perverted much of my earlier straight, bisexual, and gay readings of *Oz*. Actually, returning to *Oz* again and again in recent years has helped me to do battle with some of the remaining limitations and perversions of my straight upbringing. So I'm in love with *The Wizard of Oz* all over again, and, as with any (re)-new(ed) love, I feel compelled to publicly count the ways that I now love *Oz*.

I'm feeling especially compelled to do this because of the continuing and pervasive influence of heterocentrism and/or homophobia and/or sexism upon both queer and straight understandings of popular culture. To refer to the case at hand: here is a film about an adolescent girl who has an elaborate fantasy dream in which there is not a whisper of heterosexual romance—even displaced onto other figures.² Uh, could this girl possibly not be interested in heterosexuality? Well, according to far too many people I've encountered,

including a fair share of gays, lesbians, and straight women, this is not really possible. This cannot be a film about a teenaged girl who is having a rite of passage dream in which she fantasizes about the possibility of a choice outside of heterosexuality. Tell me, then, where *is* the heterosexuality in this fantasy?

In terms of heterosexual readings of *The Wizard of Oz*, the fantasy, my friends, is not all up there on the screen. Caught within the spell of heterocentrism (and, for some gay and straight men, sexism), viewers of all sexual identities persist in seeing heterosexuality where it ain't. I say it's wishful reading into the text. Or, if not that, it's a subtext. In any case, a heterosexual reading of *The Wizard of Oz* is appropriative, and clearly subordinate to lesbian readings. OK, maybe I'm overstating the case a bit with some of these remarks, as I certainly don't want to suggest that queer readings should just replace straight ones in some hierarchy of interpretation. But I'm constantly being pissed off at the persistence and pervasiveness of heterocentric cultural fantasies that, at best, allow most lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer understandings of popular culture to exist as appropriative of and subsidiary to taking things straight.

What I find particularly disheartening is that this heterocentrism (and, sometimes, homophobia) often plays itself out in academic and non-academic arenas as some sort of contest between straight female or feminist approaches and queer approaches to understanding popular culture. While the following cases in point involve straight women, as they come from my recent experiences surrounding the material in this essay, in another context I could just as easily have illustrated the pop culture territoriality of many gays, lesbians, and other queers. First example, I was discussing stardom with a graduate student, when she asked me to name some gay cult stars beside Judy Garland. As I began to rattle off a list, she stopped me at one name. "Wait!" she said, "Don't take Bette Davis away from us, too!" Before this, I hadn't

thought of gay culture—or gay cultural studies—as taking anything away from anyone. Nor had I wanted to believe that anyone apart from white, straight patriarchal types would think that stars and texts were commodities to be owned by one group of cultural readers or another. Was I ever naive: I guess most people out there really are lifting up their leg or squatting to mark their popular culture territory. Regarding the subject of this chapter, there was one student at a college in Louisiana who let me know through her friends that she would not be attending my lecture because she didn't want to have *The Wizard of Oz* “ruined” for her by all my dyke talk about the film. Something similar happened in class during a discussion of *Thelma and Louise*.

One final example: after reading a draft of this essay, a feminist academic (speaking for herself as well as for a group of editors) was concerned that I “[did] not acknowledge that this is an appropriative reading—[a] move from a women-centered film to a lesbian film.” Well, 1) a lesbian film is also “women-centered,” just not *straight* woman-centered, and 2) my move from reading *Oz* as straight woman-centered to understanding it as a lesbian narrative was an act of revelation, not appropriation. I don't see the process of queer interpretation as an act of “taking” texts from anyone. Just because straight interpretations have been allowed to flourish publicly doesn't mean they are the most “true” or “real” ones. *The Wizard of Oz* is a straight narrative for those who wish it so. As I (half-) jokingly said earlier, if anything, I would now see straight understandings of *Oz* as “appropriative.”

Related to the issue of “appropriation,” the editor(s) also “would like [me] to discuss more directly the process of reading an externally ‘straight’ text as ‘queer.’” Oh, yes, and while I'm at it, since my “reading will probably outrage many in the straight community,” could I “address that anger”? Well, I think I'll address this kind of straight anger by suggesting that any offended

straights address the heterocentrism (and, yes, sometimes the homophobia) that is at the heart of much of the incomprehension, defensiveness, or shock they register in the face of gay, lesbian, and queer readings of popular culture. Oh, and they might also mull over the following, from Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian*: “When it comes to lesbians . . . many people have trouble seeing what's in front of them. The lesbian remains a kind of ‘ghost effect’ in the cinema world of modern life: elusive, vaporous, difficult to spot—even when she is there, in plain view, mortal and magnificent at the center of the screen. . . . What we never expect is precisely this: to find her in the midst of things, as familiar and crucial as an old friend, as solid and sexy as the proverbial right-hand man, as intelligent and human and funny and real as Garbo.”³

ONE OF THE JOYS of working with popular culture as an academic fan is that you never know when or where you'll find material for your current project. It can jump out at you from a scholarly piece you are reading “just to keep up with things,” it can pop up during an evening of television watching or magazine scanning, or it can wait for you on a shelf in a store. During a vacation in Provincetown, a largely lesbian and gay resort at the tip of the Cape Cod peninsula, I found myself browsing in a Last Flight Out store. I was looking at a display of t-shirts celebrating famous women aviators, when I was struck by a shirt at the center of the display. On the shirt was a drawing of old-fashioned flight goggles, and within one lens were the ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*. The inscription on the shirt read: “Dorothy had the shoes, but she didn't have the vision. Take the controls. Women fly.” In the essay that follows I want to argue that Dorothy really did “have the vision,” if you consider that everyone and everything in *Oz* is a construction of her fantasies. But I understand the frustration with Dorothy expressed by the t-shirt's inscription. Because, at least on the

face of it, it seems Dorothy's vision of flying—with all its classic pop-Freudian dream symbol references to expressing sexual desire—is focused on a pair of pretty ruby slippers rather than on the film's more obvious fetishized object of flight, the Wicked Witch's broomstick.⁴ I guess for the t-shirt designer, Dorothy unwisely chooses the spectacularized, objectified feminine fetish over its active, phallicized counterpart. But those shoes have their own power, too, even if it is less clearly defined for most of Dorothy's fantasy than is the power of the Wicked Witch's broomstick. And I think the power represented by both the slippers and the broomstick is dyke power.

I know that I'm not the only person who understands the Oz sequences of *The Wizard of Oz* as the fantasy of a teenaged girl on the road to dykedom. But from everything about the film in print or on television, you'd think (as I did once) that Oz can only be either a classic heterosexual rite of passage narrative or a gay campfest.⁵ Of course, as I've mentioned, within certain gay readings, the Wicked Witch of the West is often understood to be "the mean dyke," but Dorothy is never, ever anything other than straight: Dorothy/Judy Garland is a "fag hag"-in-the-making, skipping down the road with her rather queer male friends.⁶ But even children understand that the energy-center of Oz has something to do with Dorothy and Miss Gulch/the Wicked Witch—while everyone else, even Toto, is caught up in their passions and desires. Almost every year the telecast of *The Wizard of Oz* inspired my siblings and me to stage an impromptu version of the film using the sidewalk around the block as the Yellow Brick Road. At each of these performances there were only two essential props: one sister's sparkling red plastic high heels and a suitably messy old broom. My sisters and I would then argue about who would play the two star parts—leaving the loser and our two turned-out-to-be-straight brothers to play Glinda and whatever male roles they fancied.

I have already admitted that at the time, and

well into my adult years, I understood some of my pleasures in the film as women-centered but not necessarily as queerly lesbian-centered. Like many gay men, the enjoyment I derived from the woman-woman intensities I found in *The Wizard of Oz* had more to do with what I took to be the spectacle of straight women's antagonism, or with "translating" these women's exciting expressiveness to suit my gay needs. I just didn't consider that the women in the film might be desiring outside of straight or gay contexts. I suppose the inability of most people to consider that Dorothy might be (or be becoming) lesbian can be attributed to that general cultural heterocentrism (to which sexism is sometimes added), affecting straight and queer alike, that considers all fictional narratives and characters heterosexual unless denotatively "proven" homosexual. This attitude puts the burden of proof on nonheterocentric fans and/or academic commentators, who find that they must develop their skills in exhaustive close reading if they are going to make any serious impression at all. Without the weight of close readings, it is all-too-easy for non-heterocentric and queer comments of any sort to be dismissed outright or to be patronizingly embraced as "fun" or "provocative." Thank goodness that decades of popular culture fandom has prepared me to do these "close readings"—otherwise known as watching a film (television show, etc.) over and over, examining and raving about every little detail of the text to anyone who will listen, and then using all these details to get someone else to "see the light" about the film (television show, etc.).

In the context of a heterocentrist (homophobic, sexist) culture, close reading often becomes a social and political strategy: perhaps through overwhelming details and examples we can make what is invisible to so many, visible and what is denied, possible. Yes, this is usually a reactive position: I often wish I could just go on and on about my queer popular culture enthusiasms without self-consciously presenting the material with a re-

sistant or hostile listener or reader in mind. But I rarely have this luxury. The straightforward pleasures most fans, academics, and academic fans get in talking or writing about the cultural objects of their affection are almost always heavily mixed for me. Certainly anybody can find themselves in the position of defending their popular culture readings and enthusiasms, but I am often made to feel as if I am also defending my identity or my existence. Or as if I am being chastised for being too visibly gay or queer, and for "recruiting" straight texts as part of some nefarious or misguided plan for a queer takeover of (supposedly) heterosexual popular culture. Or, at the very least, as if I'm about to be caught trying to pull a fast one by "reading an externally 'straight' text as 'queer.'" For some reason, queer and nonheterocentrist interpretations of things are never "just another way to see things" for most people, but something akin to delusional experiences, no matter how many examples you provide.

Having said all this, I will soon proceed with another of my grand delusions and justify my queer love for *The Wizard of Oz* in glorious detail, including juicy bits of behind-the-scenes production factoids and gossip (a.k.a. "archival and field-work") without which no academic fan piece is complete. I'll probably have to work even more overtime than usual on this close reading because the tendency toward heterocentrism becomes even more pronounced when people consider characters like Dorothy (and actual persons) who are under eighteen: any signs of homosexual desire and/or lesbian, gay, or queer identity in children and adolescents usually remain unacknowledged or dismissed as evidence of psychosexual "confusion."⁷ In the case of *The Wizard of Oz* we also have to remember that for millions of people this film is a sacred text of their childhood, and, therefore, one that is not to be sullied by discussions of sexuality—particularly queer sexuality. Is it any wonder that the idea of twelve-year-old Dorothy Gale (played by sixteen-year-old Gar-

land) as a developing dyke hasn't exactly been at the center of public or academic readings of *The Wizard of Oz*? But the more I look at the film, the more I am convinced that a lesbian angle is essential to interpreting Dorothy's dream-fantasy. Considering this approach seems particularly vital in the face of the plethora of "compulsorily heterosexual" or gay public, journalistic, and academic readings of Dorothy and the film that I mentioned earlier.⁸

For example, in one of the first attempts to use psychoanalytic theory to explain Oz, Harvey Greenberg makes a sharp case for the importance of Dorothy's closeness to her Aunt Em on their matriarchally run farm. Rather than celebrate this intense bond, however, Greenberg sees it as a "pathological dependency upon Em-Mother" that Dorothy needs to get over in order to grow up, which in this context means to move on to a heterosexual relationship with someone like Hunk, the farmhand who becomes the Scarecrow in Dorothy's Oz fantasy.⁹ What Greenberg doesn't seem to recall is that during his (psycho)analysis of Dorothy's fantasy he also admits that the men in Kansas and Oz are "presented as weak and damaged in some fashion, while the women are far more capable."¹⁰ So, following Adrienne Rich's line of thought in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," why *should* Dorothy want to break her connection with Aunt-Mom-women and realign herself with Uncle-Dad-men?¹¹

Salman Rushdie's reading of the film is more self-consciously feminist—at least on two pages. He "rehabilitates" the Wicked Witch by suggesting she "represent[s] the more positive of the two images of powerful womanhood on offer" in Oz—the other being that of Glinda, the Good Witch of the North—because in her rage at her sister's death the Wicked Witch shows "a commendable sense of solidarity."¹² Rushdie also understands that Oz doesn't have a traditional male hero and that "the power center of the film is a triangle at whose points are Glinda, Dorothy and the

Witch.”¹³ And at the center of this triangle lies the magic of the ruby slippers. The power of the wizard “turns out to be an illusion,” Rushdie continues, so the film reveals that “the power of men . . . is illusory; the power of women is real.”¹⁴ But all this talk about reclaiming “wicked” witches, the absence of a male hero, and the powerful triangular relationship between women in Oz only flirts with the sapphic. Finally, the feminist elements in Rushdie’s take on *The Wizard of Oz* remain within the rhetoric of straight sisterhood.¹⁵

A more consistently straight feminist reading of the film is Bonnie Friedman’s “Relinquishing Oz.” What is fascinating to me about this analysis is the number of times it suggests contiguous, and even common, ground between straight feminist and lesbian approaches. While she employs a mother-daughter paradigm to discuss the film, as Greenberg does, Friedman’s reading more directly addresses the issue of woman-woman erotics. “The story is a mother-romance,” Friedman says near the end of her piece.¹⁶ And while she makes a compelling case for the film as a straight mother-romance—Dorothy returns home to become companion to and replacement for Em-as-mother—Friedman suggests the possibility of queering her own reading when she remarks that in the witch’s castle Dorothy is “like a girl who leaves home for erotic love and can’t come back.”¹⁷ So for all her attempts to connect Aunt Em and the Wicked Witch as harsh straight mother figures, Friedman can’t help but see the two women as offering very different options for Dorothy. While the tenor of the article as a whole asks us to read this “erotic love” as heterosexual, it just doesn’t make sense within the film context for Friedman’s statement, which invites us to see the contrast as that between an “erotic love” related to Dorothy’s encounters with the witch and a “home” that is connected to fulfilling a heterosexual wife-mother role.

Friedman’s article provides a useful starting place for developing a more pointedly lesbian

reading of Oz. Indeed, Friedman begins her article by wondering if she “shouldn’t have hated that witch so much,” as a child because she really represents non-normative female desire and power.¹⁸ Rushdie is also high on the Wicked Witch of the West. Describing her as “lean and mean” in her “slimline black” outfit, Rushdie is on the verge of calling the Wicked Witch “butch,” particularly in contrast with Glinda, whom he finds “a trilling pain in the neck” in her “frilly pink.”¹⁹ A quick look at *The Wizard of Oz*’s production history reveals that the Wicked Witch’s butchness was to a great extent consciously developed—if not, perhaps, called “butch” by the film’s collaborators (but you never know). In early versions of the script by Noel Langley, the Witch has been married and has a son, Bulbo. This mother-son relationship is developed to suggest the classic overly-protective-mother-and-gay-son stereotype: “There, my darling boy, mother’ll kiss it better! Bulbo musn’t cry now; he’s going to be King of the Emerald City, and Kings never cry!”²⁰ Reinforcing this gay rather than lesbian context for the Wicked Witch was the initial casting of Gale Sondergaard in the role. It was producer Mervyn LeRoy’s idea to have Oz’s Wicked Witch look like the Evil Stepmother in Walt Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).²¹ The result was the Wicked Witch as glamorous diva, with Sondergaard made up “wearing green eye shadow and a witch’s hat made out of black sequins.”²²

But as the script changed—particularly with the work of the gay man—straight (I think) woman team of Florence Ryerson and Edgar Alan Woolf—so did the image of the Wicked Witch. It was sometime during the period of making the witch less glamorous that Sondergaard, concerned with maintaining her image, dropped out of the project. Enter Margaret Hamilton and a plainer look for the Wicked Witch. One production still shows Hamilton with her own unaltered features, sans obvious makeup, and with a de-sequined black hat over a near-shoulder-length

flip hairdo.²³ But no one was satisfied with this middle-of-the-road approach. It was probably during gay director George Cukor's stint as production consultant on *Oz* that the Wicked Witch got her final look: a sharp nose and jawline, green face and body make-up, a scraggly broom, claw-like fingernails, and a tailored black gown and cape.²⁴ This is the witch as creature, as alien, as monster, and as what straight, and sometimes gay, culture has often equated with these—butch dyke.²⁵

This big bad butch witch, who is loud, aggressive, violent, and wears an obvious "uniform," had been developed by the time of the final script to function on one level as a contrast to good witch Glinda. However Glinda presents complications for lesbian readings of *The Wizard of Oz* that have something to do with Rushdie's complaint that she is a "trilling pain in the neck [in] frilly pink." For Glinda seems to be one of those images of femmes in popular culture that are coded to be able to pass as heterosexually feminine in the eyes of certain beholders.²⁶ But look at Glinda again: there's more than a touch of camp excess here that finally seems expressive of lesbian femmeness rather than of the straight feminine. And let's not forget that while Glinda may look like a fairy godmother, she *is* a witch, and is therefore connected to the Wicked Witch and to centuries-long Western cultural associations between witchcraft and lesbianism.²⁷ So what we have set before us in *The Wizard of Oz* is the division of lesbianism into the good femme-inine and the bad butch, or the model potentially "invisible" femme and the threateningly obvious butch.

Into this sexual terrain comes Dorothy, a sixteen-year-old girl just off the farm.²⁸ Or, rather, it is Dorothy who constructs this sexual fantasy-land after being hit on the head by a flying window frame during a cyclone. The distinction between *Oz* as a "real" place and *Oz* as a fantasy is one that the film seems to do its best to blur, however. While almost every commentator and fan has crit-

icized the film's final framing device, which, unlike the L. Frank Baum novel, makes Dorothy's adventures in *Oz* a "dream," *Oz*'s movement from sepia cinematography in the short opening Kansas sequences to brilliant Technicolor during the more lengthy *Oz* sequences, and back to sepia again in the brief Kansas coda, serves to make the *Oz* material more vivid and vital. In a very important sense, then, the *Oz* narrative seems as "real" to the film audience as it is to its adolescent hero. Put another way, the effect of the *Oz* sequences in *The Wizard of Oz* is true to the perceptions of most teenagers. As one teenaged girl quoted in an essay on *Oz* says: "Fantasy is real, necessary, and . . . home is not always the best place to be."²⁹

Home down on the farm in Kansas during the latter years of the Great Depression would certainly "not always be the best place to be" for many garden variety heterosexual adolescents, let alone for lesbian, gay, and otherwise queer teens. Among many other sources, Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg's documentary film *Before Stonewall* and Allan Berubé's *Coming Out under Fire* reveal how the particularly repressive atmosphere of rural and small-town America before World War II worked to force most queer women and men either into an imitation of straight life, into closeted homosexual furtiveness, or out into urban centers.³⁰ The first and third of these responses are important to understanding Dorothy's farm and fantasy lives in *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy, told by her Aunt Em to "find yourself a place where you won't get into any trouble," translates this into "someplace where there isn't any trouble," thereby placing the blame on normative rural culture, not upon herself. Deciding there is such a place, but that "it's not a place you can get to by a boat or a train," Dorothy launches into "Over the Rainbow." While the Land of *Oz* is most generally this "over the rainbow" place, we discover late in Dorothy's *Oz* fantasy that at the heart of *Oz* lies its fabulous capital, Emerald City, through which Dorothy and her friends are conveyed to their

beauty makeovers in a carriage pulled by the hue-changing "Horse of a Different Color."³¹

Before letting Dorothy and her gay companions reach what initially appears to be an urban paradise for queers, however, we need to go back to the start of her fantasy, as it is here that the film establishes the terms for its simultaneous expression and disavowal of lesbianism.³² Two things are central to this expression and disavowal, witches and ruby slippers. To repeat a bit from an earlier section: the distinction Dorothy's fantasy makes between the witches of the East and West and the Witch of the North turn out to be those between two types of witches—wicked butch and good femme—not the one between fairy godmother and evil witches that the fantasy appears to be presenting with its visual and aural iconography.

The film most strikingly reveals its use of witch = lesbian cultural coding, as well as its butch = bad lesbian associations, during the portion of Dorothy's fantasy that takes place inside the cyclone. At one point, Dorothy's Kansas nemesis, the spinster (as with witch, read "lesbian") Almira Gulch comes riding by—or, more accurately, is imagined by Dorothy to be riding by—on her bicycle. The original dyke on a bike, Gulch almost immediately transmogrifies into a shrieking witch flying on her broomstick: spinster = witch = evil butch. Less apparent is how the cyclone episode also sets up the femme-inine woman as the positive model. As the published script puts it: "An OLD LADY in a rocking chair sails past. She is knitting busily and rocking, seemingly unaware that she is no longer on her front porch. The old lady waves as she floats out of sight."³³ So where Gulch's spinster harshness is made the clear model for the Wicked Witch of the West's butch badness (reinforced by the same actress playing both parts), the relationship between Aunt Em and Glinda as images of femme-inine goodness is more obliquely established through the old lady (who looks very much like Aunt Em) floating in front of Dorothy's bewildered eyes, much as Glinda will soon float down toward an equally as-

tonished Dorothy in Munchkinland. This less obvious, more heavily translated, connection between Aunt Em and Glinda falls squarely within the film's sexuality politics, which, at least on the surface of things, opposes butch and femme, demonizing the former for being loud and obvious (the shrieking laugh, the grotesque green makeup, the black uniform), while humanizing the latter with a name (Glinda) and the ability to pass as a non-witch. Recall along these lines that Dorothy doesn't initially allow herself to recognize Glinda as a witch. "I've never heard of a beautiful witch before!" she effuses to a smiling Glinda, who replies, "Only bad witches are ugly." But what can we expect of Dorothy's fantasy when the most readily available cultural images are of "ugly," bad butch spinster-witches? Even after she learns there are "beautiful" witches, however, the term "witch" is used almost exclusively in Dorothy's fantasy to pejoratively label the "ugly" butch variety. What's happening here in terms of Dorothy expressing her dyke desires through her Oz fantasy is complicated. Faced with her own nascent lesbianism, as well as the cultural taboos surrounding the open, positive acknowledgment of these desires, Dorothy's fantasy most clearly represents lesbianism in the conventional form of the evil, yet powerful, butch dyke witch. As she sings to the Munchkins by way of explaining her cyclone adventures: "Just then the witch/ To satisfy an itch/ Went flying on her broomstick thumbing for a hitch." It appears the "itch" the Wicked Witch wants to satisfy is somehow connected to hitching a ride from Dorothy, who has warily watched said witch from her *bedroom* window.³⁴ And all of this happens deep within the swirling vortex of a cyclone, which becomes in this context a rather outrageously heavy-handed symbolic representation of the classic dangerous butch stereotype: they possess and desire female genitalia (the vortex) while identifying with heterosexual ("phallic") masculinity (how the cyclone *externally* takes the shape of a funnel). Put it all together and you have a destructive force that sweeps through the conservative heartland of

America, separating a young girl from her family. While presented as threatening and predatory, however, the sexualized ("To satisfy an itch") image of the butch dyke in the cyclone is the only one Dorothy constructs here that will carry over into Oz. Even before we hear the suggestive lines in Dorothy's song, however, the fantasy image of the Wicked Witch has been (homo)sexualized by its pointed visual connection, through that special effects dissolve, to a dyke Dorothy is already acquainted with: the spinster Almira Gulch.³⁵ There are also moments in the Kansas sequences that suggest everyone knows about Gulch, including a lot of bizarre talk about Dorothy "biting" Miss Gulch, Dorothy's calling Gulch a "wicked old witch," and Aunt Em's "for twenty-three years I've been dying to tell you [Gulch] what I thought of you . . . and now . . . well—being a Christian woman—I can't say it!"

As you might expect, the image of spinster-turned-butch witch is one that Dorothy feels culturally compelled to distance herself from—at least in the "public" spaces (that is, on the manifest level) of her fantasy. So Dorothy also constructs the type of woman she can more safely admire, be in awe of, and perhaps desire: a glamorous witch whom she, and most of the audience, can take to be the epitome of straight femininity. Dorothy's Glinda is both witch and not conventionally witchlike, both lesbian femme and "straight acting and appearing" (to borrow a phrase from certain gay personal ads). Perhaps the ability to pass is the reason Glinda seems a less powerful and compelling figure than the Wicked Witch of the West in this particular lesbian fantasy. But this was not always the case. One Noel Langley draft script suggested the erotic power of Glinda's femmeness as it has her plant a "magic kiss" on Dorothy that protects her from the wiles of the Wicked Witch.³⁶ However, while the kiss survives in the film, it has lost its magic power.

Given the tangled and conflicted impulses toward lesbianism expressed in Dorothy's fantasy, it comes as no surprise that she both suggests and

denies her connection to witches on first meeting Glinda. When a puzzled Glinda asks the tomboyish yet gingham-dressed Dorothy if she "is a good witch—or a bad witch" (a femme or a butch) Dorothy denies being any kind of witch, because, as culture has told her, all witches are old and ugly. It is here Dorothy's fantasy reveals that Glinda is also a witch, thereby establishing a model through which she can begin to explore and come to terms with her own lesbian desires under cover of femme-ininity. But while Glinda provides her with a safe, because straight-appearing, outlet for lesbian expressiveness, Dorothy invests the Wicked Witches of the East and West with the most power and fascination in her fantasy. When she first meets the Witch of the West in Oz, Dorothy tries to convince her that the death of her sister, the tyrannical ruler of the Munchkins, was "an accident."³⁷ While there are no "accidents" in fantasies, it is clear that Dorothy has the farmhouse, and all it represents culturally, really kill the butch Wicked Witch of the East. She doesn't mean to kill (or want to kill) the witch—something that is reinforced in the later "accidental" death of the Wicked Witch of the West by water. So even while she has the Munchkins and Glinda praise her as a "national heroine" by singing "Ding dong, the witch is dead," Dorothy distances herself from the killing of the butch witch by picturing herself as being trapped within that Kansas farmhouse (and its normative ideology) at the time of the death. But it would appear that the cultural pressure on Dorothy is such that she still feels she must contrive to set herself up in opposition to butch witches. Therefore, the Wicked Witch of the West remains unconvinced by Dorothy's protestations of innocence: "Well, my little pretty, I can cause accidents, too!"

However, Dorothy establishes her connection to witches and with witchcraft—including the butch variety—by dreaming up what has become, along with *Citizen Kane's* Rosebud, the most fabulous fetish item in film history: the ruby slippers.³⁸ There is probably no need to rehearse at

any length what the sequined blood-red slippers "stand for": teenaged Dorothy's physical entrance into adulthood, as well as her subsequent sexual explorations. It is their particular place within Dorothy's fantasy narrative that give them their dyke associations. As Salman Rushdie puts it, "Glinda and the Wicked Witch clash most fiercely over the ruby slippers"—and, as Dorothy dreams it, over her body once it wears the coveted slippers.³⁹ "Surrender Dorothy" indeed! Given the "bad butch—good femme" dynamics of the Oz fantasy, however, these slippers come to indicate Dorothy's sexualized genitalia even while disavowing any "obvious" lesbian desire: the butch Wicked Witch can't even touch the femme-inine shoes while they are on Dorothy's feet without getting a shock. However, when they are first placed upon her feet, the shots of the ruby slippers are clearly presented within the narrative as a spectacular display for the Wicked Witch's benefit. While Glinda says to the Wicked Witch, "There they are, and there they'll stay," we are offered a close up of the slippers being modeled by Dorothy against the backdrop of Glinda's pink gossamer gown: the femme displaying herself for the butch? Or, perhaps, the tomboy-in-gingham trying femmeness on for size in front of a potential mentor and a dangerous, yet exciting, butch spectator.

The initial appearance and functions of the ruby slippers in Dorothy's fantasy also work to connect all the major female figures in Oz under the sign of witchcraft. What is particularly fascinating about the ruby slippers in this respect is how they manage to mix together the femme and the butch, suggesting that while there are butch and femme styles and attitudes, they need not work in tension with each other, nor are they necessarily the only ways to be expressive as a dyke. Dorothy herself is the perfect person to wear these slippers, as, perhaps until her Emerald City beauty treatment, she seems to combine butch and femme qualities as a young girl on the (yellow brick) road to discovering what type of "witch" she is. Ultimately, the uses of the ruby slippers in

Dorothy's fantasy suggest that dyke magic resides neither with butchness or femmeness exclusively, but within all sorts of lesbianism.

The tyrannical Wicked Witch of the East wears her powerful, supposedly incongruous, femmy ruby slippers. But femme Glinda can use her magic to whisk the glitzy shoes off the dead butch witch's feet and onto Dorothy's (despite a noticeable size difference). Oddly enough, however, the formidable butch Wicked Witch of the West seems powerless to remove these slippers, although otherwise her magic seems far more potent than Glinda's. To confuse the butch-femme power issue even more, Salman Rushdie points out that Glinda's knowledge about the shoes in these early scenes is "enigmatic, even contradictory," as she initially says she is ignorant about the shoes' power, even while warning Dorothy to "never let those ruby slippers off your feet for a moment, or you will be at the mercy of the Wicked Witch of the West."⁴⁰ Good advice, because, as we all know, they never respect you after they have gotten hold of your ruby slippers! Glinda's advice about the shoes is just what you'd expect Dorothy to have the "straight acting and appearing" femme tell her at this stage of her fantasy. At this point, it is impossible for Dorothy's Glinda to admit to full and clear knowledge of the magic power contained in a pair of femme slippers owned by some butch witch—and desired by her even butcher sister. Glinda is only allowed to impart this formerly unspeakable knowledge as/at the climax of Dorothy's dyke rite of passage, which includes a progression through the vaginal-shaped hallways of Castle Oz, which are colored "Wicked Witch green," as is everything else in the Emerald City. So even while Dorothy's fantasy narrative contrives to separate the Wicked Witch from the Emerald City—as it does with the Wicked Witch and Glinda—imagery like the ruby slippers and greenness in this same fantasy reveals that the agents of so-called butch evil and femme(-inine) good are really related after all. However, within the terms of the manifest fantasy narrative, it is only after Dorothy

once again "accidentally" dispatches the "threat" of butchness with that famous badly aimed bucket of water, as well as suffers the failure of patriarchy to help her (after she brings the Wizard of Oz the burnt remnants of the butch witch's "phallic" broom), that she lets femme Glinda come forward to declare that she does know something about the special powers of the butch's femme ruby slippers after all.

Actually, what Glinda says is that Dorothy has always had the "power" within her to activate the ruby slippers, but that she had to "learn it for [her]self." And what does Dorothy learn that allows her to use the power of the fetishized ruby slippers?: "It's that if I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard." Dorothy's lesson returns us, in part, to Greenberg's point about the crucial role Aunt Em plays in her life. If we divest his reading of its pathologizing and heterocentrism, Greenberg makes a compelling case for Aunt Em as orphaned Dorothy's "heart's desire."⁴¹ In many ways Aunt Em is the object of Dorothy's fantasy, for it is her desire to return to Aunt Em in particular, rather than to her life in Kansas in general, which is emphasized time and again in the script. Commenting on early scripts in a lengthy memo to Noel Langley (dated April 30, 1938), Oz production assistant Arthur Freed advises the scenarist to concentrate more on what he feels is the film's emotional center, insisting that "it is our problem to set up the story of Dorothy, who finds herself with a heart full of love, eager to give it, but through circumstances and personalities, can apparently find none in return. . . . She finds escape in her dream of Oz. There she is motivated by her generosity to help everyone first before her little orphan heart cries out for what she wants most of all (the love of Aunt Em). . . . We must remember at all times that Dorothy is only motivated by one object in Oz; that is how to get back home to her Aunt Em, and every situation should be related to this."⁴²

Considering all this, it's no wonder that the last

face Dorothy sees in Oz is Glinda's (the good witch-mother), and that the first face Dorothy sees at the end of her fantasy of dyke discovery is that of Aunt Em, her mother substitute. But while there is a strong mother-daughter aspect to the lesbian erotics represented in Dorothy's fantasy in "a land that [she] heard of once in a lullaby," it has its limits as *the* explanation of this fantasy's dyke dimensions. Recall that it is Aunt Em who tells Dorothy to find a place where she won't "get into trouble." So a temporary separation from Aunt Em seems as important to Dorothy's development at this point as maintaining the bond with her. Also recall that it is Glinda (Oz's Aunt Em figure) who puts it into Dorothy's head that her goal should be to go back home. But consider this: if Dorothy was so hot to immediately go home to Aunt Em, why does her fantasy repress the fact that she can use the power of the ruby slippers to transport herself back to Aunt Em from the start? Clearly Dorothy wants to be constantly reminded of the importance of her bond with Aunt Em, but she also wants to experience the thrills her fantasy will concoct for her with the Wicked Witch of the West.

Far from being a case of lesbianism as simply a regressive "return to mother," then, Dorothy's fantasy represents the complicated process by which she returns home to renew maternal bonds, but only after she has matured through dealing with the dangers and pleasures of becoming lesbian, which involve both the blatant butchness represented by the Wicked Witch of the West and the femme allure of Glinda and the ruby slippers. Clearly, Dorothy's fantasy is as much structured around a series of exciting flights from and encounters with the shoe-coveting Wicked Witch as it is developed around the return to Aunt Em. As it turns out, these are really two sides of the same narrative coin.

The sequence that most strikingly illustrates all this is the one in which Dorothy is imprisoned in the Wicked Witch's castle with her dog, Toto. When the witch threatens to drown Toto, Dorothy is ready to exchange the ruby slippers to save his

life. It is here her fantasy finally contrives a compelling excuse for her to surrender the ruby slippers (with their accumulated fetishistic charge) to the butch witch even though "the Good Witch of the North told [her] not to." But Dorothy still shrinks from any direct physical contact. For after offering to give up her ruby slippers, Dorothy has the shoes give the Wicked Witch a shock as she reaches out to grasp them. "I'm sorry. I didn't do it," Dorothy says at this point, thereby adding one more item to the long list of painful "accidents" her fantasy has developed to deal with her ambivalence about butchness (or "obvious" lesbianism). By having her death be the only way for the Wicked Witch to possess the ruby slippers, Dorothy's fantasy also stages a moment that echoes one tragic way many teenagers deal with the pressures and confusions of becoming queer.

After the Wicked Witch leaves to consider how to kill Dorothy, as "these things must be done delicately," a weeping Dorothy approaches a giant crystal ball in which the image of her aunt appears. But just as Dorothy says "I'm trying to get home to you Auntie Em!," her aunt's face begins to fade and is replaced by that of the Wicked Witch who mockingly imitates Dorothy's words: "Auntie Em, Auntie Em! Come back! I'll give you Auntie Em, my pretty!" In a way, the witch *does* "give her" Auntie Em, because the crystal reveals that in some way the witch and Auntie Em are related in Dorothy's mind. At one point in the film's history, this sequence was much longer. Scripts indicate that this longer version contains many elements that reinforce the fantasy connections between the Wicked Witch and Aunt Em, as well as more clearly establish the relationship between the witch and the fulfillment of Dorothy's desire to find a place "where the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true."

In this extended version, after the witch's mocking imitation of Dorothy's cries to Aunt Em, the sequence continues with the witch forcing Dorothy to perform Kansas-like domestic chores. As she scrubs and mops, Dorothy finds herself

singing "Over the Rainbow" again, even as the witch is concocting a "Spell for Rainbows" in her cauldron: "All the brilliant colors found in the prism are reflected upward into [the witch's] face from the bubbling mass." From the liquid in the cauldron, the witch constructs "The Rainbow Bridge," which the script describes as "a beautiful sight," yet it is to be the means of Dorothy's death. It is the power of the ruby slippers, which "seem to come to life with an iridescent glow," that Dorothy has save her by allowing her literally to go "over the rainbow" made by the witch and off to continue her journey of sexual awareness.

Straight, heterocentric, and homophobic readings (not always the same things) might understand what is happening in the long or short version of this sequence as either the expression of a fear of lesbianism destroying heterosexual-homosocial women's bonds, or as the expression of "how intimately bound together is the Good Mother and the Bad" in the mind of a heterosexual teenage girl.⁴³ Within the reading I am proposing, however, this sequence becomes the central paradigm for the film's incoherent attitudes about lesbianism. For one thing, the attraction-repulsion aspects of Dorothy's fantasy regarding butch witches are fully on display here, particularly in the longer version of the sequence. The butch witch is both the potential source of fulfilled desires as well as the potential source of physical danger. Besides this, the merging and confusion of Aunt Em and the Wicked Witch in the crystal ball suggests that the developing lesbianism Dorothy's fantasy struggles to express requires that she face up to, and work through, her culturally fostered fears, embodied by the figure of the butch dyke, so she can return to her Aunt Em as a more sexually mature young woman—or, to be more precise, a more sexually mature young lesbian. Will Dorothy become a butch, a femme, or remain "in-between" after she wakes up from her fantasy? I think the film leaves this open to some degree, though her strong identification with the ruby slippers and her glamorizing beauty treatment near the end of

the film make me think Dorothy enjoys being a femme.

On the other hand, the question of what kind of witch/dyke Dorothy will become might seem unresolved when you consider that her return to Kansas to look "for her heart's desire . . . in [her] own backyard" will actually involve two yards: Aunt Em's and Almira Gulch's. For if her fantasy has revealed that part of Dorothy's lesbian desires have to do with her relationship with her Aunt Em, this same fantasy has also revealed that other aspects of these desires have something to do with Miss Gulch. It is easy to forget that what initiates both the Kansas and Oz narratives is Dorothy's antagonistic relationship with Gulch, or Gulch-as-Wicked Witch. This has all begun, it seems, because Dorothy's relaxed vigilance has allowed Toto to sneak into Miss Gulch's yard more than once to chase her cat. Pleading that "Toto didn't mean to" do what he did and that "he didn't know he was doing anything wrong," Dorothy sets up the first of many "accident" scenarios involving herself (or in this case her canine sidekick) and butches. Just as when she allows the Wicked Witch to take (or try to take) the ruby slippers in order to save Toto, Dorothy's dealings with Miss Gulch over Toto make it appear that Dorothy can only allow herself to satisfy her curiosity about butch dykes (whether spinster or witch) in indirect, and contentious, ways. So time and again in Kansas and in Oz, Dorothy becomes involved in "accidents" that she allows to happen, whether it's letting Toto get into Gulch's garden, "killing" the Wicked Witch's sister, or having the slippers shock the witch. Bonnie Friedman points out that when one of the farmhands suggests that Dorothy avoid trouble with Miss Gulch by finding an alternate route home, Dorothy replies, "You just don't understand," and lets the subject drop.⁴⁴ Is it too much to imagine that Dorothy is forced to stage these encounters as antagonistic because of internalized homophobic cultural interdictions warning little girls to stay away from eccentric spinsters and other "witches"?

So while Oz initially appears to be the place where "the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true," my understanding of the much-maligned "no place like home" finale is that Dorothy comes to understand by the end of her fantasy that her daring dyke dreams will really only "come true" when she returns to those two yards in Kansas and works out her feelings toward both Aunt Em and Miss Gulch. Dorothy's last two speeches already indicate how things are sorting themselves out for her, for while she exclaims "And . . . oh, Auntie Em! There's no place like home!" to conclude the film, her penultimate lines reveal what Rushdie sees as signs of "revolt" after Aunt Em gently tries to dismiss Dorothy's attempt to explain about Oz:⁴⁵

Aunt Em: Oh, we dream lots of silly things when we . . .

Dorothy: No, Aunt Em, this was a real truly live place. And I remember that some of it wasn't very nice—but most of it was beautiful!

For a moment before she turns back to praise the virtues of home and Aunt Em, Dorothy rallies to validate her experiences in Oz. Although she doesn't consciously realize it, Dorothy's words here pay tribute to that other key figure in her journey to dykedom, the Wicked Witch of the West (Oz's Almira Gulch), who, with her final breath, half-surprised and half-impressed, exclaims, "Who would have thought that a good little girl like you could destroy my beautiful wickedness!" Dorothy's words, like the witch's, reveal that, to the end, *The Wizard of Oz* remains ambivalent and incoherent about its relationship to lesbianism. It is something that has been, at once, a "not very nice" and a "beautiful" part of Dorothy's fantasy about Oz.

Actually, it was partly through the witch's declaration of her "beautiful wickedness" that I was led to my queer appreciation of the film's lesbian narrative. I'm with Derek Jarman who said that from childhood he "often thought" about the Wicked Witch of the West, and "after [his] initial

fright, grew to love her.”⁴⁶ The Manchester, England, group Homocult (“Perversers of Culture”) has presented this gay and lesbian rewriting of the Wicked Witch more boldly by using a publicity still picturing Dorothy in the farmyard, one finger pointing upward, under which they have written “GOOD WAS WRONG, EVIL OUR FRIEND ALL ALONG.”⁴⁷ My growing affection for the Wicked Witch became one of the keys to understanding that a great deal of my enjoyment of *The Wizard of Oz* is dyke-based. Actually, I’ve noticed that many of the pleasures I take in popular culture representations of strong women, in women icons, and in women-centered narratives have taken a decidedly dyke turn. My cross-gender identificatory investments in reading certain women characters, stars, and narratives as being femininely straight, are now often supplemented or supplanted by the queer-bonding investments and pleasures I have in understanding these women and texts as lesbian. Sometimes I find I’m combining a lesbian angle on popular culture with other approaches, or I discover that certain pleasures and investments I have in lesbian popular culture personalities, texts, and images become the catalyst for questioning conventional gender and sexuality categories. Should I call these pleasures and investments “queer,” “bisexual,” or “unconventionally gay”?

For example, Oz’s Wicked Witch encouraged me to reevaluate my enthusiasms for her animated sisters, the Evil Queen (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*), Cruella de Vil (*101 Dalmatians*), and Ursula (*The Little Mermaid*). All of these characters now seem to be wonderful combinations of straight diva, drag queen, and formidable dyke.⁴⁸ Another example: I have come to realize that I am one of those “femme” gays who find certain butch and androgynous dykes and dyke icons (real and fictional, actual and image) very hot: k.d. lang, Katharine Hepburn as “Sylvester” Scarlett, model Jenny Shimuzu, Annie Lennox, Vanessa Redgrave as Vita Sackville-West, Grace Jones, the Patricia

Charbonneau character in *Desert Hearts*, Margerethe Cammermeyer, Glenn Close as Cammermeyer, and a host of butches I’ve spotted on the streets, at meetings, and in bars. So—to return to Oz—while I haven’t fully abandoned all of my previous pleasures and investments in popular culture, the sissy lion, the “hunky” Tin Man, (straight) Judy Garland-as-gay icon, and the kitschy decor in Munchkinland now stand alongside, and sometimes mingle with, the butch witches, “spinster” Almira Gulch, femme Glinda, and “baby dyke” Dorothy in my understanding and enjoyment of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Not surprisingly, it was Dorothy, or, more accurately, a female impersonator performing Judy Garland singing “Over the Rainbow” for a largely lesbian audience, who became another impetus for my re-viewing Oz. Before this drag show I would have been among those who would have categorized Oz, Garland, and “Over the Rainbow” as “gay things.” Perhaps the overwhelmingly gay public claims on Garland, the song, and the film have kept lesbian appreciations in the shade. Or maybe publicly expressing enthusiasms like these has been considered as not being distinctly “dyke” enough in your popular culture fandom within lesbian culture at large. Whatever the case, that night in a Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, club left no doubt in my mind that Judy, “Over the Rainbow,” and Oz could be “lesbian things,” too.⁴⁹ Jimmy James-as-Judy was about to leave the stage without singing “Over the Rainbow” when lesbian audience members chanted for him to sing it. Relenting, s/he sat down and proceeded to sing the song to a butch woman who had rushed up to the stage to kiss “Judy” and tell her that she loved her. By the end of the number it was clear the gay drag performer-as-diva and the crowd had found a common ground in Oz’s most famous song, turning it from the “Gay National Anthem” into something like a “Queer National Anthem.” One big reason I’ve written all this lesbian stuff about *The Wizard of Oz*, I guess, is to recapture some of the

feelings of queer connectedness that I experienced sitting in Diamondz while a drag queen and his dyke fans came together for a while as "Friends of Dorothy."

Notes

I would like to thank Ben Gove for our challenging discussions, and Phyllis Santamaria and Peter Gove for the use of their place in Ealing.

- 1 *The Wizard of Oz* (dir. Victor Fleming, MGM, 1939).
- 2 Documented in John Fricke, Jay Scarfone, and William Stillman's *The Wizard of Oz: The Fiftieth Anniversary Pictorial History* (New York: Warner Books, 1989) is producer Arthur Freed's demands that scripts develop a tighter narrative built around Dorothy and Aunt Em as well as Dorothy and the Wicked Witch. One important result was the gradual elimination of all the heterosexual elements in earlier script drafts, which included a princess and prince pair (Sylvia and Florizel, who in Kansas were Mrs. Gulch's niece Sylvia and her boyfriend Kenny), a farmyard romance between Lizzie Smithers and Hickory (who became Oz's Tin Man), an attempt by the Wicked Witch (Mrs. Gulch) to force Princess Sylvia to marry her son Bulbo, and even a flirtation between Dorothy and Hunk (who became the Scarecrow). Traces of the latter pairing might be said to remain in the finished film with Dorothy's pronouncement that she'll "miss [the Scarecrow] most of all" when she leaves Oz. How refreshing to have heterosexuality be the repressed thing whose trace returns in a narrative!
- 3 Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2–3.
- 4 Among the many examples of texts that allude to or use the idea of flying as (dream-fantasy) coding for women's non-normative, "excessive" sexual desires, whether straight or queer, are Kate Millet's *Flying*, Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*, and Dorothy Arzner's *Christopher Strong*. So witches don't ride those broomsticks just to get from one place to another!
- 5 Among the lengthier critical pieces on the film are Salman Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992); Fricke, Scarfone, and Stillman, *The Wizard of Oz*; Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz* (New York: Delta/Dell, 1989); Danny Peary, *Cult Movies* (New York: Dell, 1981), 390–93; Janet Juhnke, "A Kansan's View," in *The Classic American Novel and the Movies*, ed. Gerald Peary and Roger Shatzkin (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1977), 165–75; Harvey Greenberg, "The Wizard of Oz: Little Girl Lost—and Found," in *The Movies on Your Mind* (New York: Saturday Review Press/E. P. Dutton, 1979), 13–32; Michael Bracewell, "The Never-Ending Story," *Times Magazine* (London) (January 29, 1994): 18–19; Bonnie Friedman, "Relinquishing Oz: Every Girl's Anti-Adventure Story," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 35(1) (winter 1996): 9–28; and Richard Smith, "Daring to Dream," *Gay Times* 211 (April 1996): 60–61. Of course there are hundreds (thousands?) of shorter reviews of and commentaries on the film, beginning from the announcement of its production in 1938.
- 6 The introduction to the anthology *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*, which I coedited with Corey K. Creekmur (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), includes a brief discussion of certain gay camp readings of the film. In "Fasten Your Seat Belts: The Ten Gayest Straight Movies—Ever," *Genre* 28 (May 1995): 71, Steve Greenberg quotes college instructor Daniel Mangin: "Gays seem to identify with this [film] early in their lives. Some gays say they've always identified with Dorothy's pals because their body language and manner of speaking seem so gay."

To this and other remarks by gay journalists and scholars can be added understandings of the film that center around its production history, particularly around the contributions of gay men like production adviser George Cukor and coscenarist Edgar Allan Woolf, who MGM story editor Sam Marx remembered as "a wild, red-headed homosexual" who contributed "whatever levity and foolishness there was in *The Wizard of Oz*" (Harmetz, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 46).
- 7 For a more detailed analysis of the representation of homosexuality and adolescence in film and popular culture see Ben Gove, "Framing Gay Youth," *Screen* 37(2) (summer 1996).
- 8 The phrase "compulsorily heterosexual" is, of course, adapted from Adrienne Rich's landmark essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," which has been reprinted many times since its initial appearance in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5(4) (1980): 631–60. Most recently, this essay has appeared, with an afterword from 1986, in *The Lesbian*

and *Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 227–54.

While placed within heterosexualizing contexts, two pieces on *The Wizard of Oz* contain comments that, taken together, might be read as alluding to certain lesbian understandings of Dorothy. The first is by Salman Rushdie to the effect that “the scrubbed, ever-so-slightly lumpy *unsexiness* of Garland’s playing is what makes the movie work” (*The Wizard of Oz*, 27). At the other extreme, a review in *Times Magazine* (London) states, “One doubts this film would have resonated so much or aged so well if any actress other than Judy Garland had played Dorothy. . . . That a corseted, nubile 17-year-old was asked to play a 12-year-old adds a muted but persistent undertone of sexuality to an already disturbing film” (June 8, 1994): 41. Not surprisingly, when taken together these remarks echo conventional notions of lesbianism as a state of being either nonsexual or oversexed.

- 9 Greenberg, “*The Wizard of Oz*,” 25, 30.
- 10 Ibid., 22. Greenberg’s understanding of the men in the film as lacking in some way is echoed by many commentators. For example, Bonnie Friedman finds that “the men of Oz are all missing one key organ. . . . One suspects that, in Dorothy’s mind, the men on Aunt Em’s farm all lack an organ, too” (“Relinquishing Oz,” 25–26). It would seem to be a very short step from comments like these to understanding Dorothy as a dyke-in-the-making. But, where lesbians are concerned, it seems that this one small step is, indeed, a giant leap for most people to make.
- 11 Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality.”
- 12 Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, 43.
- 13 Ibid., 42.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 In a short story appended to his critical study of *Oz*, entitled “The Auction of the Ruby Slippers” (58–65), Rushdie places the slippers in a heterosexual context as the male narrator recalls making love to his cousin Gail, who liked to yell “Home boy! Home baby, you’ve come home” the moment he penetrated her (61). After they split up, the narrator wants to buy the ruby slippers for Gail, in the hope that she will remember their sexual activities and come back “home” to him. While heterosexualized, the ruby slippers are still to a great extent associated with women’s sexual desires in this story. The story does suggest that lesbianism and gayness are

also associated with the slippers as it describes how one female “memorabilia junkie” and her (non-sex-identified) lover are electrocuted when they place their lips to the glass box in which the slippers are being displayed at an auction, thereby setting off an alarm system that “pumps a hundred thousand volts of electricity into the silicon-implanted lips of the glass kisser” (shades of the Wicked Witch of the West). “We wonder . . . at the mysteries of love,” the narrator goes on to comment, “whilst reaching once again for our perfumed handkerchiefs” (58–59).

- 16 Friedman, “Relinquishing Oz,” 27.
- 17 Ibid., 10.
- 18 Ibid., 9.
- 19 Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, 42.
- 20 Harmetz, *Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 43–44.
- 21 Fricke, Scarfone, and Stillman, *The Wizard of Oz*, 24.
- 22 Harmetz, *Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 122.
- 23 Fricke, Scarfone, and Stillman, *The Wizard of Oz*, 62.
- 24 Ibid., 72–76.
- 25 For an excellent discussion of cultural associations between lesbianism and the monstrous, see Rhona J. Berenstein, “‘I’m Not the Sort of Person Men Marry’: Monsters, Queers, and Hitchcock’s *Rebecca*,” *CineAction!* 29 (August 1992): 82–96.
- 26 Both Danae Clark’s “Commodity Lesbianism,” *Camera Obscura* 25/26 (January/May 1991): 181–201; and Christine Holmlund’s “When Is a Lesbian Not a Lesbian? The Lesbian Continuum and the Mainstream Femme Film,” *Camera Obscura* 25/26 (January/May 1991): 145–78, discuss the complexities and complications of popular culture coding that seeks to simultaneously represent the straight feminine and the lesbian femme. I use the term “femme-ininity” in this essay to express this coding and decoding dilemma. When I use the term “femme,” I am indicating specifically lesbian contexts and readings.
- 27 Among the many books and articles that discuss the connections between lesbianism and witchcraft are Vern L. Bullough, “Heresy, Witchcraft, and Sexuality,” in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, eds. Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), 206–17; Judy Grahn, *Another Mother Tongue* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 80–82, 93–98, 218, 242–43; Arthur Evans, *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture* (Boston: Fag Rag Books, 1978); and Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (London: Pandora, 1995), 72.

- 139–41, 216–17. I'll let two popular culture examples stand in for the many, many others that use the lesbian = witch paradigm. Mrs. Worthington's Daughters, an English theater company, presented "Any Marks or Deviations," by Charles Hughes-D'Aeth, on a national tour between May and June 1997. The play was advertised as "a chillingly witty ghost story harking back to a time when the love of two women could only mean the dealings of witchcraft." In *The Haunting* (1966, dir. Robert Wise), a doctor calls the two central female characters (one an out lesbian, one a closet case) "witches."
- 28 For most of her fantasy, Dorothy is positioned—or, rather, positions herself—in between the butch and the femme figures. This butch, femme, and femmy butch (or butchy femme) triad is repeated in a number of popular culture texts, such as the Nancy Drew mystery series, which features butch dark-haired cousin George, femme-inine blonde cousin Bess, and in-between red-head Nancy. The major women characters in the film *All about Eve* (1950, dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, dir.) also fall into these roles: blonde Karen (femme); ambitious, short-haired Eve (butch), and femmy butch/butchy femme Margo. Not surprisingly, the "star" of these kinds of texts always seems to be the character positioned between butch and femme. In *The Wizard of Oz* it seems to me as though Dorothy is moving toward becoming a femme, if her Emerald City beauty makeover is any indication.
- 29 Juhnke, "A Kansan's View," 175. In an August 28, 1939, review in the *Minneapolis Star-Journal* by nine-year-old Mary Diane Seibel, she says that "everybody but Dorothy and Toto thought it was a dream. I don't know what to think" (quoted in Fricke, Scarfone, Stillman, *The Wizard of Oz*, 186).
- 30 *Before Stonewall* (1984, dir. Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg), Allan Berubé, *Coming Out under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York: Plume, 1990).
- 31 Rushdie's description of Emerald City is worth repeating as it suggests something of the queerness of the place: "Members of the citizenry are dressed like Grand Hotel bellhops and glitzy nuns, and they say, or rather sing, things, like 'Jolly good fun!'" (*The Wizard of Oz*, 51). It is also worth remembering that Emerald City is where Dorothy and her male companions receive their beauty makeovers, which leaves the Cowardly Lion looking like Dorothy with a curly coiffeur and a bow in

his hair. And while we're pointing out the signs that mark Emerald City as queer, let's not forget "green" as in "green carnation," a favorite gay-coded accessory of urban dandies from the end of the nineteenth century into the early decades of the twentieth. For more on the green carnation in gay culture, see Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988), 39–59.

- 32 While certainly prominent in Dorothy's fantasy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion function as figures Dorothy has "go along for the ride" with her. She seems to have translated the three ostensibly straight farmhands who work for her aunt and uncle into gay companions mostly to help make her fantasy more queer-friendly. The support of these gay men (as well as femme Glinda) allow Dorothy to persist on the path to lesbianism even in the face of the "interruptions" she has the Wicked Witch devise for her. Considering what appear to be Dorothy's problems with more "obvious" signs and forms of lesbianism, it makes sense she would have gay men and femme-inine women represent benevolent queerness in her fantasy.
- 33 Noel Lagley, Florence Ryerson, and Edgar Allan Woolf, *The Wizard of Oz* (Monterey Park, CA: O.S.P. Publishing, 1994), 12. All further quoted references to dialogue and action in this essay are taken from this version of the script, which is a transcription of the final release version of the film. This script also contains appendices of material cut from the final released version of the film.
- 34 There is actually some confusion about just which Wicked Witch is the one who flies past Dorothy's window. Dorothy and the Munchkins' duet here suggests it is the Wicked Witch of the East as "the house began to pitch/The kitchen took a slitch/It landed on the Wicked Witch in the middle of a ditch." However, the Witch who flies past Dorothy in the cyclone is played by Margaret Hamilton, who is the Wicked Witch of the West in the rest of the film. Perhaps the two witches are meant to be twin sisters, or the confusion of the two is meant to suggest that Dorothy still conventionally sees all witches (particularly of the butch variety) as being alike. In any case, the points made later in this section about sexualizing the butch witch as well as those addressing the transformation of spinster Gulch into butch Wicked Witch remain valid no matter which Wicked Witch is looking to "satisfy [her] itch" with Dorothy.

- 35 The associative connection between Miss Gulch's last name and "West"—as in Western locales like "Dead Man's Gulch"—adds one more point to the case for Gulch turning into the Wicked Witch of the West here, and not into the one from the East.
- 36 Harmetz, *Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 40.
- 37 Rushdie offers "the heretical thought" that "maybe the Witch of the East *wasn't so bad as all that*—she certainly kept the streets clean, the houses painted and in good repair . . . she [also] seems to have ruled without the aid of soldiers, policemen or other regiments of repression. Why, then, is she so hated?" (*The Wizard of Oz*, 42). So from all that we can gather from Dorothy's fantasy, this particular butch witch may not have been such a monster after all. Perhaps Dorothy understands this at some level, for while she has Glinda and the Munchkins rehearse conventional cultural ideas about "ugly" butch witches by having them tell her how horrible the Witch of the East has been, Dorothy also protests to them that she killed the witch only "by accident."
- 38 Besides being a fetish item within Dorothy's fantasy narrative, the ruby slippers have become a more general cultural fetish. Outside of the Salman Rushdie short story, "The Auction of the Ruby Slippers," mentioned in note 15, there are many fiction and nonfiction references, stories, and articles about Oz's ruby slippers. Various pairs of the slippers created for the production have been auctioned over the years, and they have always set records for the most money ever paid for a piece of movie memorabilia. Two popular postcards reproduce the shots in the film of the ruby slippers on Dorothy's feet with 1) Glinda's star-tipped wand next to them, and 2) the Wicked Witch's green hands receiving a shock as she tries to take them off.

There is even a book about the slippers, *The Ruby Slippers of Oz* (Los Angeles: Tale Weaver Publishing, 1989), which centers around the attempts of writer Rhys Thomas to discover just how many pairs of slippers existed and exactly how they related to the making of *The Wizard of Oz*. For the record, Thomas found that "four pairs of ruby slippers are known to have survived the fifty years since the making of *The Wizard of Oz* at MGM in Culver City" (219). Thomas labels these four pairs "Dorothy's Shoes" (won in a contest in 1940 by Roberta Jeffries Bauman and auctioned in June 1988 for \$165,000), "The People's Shoes" (now on display at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, these are probably the pair purchased by

an anonymous buyer at the MGM auction in 1970 for \$15,000), "The Traveling Shoes" (owned by collector Michael Shaw), and "The Witch's Shoes" (formerly owned by MGM employee Kent Warner, purchased at an auction in August 1988 for \$165,000 by Philip Samuels, they are now on display at his art gallery in St. Louis) (218–24).

A more queer-specific cultural appearance of this fetish can be found in its recent translation into glittering rhinestone-studded pin versions of the red AIDS remembrance ribbons. Shocking Grey, a gay and lesbian mail order outfit, has advertised these pins ("the new gay and lesbian icon") in their catalog with an accompanying photo of an interracial lesbian couple, one of whom wears the ruby pin.

- 39 Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, 43. One suggestion scriptwriters Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf had for revising Noel Langley's script was to have Dorothy actually take the slippers ("Dorothy has always wanted red slippers") from a temporarily stunned, but not dead, Wicked Witch of the East (Harmetz, *Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 48). This would have made Dorothy much more active in expressing and attaining her desires than she is in the final film, where her fantasy consistently places her in the position of being "done to," or "accidentally" doing things to others. This position might be indicative of Dorothy's fears and hesitations about more directly expressing her "forbidden" dyke desires even in her own fantasy.
- 40 Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, 43.
- 41 Greenberg, "The Wizard of Oz," 15–25. Friedman's "Relinquishing Oz" more directly discusses Em as Dorothy's "heart's desire," but largely within a heterosexualized "home vs. the world" analysis of Dorothy's choices in life (21).
- 42 Fricke, Scarfone, and Stillman, *The Wizard of Oz*, 30. While Freed continued to insist that Oz scriptwriters carefully maintain one important emotional center of the film around the relationship between Dorothy and Aunt Em, he also realized that, at the same time, "the Wicked Witch must be made more of an antagonist" for Dorothy (30).
- 43 Greenberg, "The Wizard of Oz," 25.
- 44 Friedman, "Relinquishing Oz," 12.
- 45 Rushdie, *The Wizard of Oz*, 57.
- 46 Derek Jarman, "The Wizard of Oz," *Observer Magazine* (London) (April 1, 1981). Jarman also cites the film overall as a major influence on his own films.

- 47 Homocult, *Queer with Class: The First Book of Homocult* (Manchester, UK: MS.ED [The Talking Lesbian] PROMOTIONS, 1992).
- 48 Films cited: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937, dir. Walt Disney); *101 Dalmatians* (1960, dir. Wolfgang Reitherman, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi); *The Little Mermaid* (1989, dir. John Musker, Ron Clements).
- 49 Some lesbian enthusiasms for Judy Garland might have their source in the rumors of her affairs with women, which have been variously labeled "lesbian" and "bisexual." As for "Over the Rainbow," recent evidence that suggests this once almost exclusively gay cultural reference is now understood as also relating to lesbian (and also more generally queer) culture, include the rainbow symbol (which is widely used and marketed in various forms—flags, pins, bumper stickers, etc.), and a four-part television documentary titled *Over the Rainbow* (1994, Testing the Limits/Channel Four UK), which traces lesbian, gay, and queer cultures and politics from the 1950s to the present.