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## Briefly Noted: The Wizard of Oz as a Parable. Steve Adams.

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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### Additional Keywords

L. Frank Baum; OZ

There are several other interior illustrations as well. The issue includes a wide variety of content, such as Zuiko Julie Redding's Buddhist meditation on the One Ring and the characters who carry it, Kristin Thompson's account of the research and writing of her *The Frodo Franchise* (reprinted from TheOneRing.net), Douglas A. Anderson's appreciation of fantasy author Evangeline Walton, Jeanne Gomoll's speculation on the identity of the Entwives, and letters and a review. There are several more scholarly essays as well: Matthew A. Fisher on *Smith of Wootton Major* as a saint's life is very intriguing; Nelson Goering considers the etymology of Eärendil, and Thomas A. DuBois looks at language formation in both Middle-earth and Lewis's Space Trilogy; and Peter Brummel writes about power and evil in *The Lord of the Rings*. Perhaps most valuable is the transcript of a talk on the acquisition of the Tolkien manuscripts by Marquette (referenced earlier in this issue of *Mythlore* in Bill Fliss's article), originally given by John Rateliff in 2012 and specially revised with substantial new information for this issue of *Orcrist*.

Will there be another issue of *Orcrist*? Or will we have to wait another forty or more years? Richard West's Foreword offers no clues, but judging by this issue it would be quite welcome.

—Janet Brennan Croft



**THE WIZARD OF OZ AS A PARABLE.** Steve Adams. GFENC Productions. 222 pp. ISBN 9781514847374. \$14.95

ERSTWHILE COMMUNITY COLLEGE GEOLOGY INSTRUCTOR Steve Adams of North Carolina has crafted a study of L. Frank Baum's 1900 fantasy that must leap a high hurdle. "I wish to disclose from the outset that I cannot quote from the movie 'The Wizard of Oz,'" Adams writes in the first words of his preface. "The license fee is formidable. [...] Nor can I use terms and phrases exclusive to the movie that differ in the book. [...] I must stick to the book's terminology for the 'Tin Woodman' and the 'road of yellow bricks.' In the book, Dorothy's slippers were silver. I will call them the 'red slippers'."

Adams's attempt to find a spiritual paradigm in a work of make-believe is less egregious than the horrid *Chicken Soup for the Hobbit Soul* but far less lucid than Presbyterian minister Robert L. Short's 1965 best-selling *The Gospel According to Peanuts*. Adams drops a boggling pantheon of names: Joseph Campbell, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, P.L. Travers, and William Shakespeare. His religious sources include Islam, Hinduism, Judaism,

Christianity, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and the Quakers. On the cover, the Tin Woodman is posed as Buddha meditating.

Adams's sources make claims as staggering as his own assertions; he quotes Wayne Purdin, who says "The silver slippers . . . represent our direct connection to the white fire of Mother Earth through the base chakra, which is the seat of kundalini energy" (48). Occasionally Adams oversimplifies; for example, when he states that the lion Aslan of C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* chronicles represents God (120). A more distinguishing view is that Aslan symbolizes the crucified and reborn Christ.

But *The Wizard of Oz*, like Aesop's elephant felt by blind men, can mean many things to many readers.<sup>1</sup> To this reader, this Procrustean project is less convincing than other interpretations. *Oz* completists may find some value in Adams' book, which could be called *Chicken Soup for the Scarecrow Soul*. This reader did not.

Adams's parable is not what Baum ever intended. Some see wizards and gods in the clouds that are simply clouds.

—Mike Foster



## ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

**DOUGLAS A. ANDERSON'S** first book was *The Annotated Hobbit* (1988; revised and enlarged 2002). His anthologies include *Tales Before Tolkien* (2003) and *Tales Before Narnia* (2008). His blog about "Tolkien and Fantasy" can be found at [tolkienandfantasy.blogspot.com](http://tolkienandfantasy.blogspot.com). He was Scholar Guest of Honor at Mythcon in East Lansing, Michigan, in 2013.

**DIANE JOY BAKER** earned a BA in Journalism from Suffolk University, and an MA from the University of Cincinnati. She is a long term, though intermittent, member of the Mythopoeic Society.

**CAIT COKER** is a genre historian with a background in fan history and women's writing. Her book reviews have appeared in *The Future Fire* as well as *The SFRA Review* and *Mythlore*, and her essays have appeared in *Transformative Works and Cultures* and *The Journal of Fandom Studies*.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the theory espoused by Hugh Rockoff that the tale is an allegory for debates on the Gold Standard in the post-Civil War era. See "The Wizard of Oz as a Monetary Allegory." *The Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (1990), pp. 739–760.