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Abstract

Imagine having the land of your birth, a place about which you feel complex and wildly ambivalent feelings, reduced to a banal cartoon. You meet someone, and out of nowhere, this well-meaning stranger flashes a hideous smile and asks, Where's Toto? Oh, that's right, we're not in Kansas anymore ...

Keywords

Kansas, reality, Oz



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Why I Hate The Wizard of Oz

by Robert Rebein

Imagine having the land of your birth, a place about which you feel complex and wildly ambivalent feelings, reduced to a banal cartoon. You meet someone, and out of nowhere, this well-meaning stranger flashes a hideous smile and asks, Where's Toto? Oh, that's right, we're not in Kansas anymore ...You get this in Indiana, New York, South Carolina, California. Even as far afield as Paris, you get it. *Kansoz! Ah, oui. Les munchkins ...*

How to say you hail from a place uninhabited by tin men and sweet little girls in pinafores—a demanding, starkly beautiful place with twenty-mile views and sunflowers as big as your head and night skies so clear it's no cliché to believe yourself to have been born among stars; where the wind blows without cease and flies bite like vampires and the stink of the slaughterhouse overhangs everything like that cloud in *White Noise*; where it is not unusual for a kid like yourself to receive his first shotgun at ten, drive a semi at twelve, solo in a Beechcraft Debonair at fourteen or fifteen ...

Does that sound like Oz? you want to ask.

You don't, though. Why bother? When the tornado came and swept you away, as you knew all along it would, it was not to drop you into some technicolor fantasy, but rather into the same drab world of Applebee's and Best Buy the jokesters inhabit. That's the context here. That's the reason you refuse to join Dorothy's fan club.

Robert Rebein's recent nonfiction has appeared in *The Cream City Review*, *Ecotone*, *Bayou*, *Grasslands Review*, and *The Georgia Review*. This essay is from a collection in progress entitled *Dragging Wyatt Earp: Essays on Place and Identity*. He teaches in the creative writing program at Indiana University Purdue University in Indianapolis.



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