

WORD PLAY IN THE L. FRANK BAUM FANTASIES

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Lyman Frank Baum, author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and thirteen other Oz books, also wrote many fantasies for children that did not have Oz as a setting. In all these books he liked to make up names for persons, places, and things. These names often involved word play. Puns were the most common form, but Baum also indulged in anagrams, spoonerisms, reversals, and other forms of linguistic whimsies.

I recently compiled an alphabetical list of all of Baum's invented proper names, and tried to identify the intended play. In most cases Baum's made-up names have no special significance, and when word play is involved it most often is obvious. Examples include such names as Betty Blithesome, Madame de Payke (a psychic donkey who reads hoofs), Tottenhots, Professor Nowitall, Nuphsed, Ann Soforth, Tom Ato, Grunter Swyne (a pig), Miss Trust, Duchess Bredenbutta and hundreds of others.

Here are some alphabetized instances of less-obvious word play:

SIR AUSTED ALFRIN, a poet (England's poet laureate of the time was Sir Alfred Austin)

SIR PRYSE BOCKS, surprise box

CHOPFYTE, a composite man made from parts of the bodies of Nick Chopper (the Tin Woodman's name before he became tin) and Captain Fyter

MISS CUTTENCLIP, who cuts and clips paper figures that come to life

DAMA, a forbidden fruit (a reversal of Adam)

JOHNNY DOIT, a carpenter who can make anything in a jiffy

DOT AND DOT, the protagonists of *Dot and Dot in Merryland* (Dot for Dorothy)

JOE FILES, an army private (extensive files are necessary in the army, and soldiers march in files)

GLINDA, the good witch of the Quadling region of Oz (anagram of the last six letters in Quadling)

HARTILAF, a giant with a hearty laugh

HERKUS, persons of great strength like Hercules

INGA, prince of the Island of Pingaree (Inga consists of letters two through five in Pingaree)

JELLIA JAMB, Ozma's maid (jelly and jam)

GENERAL JINJUR, a woman full of "ginger"

KING KREWL, a cruel king

KWYTOFFLE, a quite awful humbug wizard

PRINCESS LANGWIDERE, a woman with a languid air

LIM-MON-EAG, a hybrid monster combining lion, monkey, and eagle

NOLAND, a mythical "no land"

OZ. It has been widely reported that Baum saw O-Z on a file cabinet, but this may be a myth (if O and Z are shifted backward one step in the alphabet, you get NY, the state where Baum was born and reared; if O and Z are shifted forward one step with Z joined to A, you arrive at PA, the state where Baum's successor, Ruth Plumly Thompson, lived)

PRINCESS OZMA, the appended "ma" could stand for mother or the first two letters of Maud, the name of Baum's wife

KING PHEARCE, a fierce king

LORD PINKERBLOO, pink or blue

RAK, a giant creature who breathes out smoke ("Kar (car)" backward)

TALLYDAB, TELLYDEB, TILLYDIB, TOLLYDOB, TULLYDUB, five counsellors to Queen Zixi (each of the five vowels appears twice in each name)

TIETJAMUS TOIPS, a musician ("Tietj" begins the last name of Paul Tietjens, Baum's friend who wrote the music for the stage version of *The Wizard*)

TIP, Ozma in enchanted form as a boy; when she was later kidnapped by Ugu, he transformed her into a peach pit ("pit" is "Tip" backward)

UGU, an evil shoemaker (the third column of the rectangle at right, containing his wife's full name, spells UGU--coincidence?)

MAUD

GAGE

BAUM

WOOT, the protagonist of the *Tin Woodman of Oz* (the book's title has the acronym TWOO; move T from front to back to get WOOT)

WILL-TAKUM, a thief who "will take" whatever he wants

QUEEN ZIXI OF IX (shift the Hebrew letters for Jehovah, YHWH, forward one step and you get ZIXI; shift XI back nine steps to get OZ)

Oz is divided into four regions: Gillikin in the north, Winkie in the west, Munchkin in the east, and Quadling in the south. The Gillikin region, where the dominant color is purple, may have been named after the purple blossoms of the gillyflower, a plant that flourishes in upper New York where Baum spent his boyhood. I have also speculated that Munchkin may refer to the munching of breakfast after the sun rises in the east. The color of this region is blue, perhaps a reference to the sky turning blue in early morning. Winkie may refer to the winking of sleepy eyes when the sun sets in the west. The Winkie color of yellow could suggest the gold of sunsets. Quadling clearly stands for the fourth region of Oz.

The most puzzling of Baum's proper names is Tititi-Hoochoo, the handsome black-eyed ruler of a land at the other end of a tube that goes through the earth. It has been suggested that the name sounds like a sneeze, but Baum may have had something else in mind. My wild conjecture is that Baum originally intended the ruler to be a beautiful dark-eyed dancer combining a reference to her breasts with the erotic dance called the hootchie-cootchie. The book's publisher forced him to change the ruler to a man to avoid titillating child readers.