Lions and Tigers and Rears and Environmental Activists, Oh My! An Eco-critical Reading of L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

Mollie Barnes
Agnes Scott College Decatur, Georgia

Rebecca Weber
Agnes Scott College Decatur, Georgia

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/tor

Part of the American Literature Commons, and the Literature in English, North America Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/tor/vol7/iss1/3
Lions and Tigers and Rears and Environmental Activists, Oh My! An Eco-critical Reading of L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

Keywords
L. Frank Baum, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Eco-critical
In L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and three friends, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Lion, travel to Emerald City in search of happiness. In the process, they also find home. The characters’ journey through the Land of Oz is not a linear progression; rather, it is a jumbled passage through the forests and the fields to the city—and then back again. The confusion that Dorothy and her companions experience during their seemingly aimless travels in Oz reflects the confusion that many Americans experienced during the 1900s in the developing Midwest: the conflict between economy and ecology. Baum, who lived in the Dakotas, saw the dustbowl transformed into an industrial frontier. His fictional Kansas and Oz reflect this reconstruction of the natural world. He sets a gray but real
Kansas prairie against a rich but illusory Emerald City that, in many ways, resembles Chicago after the 1893 Columbian Exposition. In this way, Baum situates his novel at the nexus of the environmentalist debate. Published in 1900, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* speaks to a young generation faced with a new set of ideological questions. Dorothy and the Tin Woodman are products of their natural environments and their socioeconomic environments. Throughout the story, these two characters waver between acting for themselves and acting for their environments. They are both wild and domestic. They are both protectors and destroyers.

The first American ecologists were turn-of-the-century writers and politicians. While nineteenth-century essayists like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau wrote about the value of the American environment, twentieth-century activists like John Burroughs and John Muir wrote about the vulnerability of the American environment: “although the roots of an environmentalist consciousness can be found in Romanticism and . . . Transcendentalism, environmentalism in its modern sense—which implies an active effort to conserve and protect nature—is little more than a hundred years old” (Rahn, “Green Worlds for Children” 151). Baum lived and wrote during this transitional period. His story captures the beginning of an American identity crisis historically and geographically. David B. Parker, Professor of History, explains that Baum published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* “when the
United States was in a tremendous state of flux, its rural agrarian society steadily giving way to cities and factories. Some Americans championed the new urban/industrial order, while others mourned the loss of a more traditional life and the values and virtues that had accompanied it” (2). Dorothy represents this divided American population because she comes from Kansas, a state in the heart of an American Midwest that was in a period of transition. The characters in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* experience the tensions of Baum’s time as they travel across the Munchkins’ fields towards the Wizard’s Emerald City.

The publication of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* marks an important moment in American children’s literature and in American environmental literature. In “Green Worlds for Children,” Suzanne Rahn explains the deep-rooted connection between the two:

[N]ot surprisingly—if one believes, like the Romantics, that children and the green world belong together—children were informed and involved from the outset. In fact, merely by studying old volumes of *St. Nicholas Magazine* that children read in the 1870s and ’80s and ’90s, one can trace the changes in attitudes toward the wilderness and its creatures with which environmentalism began. (151)

Activists created the first green magazines and organizations in the late 1800s and early 1900s for children, not for adults.
Consequently, these children were the first Americans widely exposed to conservationist thinking. Baum speaks to the children of this generation through the actions of Dorothy, a little girl. Fred Erisman writes, "Baum wrote for children—children who would become the adults of the next generation. He presents to them a twofold picture of the world: in one form it is flawed, but still possesses, in traditional values, the seeds of perfection; in the other, it is perfect" (qtd. in Bloom 6). When reading *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, children must confront this conflict of values. Baum does not reduce the setting of his story to a symbol. Dorothy, the Tin Woodman, the Lion, and the Wizard feel connected to the countryside, not to the country. They define home as a natural place, not as a political construction. Still, Baum's book is not a scientific study of the plants and animals in the Land of Oz. Instead, it is the story of an American girl who must choose between profiting from the land and preserving the land as she tries to find herself and her way home.

Baum introduces Dorothy by describing the land from which she comes: "Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife" (Baum 11). The first sentence of the story tells the reader very little about Dorothy. Instead, it places the protagonist in an environmental and economical context: Dorothy comes from a rural, but agricultural, area and probably from a poor, but hard-working, family. The words "in the midst" suggest
that Dorothy is just a small part of her surroundings. Likewise, Uncle Henry is simply “a farmer” and Aunt Em is simply “the farmer’s wife.” Baum describes Uncle Henry with an indefinite article, making him appear anonymous in the “great Kansas prairies.” Interestingly, Baum’s initial depiction of Aunt Em makes her the domesticator and the domesticated: she lives and works on the farm, but she belongs to her husband.

From the start, nature seems more powerful than people. The sun and the wind—untamed, intangible parts of nature—define the land and the families who depend on it. In the opening scene, Dorothy is static because her surroundings are static:

[W]hen Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. (12)

The young girl sees the emptiness of the American Midwest from the doorway of her house, the only visible boundary in the scene. Dorothy’s home appears empty and eroded—but vast. The soil is weather-beaten. The sun, which should nourish the grass, has killed it. The words
"nothing," "not," and "gray" make the ground appear barren, like the Dakota badlands, not fertile, like the fields in Kansas. Biographers attribute this geographical incongruence to the fact that Baum lived in the Dakotas, not in Kansas (Bloom 1). Agriculture is central to their small community, but the land means more than money. In the chapter entitled "'Now We Can Cross the Shifting Sands': The Outer Landscape of Oz," Rahn explains that "Baum's most conspicuous cluster of sensory details occurs in the first two chapters of The Wizard, creating the contrast between gray, dry Kansas, and the colorful, fertile world of Oz; his purpose here . . . is not simply to make both places vivid to the imagination but to define them as states of being" (The Wizard of Oz: Shaping an Imaginary World 80). The land is as alive as the people. The sun has human actions — it bakes, burns, and plows. These verbs describe a sort of domestication: the weather cooks the grass until the ground is gray and dead. Through these verbs, Baum suggests that the farmers affect the land at least as much as the land affects the farmers. In fact, before Americans made the Midwest the agricultural center of the country, the grass grew five or six feet high (Chicago: City of the Century). Nature domesticates the land through the heat of the sun and the farmers domesticate the land with the blades of their plows. The reader—a child at the turn of the century—must decide whether the land in the story is gray because it is wild or gray because it has lost its wildness.

Baum also attributes the graying of the house and
the people to the weather, an uncontrollable part of the Kansas wilderness. The paint on the farmhouse fades and cracks, like the soil, despite Uncle Henry and Aunt Em’s effort to preserve it: “once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else” (Baum 12). Nature has a similar damaging effect on Aunt Em, who becomes gray, physically and psychologically, after she moves to Kansas: “when Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray, also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled, now” (12). Aunt Em, a childless woman, is infertile because her environment is stagnant. Similarly, Uncle Henry defines himself and his life by the cycle of the sun and the cycle of the soil. Farming allows Uncle Henry to be independent from the political development of the country but forces him to be dependent on the agricultural development of the land. The farm is Uncle Henry’s work, but it is also his home: “he worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also” (15). Thus, in the first few pages of the story, Baum reverses the typical human-nature relationship. The land does not reflect the people’s psychological or physiological state. Instead, the health of the people reflects the health of the land (Barry 259). With this subtle difference, Baum establishes an ecological—rather than an anthropomorphic—attitude.
Toto, Dorothy’s dog, brings the scene and the little girl to life: “it was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog, with long, silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly” (Baum 15). Like Dorothy, an orphan, and Aunt Em, a childless woman, Toto seems displaced in rural Kansas. Little black dogs are not native to the Midwest. Toto’s fur is black and healthy against the gray fields, and he is a pet, not a sheepdog or a wolf. Perhaps he is black because he is not completely wild or completely tame. Toto is stuck in the middle of the struggle between humans and the environment. Because he is not part of this struggle, he is not gray.

Eventually, a cyclone disrupts the stillness and the silence on the farm. Before the storm approaches, the people are static: Dorothy stands in the doorway, Aunt Em stands at the sink, and Uncle Henry sits on the porch. After spotting the dark clouds, however, Uncle Henry “ran toward the sheds where the cows and horses were kept” and “Aunt Em dropped her work and came to the door” (16). The characters’ movement on the farm is only a reaction to the movement of the approaching storm. Uncle Henry’s warning to Aunt Em serves as the first piece of dialogue: “‘[T]here’s a cyclone coming, Em,’ he called to his wife; ‘I’ll go look after the stock’” (16). In this way,
the storm introduces Baum’s story. Interestingly, Uncle Henry behaves like a farmer in this moment, not like a husband. His instinct tells him to protect the farm animals first, not Aunt Em or Dorothy. The reader must wonder whether Uncle Henry runs to the barn to save the cows and the horses because they are helpless animals or because they represent a potential profit.

When the cyclone hits the farmhouse, the wind sweeps Dorothy and Toto up into the air. The passage describes the energy and the entropy of the storm, not the fears of the girl caught up in it: “the north and south winds met where the house stood, and made it the exact center of the cyclone. In the middle of a cyclone the air is generally still, but the great pressure of the wind on every side of the house raised it higher and higher, until it was at the very top of the cyclone; and there it remained and was carried miles and miles away” (16-17). Indeed, Baum’s language is scientific. He positions the house in the “exact center” of the spinning cyclone and measures the “pressure of the wind” that surrounds Dorothy and Toto. The weather’s function is practical because the cyclone removes Dorothy from one setting and replaces her in another in a very real way. As Peter Barry states, “the storm is a storm, and not just a metaphor” (259). The external chaos in the environment does not represent an internal chaos in Dorothy’s mind.

In fact, the cyclone does not scare Dorothy until Toto wanders “too near the open trap door” (Baum 17).
Both Dorothy and Toto appear desensitized to nature because of their respective forms of domestication. Dorothy manages to fall asleep while the house whirrs across the desert to the Land of Oz. When Dorothy wakes up, she finds herself in a very different environment: “banks of gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered in the trees and bushes. A little way off was a small brook, rushing and sparkling along between green banks, and murmuring in a voice very grateful to a little girl who had lived so long on the dry, gray prairies” (22). Baum sets the green in Oz against the gray in Kansas, the “rich and luscious fruits” against the “baked” and “burned” grass, and the birds’ songs against the prairie’s silence. As an outsider, Dorothy appreciates the natural beauty of the trees, but Baum also attaches a monetary term to them. Their fruit is “luscious” and “rich” (22). Dorothy, who was raised on a farm, sees the trees as plants and as a form of produce. The Land of Oz becomes a sort of utopia because it is “rich” in aesthetic and economic value.

Still, Dorothy never plans to stay in Oz. She feels homesick for her family and her farm in Kansas. Eventually, she meets the Good Witch of the North, who tells her that the Wizard in Emerald City will help her find a way home. When Dorothy asks how to find the city, the Good Witch says that “it is exactly in the center of the country” (31). Dorothy learns that Emerald City was built by the Wizard, a man from Omaha. While Dorothy represents
the rural people in the Midwest, the Wizard represents the city-builders. Architects came to Chicago and “built the White City of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition from the marshes along Lake Michigan” (Hearn 267). Within a few years, this “mud hole” was transformed into a “metropolis” (Chicago: City of the Century). The Wonderful Wizard of Oz was published only seven years after the World’s Fair. Chicago, like Emerald City, sits in the center of an agrarian country. Both cities serve as links between the East and the West. Furthermore, both cities display their developers’ wealth. Chicago’s White City was classical. The buildings and the streets were constructed of white marble. Likewise, the Wizard paves the streets of his city with marble and lines the cracks with emerald stones. His city’s green glow is artificial. Michael Patrick Hearn writes, “[O]f course the magic of the White City of Chicago was all an illusion like that of the Emerald City of Oz” (267). Emerald City, the capitol of Oz, reflects the industrial need for money in place of nature. Historians say the same about the construction of the White City: “for much of the nineteenth century . . . [America] was a familiar world, rooted in nature,” but “Chicago turned this world on its head” (Chicago: City of the Century). In essence, Emerald City, like Chicago, “was a crucible of the larger transformations that the country was undergoing—from agriculture to industry, from rural isolation to the crowding of urban life, from the seasons and the movements of the sun dictating our rhythms to the movements of the punch
clock" (Chicago: City of the Century). Dorothy—like all Americans at the turn of the century—must confront these “transformations” so that she does not stay stranded, alone, in an unfamiliar country.

Dorothy begins interacting with her environment more directly when she begins her journey through Oz along the yellow brick road. The choices that she makes in order to survive reveal her system of values. In some cases, Dorothy’s actions are defined by self-interest; in other cases, her behavior suggests a growing concern for the environment. Before she leaves the house and starts down the yellow brick road, Dorothy prepares some food, but she eats only bread and fresh fruit during her long journey to the Emerald City:

[W]hen Dorothy was left alone she began to feel hungry. So she went to the cupboard and cut herself some bread, which she spread with butter. She gave some to Toto, and taking a pail from the shelf she carried it down to the little brook and filled it with clear, sparkling water. Toto ran over the trees and began to bark at the birds sitting there. Dorothy went to get him, and saw such delicious fruit hanging from the branches that she gathered some of it, finding it just what she wanted to help out her breakfast. (Baum 35)

Baum details Dorothy’s eating habits throughout the story. For instance, she eats eggs and porridge when she stops to
rest in a Munchkin farmer’s house. On another occasion, Dorothy and the Tin Woodman beg the Lion not to hunt a deer even though they have run out food. Dorothy’s diet suggests that she is a vegetarian: “‘Oz was free from many of the fads which have attracted much attention in the outside world,’ S. J. Sackett wrote in ‘The Utopia of Oz.’ At one time, however, Dorothy was taken by an idea which was rather close to vegetarianism. A close look at Dorothy’s diet in *The Wizard of Oz* reveals no meat of any kind” (Hearn 118). Dorothy does not subscribe to vegetarianism out of necessity. The Tin Woodman and the Lion, friends she makes while traveling down the yellow brick road, are quite capable of hunting. Dorothy, like Baum’s mother-in-law, Matilda Joslyn Gage, is likely an ethical vegetarian. Gage writes that such vegetarians “‘think all life—even of animals, birds, and insects—is sacred. They think it is very wrong to kill anything that lives. They also think it is bad for anyone to eat flesh food’” (qtd. in Hearn 118). Dorothy never eats any kind of animal. In his “Introduction,” Baum claims that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is not designed to teach morality; however, Dorothy, like Baum’s readers, is a child who is in the process of learning right from wrong. Dorothy’s decision not to eat meat reflects her evaluation of the ethical environment in which she lives. On several occasions, she chooses an animal’s welfare over her own.

When Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, however, she must question her clear-cut definition of “animal.” The
Scarecrow—a man made of straw, not flesh—appears very much alive to Dorothy and Toto. Baum describes his body in great anatomical detail: “its head was a small sack stuffed with straw, with eyes, nose, and mouth painted on it to represent a face. An old, pointed blue hat, that had belonged to some Munchkin, was perched on his head, and the rest of the figure was a blue suit of clothes, worn and faded, which had also been stuffed with straw” (Baum 42). The Scarecrow blurs the line between the human world and the natural world. His body, which is stuffed with straw, comes from the land, but his face, which is painted, comes from the people who harvest it. Furthermore, the straw man wears a Munchkin’s clothes. Dorothy accepts these liminal states because she has seen scarecrows in Kansas; however, she feels confused when the Scarecrow begins to move: “while Dorothy was looking earnestly into the queer, painted face of the Scarecrow, she was surprised to see one of the eyes slowly wink at her. She thought she must have been mistaken, at first, for none of the Scarecrows in Kansas ever wink; but presently the figure nodded its head to her in a friendly way” (42-45). In Kansas, the scarecrows stand still in the cornfields. In Oz, however, these mannequins become real men.

The new agricultural and industrial landscape challenges Dorothy, like all Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century, to evaluate what critic G. Stanley Hall describes as “the difference between living tissue and dead matter, between life and mechanism” (qtd. in Culver 614).
Dorothy confronts this difference through her doll-like friends, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman. Dorothy and the Scarecrow understand that he has a very different kind of body—hers is human, while his is dried grain—but Dorothy does not make a distinction between the two kinds of life. Does the Scarecrow consider himself a person or a product of the agricultural landscape? He says that he cannot feel because he is not made of flesh: “I don’t mind my legs and arms and body being stuffed, because I cannot get hurt. If anyone treads on my toes or sticks a pin into me, it doesn’t matter, for I can’t feel it” (Baum 47). The Scarecrow devalues his own body, suggesting that he is vulnerable because he is constructed of natural elements unnaturally. He is unfeeling physically, but not emotionally. The Scarecrow’s complicated sensitivity helps to make Dorothy aware of the perhaps muted environmental debate of her time. Ultimately, Dorothy must decide whether she can identify with the Scarecrow. Accordingly, Hall “saw in the doll ‘the most original, free and spontaneous expression of the child’s mind’ . . . Doll play seemed . . . an important tool for getting children to confront difficult questions about human identity and embodiment” (Culver 613). In the real world, children learn that dolls cannot move or speak or feel, but in Baum’s world, Dorothy learns the exact opposite through her anthropomorphized friend.

Dorothy and the Scarecrow talk about the meaning of home as they travel down the yellow brick road together:
"Tell me something about yourself, and the country you came from," said the Scarecrow" (Baum 52). Dorothy tells him "all about Kansas, and how gray everything was there, and how the cyclone had carried her to this queer Land of Oz" (52). While she describes Kansas, Dorothy says nothing about herself, her family, or her own interests. She tells the Scarecrow only about the farm and the weather. Dorothy's response suggests that she defines herself by her homeland. Moreover, Dorothy interprets the word "country" to mean countryside. For Dorothy, Kansas is a natural environment, not a political environment. When the Scarecrow replies, "I cannot understand why you should wish to leave this beautiful country and go back to the dry, gray place you call Kansas," Dorothy becomes defensive. She says, "[N]o matter how dreary and gray our homes are, we people of flesh and blood would rather live there than in any other country, be it ever so beautiful. There is no place like home" (52-53). Ironically, the little, lost girl must explain her feeling of rootedness to the man made of straw. Before Dorothy rescued the Scarecrow, he stood above a cornfield, attached to a pole. Despite this physical connection to the land in Oz, the Scarecrow cannot understand Dorothy's emotional connection to her home in Kansas. Dorothy explains to the Scarecrow that unlike people of straw, "people of flesh and blood" depend on their homes for happiness and security (52). In essence, Dorothy says that she chooses home because her natural instincts overpower her interests in beauty or wealth.
Still, the Scarecrow may have a point. In his discussion of wild and domestic lands, Barney Nelson describes Western writer Mary Austin’s perspective on rootedness and its relationship to the concept of homeland. Austin was "so fiercely loyal to place that she believed any desire to return to a former homeland, through a mythic longing either for a lost Eden, for lost tribal lands, or for lost childhood places, was a sentimental, nostalgic journey that devalued the current home" (Nelson 19). In this way, Dorothy’s yearning for her home in Kansas, for either emotional or economical reasons, “devalues” the Scarecrow’s home in the Land of Oz.

As the two continue down the path, the fields fade into the forest. The environment and the animals that live in it become wilder: “there were no fences at all by the road side now, and the land was rough and untilled. Towards evening they came to a great forest, where the trees grew so big and close together that their branches met over the road of yellow brick. It was almost dark under the trees, for the branches shut out the daylight” (Baum 58). When Dorothy and the Scarecrow venture further into this wild part of Oz, they meet the Tin Woodman, who is debatably the least wild of the four main characters in the novel. The Tin Woodman blurs the distinction not only between human and not human but also between wild and domestic. His tin body reflects the Industrial Revolution, the time period during which Baum wrote his story, particularly the industrial impetus that led to the development
of Chicago. Baum’s contemporaries—like the notorious muckraker Upton Sinclair—and modern-day historians look to the meatpacking industry as the prime example of the Midwest’s economic and environmental exploitation:

‘[I]n Phillip Armour’s Chicago, they did it straight,’ Norman Mailer would write, ‘they cut the animals right out of their hearts,’ which is why it was the last of the Great AmericanCities. And people had great faces, as carnal as blood, too impatient for hypocrisy, an honest love for plunder. The Chicago packing houses became the largest killing field in the world [...] a person could visit the lumber yards or the grain elevators without pondering their meaning—not the stockyards. (Chicago: City of the Century)

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, people destroyed trees and killed animals living on the land on which they built cities. Baum embodies this conflict between man and nature through a character—the Tin Woodman. He humanizes the Tin Woodman, who retains a human spirit even when his physical body is replaced with a mechanical body. This humanization redefines what a living organism is and, therefore, what a wild organism is. Hearn writes that “by transforming the talking beasts of ancient folk tales into talking machines, Baum grafted twentieth-century technology to the fairy tale tradition. The useful, friendly, companionable creatures of Oz became part of the child’s
family life, much as the automobile was becoming integrated into contemporary American society” (88). The Tin Woodman relates the tale of his recreation, during which the Wicked Witch of the East enchants his axe so that it chops off one of his legs, then the other, and continues in this piecemeal manner until the Tin Woodman must craft himself an entirely new body. He becomes tin from head to toe. In losing his physical and natural body, it is surprising that the Tin Woodman is able to maintain his life. He does not lose the source of “wildness” present in all living things. In his essay “Walking,” Henry David Thoreau “argues that wildness is [. . .] something that cannot be lost, something that should be both valued and feared” (Nelson 4). Like Thoreau, Baum “makes it clear that civilization can hide it, oppression can stifle it, but scratch the surface deep enough to draw blood, and wildness springs eternal” (Nelson 4). Perhaps the Tin Woodman’s lack of blood leads to his ecological ignorance and ambivalence. The paradox of simultaneously being a producer and a destroyer originates from the “wildness” that remains in his human soul—the undeclared driving force which keeps him alive. Nelson writes that “in short, the ‘wildness’ Thoreau struggles to define cannot be bred out, beaten out, preached out, educated out, or domesticated out of any animal” (7). Nor can it be chopped off, as in the Tin Woodman’s case.

The Tin Woodman also proves uncategorizable because his line of work places him in the midst of a natural
setting—the wilderness of a thick forest. But he lives like the less wild, more realistic Munchkins: he has a job, owns a cottage, and interacts with the Munchkins, especially associating himself with “one of the Munchkin girls who was so beautiful [he] soon grew to love her with all [his] heart” (Baum 70). Both the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow blur Dorothy’s categorical definitions. The Tin Woodman admits that he has no brains, like the Scarecrow; still, the Woodman chooses ignorance over unhappiness: “‘I shall take the heart,’ returned the Tin Woodman; ‘for brains do not make one happy, and happiness is the best thing in the world’” (73). This choice to remain without brains reflects the fact that the Tin Woodman is ignorant about ecological matters and about the consequences of his actions.

The Woodman’s dualistic nature is further developed through his trade. As a woodcutter, he is part of the wilderness, but he also destroys the wilderness. His profession requires him to be an inhabitant of the forest—not of the village or the city. This puts him in constant close contact with nature. At the same time, however, he chops down trees to build houses, making him both producer and destroyer. The producer-destroyer duality in the Tin Woodman’s occupation echoes in the duality of his own physical body: as his new tin body was produced piece by piece, his old, natural body was destroyed. Consequently, the Woodman’s first contribution to the newly-formed group happens when he “set to work with his axe and chopped so well that soon he cleared a passage for the entire party” (69).
He produces a clear path for the group as he destroys the surrounding natural habitat. As he does this, the Tin Woodman states that he “was the son of a woodman who chopped down trees in the forest and sold the wood for a living. When I grew up I too became a wood-chopper” (70). Thus, the Tin Woodman reveals that the dismemberment of the forest has a predestined, patriarchal history.

Dorothy learns to distinguish between flesh and straw when she meets the Scarecrow. Similarly, she learns to distinguish between male and female when she meets the Tin Woodman:

[T]ypically in Oz, women are . . . organic or ‘meat people,’ while men are more often than not manikins or robots; thus Baum’s child reader learns sexual difference as she learns what Hall saw as the more basic distinction between organic and vital organization. As she learns this difference, the reader confronts two antithetical drives: the female urge to incorporate is juxtaposed to a masculine desire first articulated in The Wizard of Oz by the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman. (Culver 619)

He is a Tin Woodman, while Dorothy is a young girl. The Woodman, living on the edge of civilization, reflects all the characteristics of a typical male figure: “frontiersmen, mountain men, and cowboys are represented as romantic, handsome, aggressive, self-reliant, and, of course, happily single” (Nelson 54). Indeed, the Tin Woodman
proves romantic and self-reliant, but also happily single. Though he says he laments his lost Munchkin love, the Tin Woodman desires even more the emotion and happiness that come with having his own heart. Culver writes that “one could argue that while Baum’s male characters anticipate science fiction’s obsession with the robotic duplication of humanity, his female characters look back to the archaic and aristocratic dualism of wicked witch and fairy princess” (616). Even the Tin Woodman’s instinct becomes mechanized when his axe turns his body to tin. His longing for a heart is really a longing for a tangible organ, not a longing for intangible love.

As the three companions continue toward Emerald City, Dorothy notices that “the road was still paved with yellow brick, but these were much covered by dried branches and dead leaves from trees, and the walking was not at all good” (Baum 79). The trees hide the vestiges of human construction when the environment gets wilder: the natural brown branches cover the man-made yellow bricks. The animals in the forest grow wilder, too. Dorothy hears “a deep growl from some wild animal hidden among the trees,” and moments later, the Lion “bound[s] into the road” (79-80). The Lion attacks the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, but Dorothy smacks him before he hurts Toto. At first, the Lion seems characteristically violent; however, he soon reveals that he feels just as scared as Dorothy and her friends. The Lion says, “‘[A]ll the other animals in the forest naturally expect me to be brave, for the Lion is
everywhere thought to be King of Beasts,’” but he continues, “‘Whenever I’ve met a man I’ve been awfully scared; but I just roared at him, and he has always run away as fast as he could go’” (82). Thus, the Lion, like Dorothy, feels stuck between instinct and self-interest. He knows that he is supposed to protect the forest from human invaders, but he gets caught up in his own emotions. He is a wild beast, but he is also a scared animal. The Lion’s violent response and Dorothy’s violent response are rooted in the same fear—a fear of otherness. Dorothy and the Lion become frightened because they cannot distinguish each other as clearly wild or clearly domestic creatures. Writers of the American West “realized not only that this imagined dichotomy between the wild and domestic was false, but that it also encouraged treating the West as a place of wild ‘otherness’” (Nelsen 57). When Dorothy scolds the Lion for attacking her dog and her new friends, the Lion asks what kind of creature Toto is: “‘Is he made of tin, or stuffed?’ asked the lion. ‘Neither. He’s a — a — a meat dog,’ said the girl” (Baum 82). The Lion, like Dorothy, seems to struggle with distinguishing between flesh and straw and tin.

Although Dorothy does not seem shocked that the Lion has human qualities, his personification is significant to the text. The popularity of animal stories in the late 1800s and early 1900s reflects the period’s politicized conservationist climate. According to Suzanne Rahn, “one of the most striking developments in the history of children’s literature is the sudden rise of the animal story, both
realistic and fantastic . . . particularly, the story of wild animals. Before 1890, the few animals had been nearly all domestic animals” (“Green Worlds for Children” 159). Furthermore, Rahn writes that “perhaps the most startling innovation in the animal stories of this period is the appearance of wild predators in sympathetic roles” (6). The Lion is not just a wild animal: he is a predator, but he is a cowardly predator. Like Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman, the Lion feels displaced and incomplete in his surroundings so he decides to travel to Emerald City to see the Wizard. When the Lion joins Dorothy and her companions, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* becomes a classic American animal story and an early example of children’s environmental fiction.

Baum’s environmentalist stance is most obvious toward the end of the characters’ journey to the Emerald City. The tensions between the characters in Baum’s story represent the tensions between the people who supported preservation and the people who supported production: the Lion serves as a protector of his natural environment while the Tin Woodman appears to be its destroyer. The Lion reminds the reader that nature is its own protector against the industrial and destructive influence of man. The Lion, a “meat” or flesh animal, coexists with nature and serves to scare away the potentially dangerous human predators. The Lion is a representative of the Transcendentalist sentiments that saturated American Literature in the nineteenth century. Through the Lion, Baum echoes Thoreau’s
environmentalist thinking that “in Wildness is the preservation of the world” (qtd. in Nelson 4). Nelson continues by explaining that “[Thoreau] does not say that wildness needs our condescending protection, but rather that wildness will protect us” (4). Throughout the novel, the Lion ignores his cowardice to protect the party of travelers, much as he protects his fellow forest creatures before meeting Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman. The reader meets the Lion during one of his protective bouts, when he views these half-men as a potential threat to his homeland. Nature seems well-suited to care not only for its inhabitants but also for itself. For example, when the three first leave the frontier and enter the wilderness, the Tin Woodman declares, “If I should get caught in the rain, and rust again, I would need the oil-can badly” (Baum 69). The Tin Woodman learns to fear the rain—a natural force. He seems to understand that nature will fight against his abuse of the forest, perhaps rendering him immobile for “more than a year” again (65). Nature repeatedly gets its revenge for the Tin Woodman’s violent tree chopping.

During their journey out of the forest, the Woodman inadvertently steps on a beetle and kills it. In this instance, his natural instincts overcome his industrial, tin half and make him “very unhappy, for he was always careful not to hurt any living creatures” (85). It seems paradoxical that the Woodman, whose body blurs the distinction between animal and machine, creates such a clear distinction between creature and non-creature. He has no qualms about
chopping trees, but he “[weeps] several tears of sorrow and regret” over one beetle (85). Hearn comments on this entrenched incongruity: “Despite his lack of a heart, the Tin Woodman is still able to express concern for all living creatures; evidently he has learned from the experience that closed the last chapter. But his moral position remains ambiguous” (118). The Woodman’s body is both natural and industrial, and his behavior reflects this blurred identity. He wavers between supporting nature and supporting industry.

Even the Tin Woodman’s environmental activism appears tainted by his industrial nature. His activist tendencies resurface when the group stops for dinner after joining up with the Lion, who offers to “go into the forest and kill a deer” (Baum 89-90). The Tin Woodman vehemently objects to hunting. “Don’t! Please don’t...I should certainly weep if you killed a poor deer,” he pleads (90), identifying with a natural wildness and reinforcing the vegetarian lifestyle that values animals as living organisms, but, ironically, devalues plants. The Woodman, like the intrusive and destructive speculators in early twentieth-century Chicago, is driven by self-interest. While he acts like an ecological activist for the life of the woodland creatures, he denies the Lion’s natural tendencies as a predator and a provider. In this way, the Tin Woodman realigns himself with his industrial half. He also reinforces a masculine model—the industrial man as the provider. He opposes the Lion’s offer to hunt, but he has no problem
chopping down trees. He uses his man-made tools to provide warmth for Dorothy, but he denies the Lion a more instinctive means of providing food for her. The Tin Woodman mimics the selfish speculators of the American frontier because he is driven by profit—a new heart awaits him in Emerald City. Likewise, Chicago, the city on which Baum based much of Oz, “is the city where . . . human life is secondary to making money” (Chicago: City of the Century). In his quest for personal profit, the Tin Woodman neglects the basic needs of the rest of the party. In fact, the Tin Woodman, who does not even eat, is the character that objects most to the Lion’s hunting. Furthermore, he makes no effort to supply food for the “flesh” members of their group: the Scarecrow provides nuts for Dorothy and the Lion must fend for himself. In effect, the Tin Woodman “tames” the Lion, the only wild one in the group.

The Tin Woodman tries to blunt the Lion’s instincts again, later, when the four travelers come to a very wide and very deep gulf that proves impassable. The Lion does not use his natural strength to overcome the obstacle as he would have done before meeting Dorothy and the Tin Woodman. Instead, he supports the Scarecrow’s idea that the Tin Woodman chop down a nearby tree in order to build a bridge, referring to it as “a first rate idea” (Baum 94). The Lion even helps the Tin Woodman knock down the tree. In effect, the Lion joins the Tin Woodman in the destruction of an environment that he formerly protected. Yet again, a character’s former environmentalist tendencies are
jeopardized and lost to the Tin Woodman’s industrial agenda. In this way, the Tin Woodman is both an object of the industrial age and an advocate for the industrial lifestyle which places economy over ecology and production over reproduction.

The Tin Woodman also becomes an interesting character for eco-feminist critics because he embodies the patriarchal symbolic, [which is] constructed around dualisms, [and] imagines production, culture, the mind, and rationality in terms gendered ‘male.’ In such a system, women occupy a contradictory middle ground between nature and culture, sharing with men the project of mastering nature, while simultaneously being cast as ‘closer to nature’ than men are. (Carr 16)

Eco-feminism associates the devaluation of women with the devaluation of the natural world. In The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Baum develops these parallel patriarchal undercurrents through the Tin Woodman. Dorothy, a human girl, is closer to nature than the nearly robotic Tin Woodman, yet she supports—and is often the cause of—the Woodman’s destructiveness. His industrialization and lost interest in the Munchkin girl subordinates reproduction as it emphasizes the production of his job. As a consequence of this ingrained idea of masculine power, the Tin Woodman’s patriarchal relationship with Dorothy subordinates her as both natural and female. Furthermore,
female rulers, in the form of good and bad witches, rule over the agricultural areas in Oz, while the authority figure in the metropolitan Emerald City is a man. Playing into this patriarchal mindset, Dorothy and the people in Oz never openly question his power. The discovery that the Wizard is a phony is a matter of accident. Baum’s novel, however, is pulled by opposing views on the matter of sex and submission. All of the characters who actually hold power are female; the Wizard, on the other hand, holds only the power of illusion and, therefore, has only the illusion of power. Ultimately, Dorothy, the female protagonist, is the source of her male companions’ success.

Throughout their journey to the city, Dorothy and her companions struggle against the natural world, but the world struggles back. As Dorothy and her friends approach the outskirts of Emerald City, they face yet another natural barrier—a field of poisonous poppies. Baum describes nature’s influence over the girl and her anthropomorphized company: “now it is well known that when there are many of these flowers together their odor is so powerful that anyone who breathes it falls asleep, and if the sleeper is not carried away from the scent of the flowers he sleeps on and on forever” (Baum 111). The poisonous smell of the poppies overwhelms Dorothy, and she falls asleep in the middle of the field, but the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman carry the girl out of the field, lay “her gently on the soft grass and wait for the fresh breeze to waken her” (114). Ironically, the natural world hurts Dorothy and then nurses
her back to health; the poisonous smell of the poppies endangers Dorothy’s life, but the soft touch of the wind saves her from actual tragedy.

The Tin Woodman’s contradictory nature surfaces yet again in this scene when he escapes the poppy field and comes across a wildcat in pursuit of a field mouse. Despite his earlier declaration that he could never hurt a living creature, he does not hesitate to “cut the beast’s head clean off from its body” to save the mouse (118). Early in the novel, the Tin Woodman’s heartlessness is a cause for caution when he deals with life and death matters. Now, however, the Tin Woodman uses his heartlessness as an excuse for his violence. He says that he is “careful to help all those who need a friend”—even if it means killing another creature (118). The Tin Woodman realizes that “it was wrong for the wildcat to kill such a pretty, harmless creature,” but he does not realize that it is wrong for a man to kill a wildcat (118). The Tin Woodman’s duality in this situation demonstrates an internalized conflict between man and nature. The Tin Woodman is connected to nature in his humanness, but he subscribes to the masculine industrialist “task of culture [to] transcend or triumph over nature” (Carr 16). In this reversal of a natural hierarchy, the Tin Woodman succumbs to his industrialist urge to control and dominate nature. His industrialist urges prepare the reader for Dorothy’s arrival in the city.

As Dorothy and her friends arrive in the city, parallels between the Emerald City of Oz and the White City of
Chicago's 1893 World's Fair became even more apparent. Both are industrialized. During the World's Fair, electric streetlamps and spotlights in the White City were so powerful that farmers outside of Chicago could see the light in the night sky. Hearn writes that "the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition was famous for being illuminated by electricity and did much to popularize Thomas A. Edison's marvelous invention. In 1900, electricity was still one of the world's great untapped wonders. Electric lights are found everywhere in Baum's fairy tales" (184). Likewise, Dorothy sees the green glow of Emerald City even before she reaches the gates that surround it: "as they walked on, the green glow became brighter and brighter, and it seemed that at last they were nearing the end of their travels" (Baum 137). The emeralds become the beacon of urban life. The intensity of the artificial light in Emerald City seems to affect Dorothy as much as the intensity of the sun's light in Kansas; however, the glow in Emerald City is beautiful. As they enter the city "at the end of the road of yellow brick," they see "a big gate, all studded with emeralds that glittered so in the sun that even the painted eyes of the Scarecrow were dazzled by their brilliancy" (137). The light within Emerald City overpowers the land and the people surrounding it.

Emerald City "glitters" against the dark land that Dorothy has encountered so far. As the characters pass from rural Oz to urban Emerald City, the environment stays green, but it changes from an organic green to a geological
green—the city is the color of an emerald, not a cornfield. This change in the source of color indicates a change in the values of the people. Prosperity makes the people blind to nature. When Dorothy and her friends ring the bell outside of the gate, a green man meets them and fastens pairs of spectacles over their eyes, explaining that if they do not “wear spectacles the brightness and glory of the Emerald City would blind [them]” (139). Baum writes that the man has “spectacles of every size and shape,” but “all of them had green glasses” (139). Of course, the people are not blinded by the supposed green color but by the green glasses. The spectacles superimpose an artificial nature over the reality of city life. Hearn suggests that “Baum may be playing with the proverbial phrase ‘to wear rose-colored glasses,’ meaning to view the world as better than it really is” (267). Dorothy and her friends do not seem to mind—or even notice—that their perception of Emerald City is an illusion. Historians note a similar ambivalence among the people who flocked to Chicago at the turn of the century. Historians remember Chicago as “the explosive city of the new industrial age where there were no rules in the battle between capital and labor. They were revolutionaries. They felt that perhaps with a single act of violence, capital would crumble and a new society would take shape. Chicago is the city where people driven by profit were blind to nature” (Chicago: City of the Century). People came to Chicago to find work and, ultimately, prosperity. Many immigrants were blind to the hardships of industrial life: for them, the myth
of an urban utopia was their only hope. Likewise, Dorothy enters Emerald City desperate to find a way home. Her “profit” is a passage back to Kansas. Because she is so focused on her own needs, Dorothy does not notice that the emerald environment is an illusion and that the Wizard may be an illusion, too.

Baum’s description of the Emerald City appears strikingly similar to historical descriptions of Chicago during the World’s Fair. Dorothy and her friends leave the gatekeeper and walk down the streets [that] were lined with beautiful houses all built of green marble and studded everywhere with sparkling emeralds. They walked over a pavement of the same green marble, and where the blocks were joined together were rows of emeralds, set closely, and glittering in the brightness of the sun. The window panes were of green glass; even the sky above the City had a green tint, and the rays of the sun were green. (Baum 143)

Similarly, Chicago “was a utopian vision: a city with broad streets shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings. Statues glistened and fountains flashed in the late afternoon sun” (Chicago: City of the Century). Emerald City and Chicago are utopias because their economies project images of progress. At the same time, however, their environments are being destroyed in order to promote urban growth. Upon reaching the city, Dorothy’s attention shifts
from the natural to the constructed. Once in the Emerald City, she admires the jewels in the streets just as she admired the trees in the forests. Both are, as Baum writes, "rich." Dorothy realizes that the Wizard must be powerful because he is wealthy. Because of this, she feels confident that he will help her find a way home. In the city, the wealth and power of the urban world challenges the power of a natural world, and it wins. Importantly, Dorothy notices that the two worlds do not coexist: "there seemed to be no horses nor animals of any kind. Everyone seemed happy and contented and prosperous" (Baum 144). In Kansas, Uncle Henry and Aunt Em have a farm with animals, but they are poor. Conversely, in Emerald City, the economy flourishes, but there are no trees and no animals. The city's economy comes at the cost of the environment.

When she leaves Emerald City to find the Wicked Witch of the West, Dorothy discovers that the green glow is an illusion: "Dorothy still wore the pretty silk dress she had put on in the Palace, but now, to her surprise, she found it was no longer green, but pure white" (166). Dorothy sees clearly once she removes the green-glassed spectacles and returns to a rural environment. When Dorothy and the Tin Woodman return to the countryside, they revert back to their instinctive behavior. Dorothy respects the environment, while the Tin Woodman continues to destroy it. The Wicked Witch, who realizes the threat of Dorothy and her companions, sends forty wolves to "tear them to pieces" (167). Faced with this plague, the Woodman is once again
subject to the oppositional forces of his body and his behavior. The Woodman, who weeps so readily and easily after stepping on a beetle, kills these creatures one by one, without pausing to think or feel: “he seized his axe, which he had made very sharp, and as the leader of the wolves came on the Tin Woodman swung his arm and chopped the wolf’s head from its body, so that it immediately died. As soon as he could raise his axe another would come up, and he also fell under the sharp edge of the Tin Woodman’s weapon” (168). The Tin Woodman’s violence in this case is no accident. He intentionally kills the wolves.

The industrialist ideals—as personified in the Tin Woodman—seem to have affected the others as well. The Scarecrow refers to the wolf massacre as “a good fight,” and Dorothy merely thanks the Tin Woodman before eating her breakfast (169). When the Wicked Witch sends another plague of animals the next night, the Scarecrow follows in the footsteps of the Tin Woodman, and turns into the male protector, too. Baum highlights this transformation through the Scarecrow’s superhuman strength: “there were forty crows, and forty times the Scarecrow twisted a neck, until at last all were lying dead beside him. Then he called his companions to arise, and again they went upon their journey” (169). His violence is almost mechanical, like the Tin Woodman. None of the characters objects to the Scarecrow’s violent reaction and utter lack of respect for the wild animals. The reader must decide whether the party becomes an uncaring and unfazed group of destroyers because of the
influence of the industrial Tin Woodman or because of the influence of the industrialized Emerald City.

After killing the Wicked Witch of the West, Dorothy and her companions try to return to the Emerald City to have their requests honored; however, “there was no road—not even a pathway—between the castle of the Wicked Witch and the Emerald City... [The four travelers] know, of course, they must go straight east, toward the rising sun” (197). Interestingly, the western part of the Land of Oz—like the western part of the United States—is unmapped and unpaved. The West is a frontier for Dorothy, just like it was a frontier for the farmers of Baum’s time. At first, the four travelers try to use the sun as a source of direction, but eventually, Dorothy must call the Winged Monkeys for help. The Winged Monkeys tell the travelers that they were captured and colonized by the Wicked Witch. They describe their wild life before domestication; before they were under her control, they “were a free people, living happily in the great forest, flying from tree to tree, eating nuts and fruit, and doing just as [they] pleased without calling anybody master” (204). The Winged Monkeys’ history parallels Oz’s metropolitan development. The Wizard built the Emerald City as a shelter against the Wicked Witches during their struggle for power. As a result of this power struggle, the Winged Monkeys were captured and put under the control of the Witches. In this way, the Winged Monkeys experience colonization and domestication simultaneously.
The Wizard refuses to see Dorothy and her friends when they return to the Emerald City because he cannot grant their wishes. The Wizard finally reveals that his identity, like his city, is an illusion, “[J]ust to amuse myself, and keep the good people busy, I ordered them to build this City, and my palace; and they did it all willingly and well. Then I thought, as the country was so green and beautiful, I would call it the Emerald City. And to make the name fit better I put green spectacles on all the people, so that everything they saw was green” (221). The Wizard takes from the ground precious stones from which he constructs an artificial city. He also creates artificial happiness. In effect, he destroys the natural green environment only to replace it with his own, unnatural green environment. The Wizard names the city in an equally incongruous manner. “Emerald” describes the land, but the land is paved with white marble. Likewise, the architects of the World’s Fair created Chicago from an illusion: “the fair’s buildings were temporary structures coated with plaster. Called the ‘White City,’ it was the businessman’s idea of civic order—white, clean, and safe—everything it was not. It’s an imaging thing. The fair was an imaging thing” (Chicago: City of the Century). Upon her return from the countryside, Dorothy also learns that Emerald City is an “imaging thing.”

The entire endeavor—building a city—seems like entertainment to the Wizard, a circus man from Omaha. His transformation of the land becomes a game. Similarly,
Chicago's city-builders were risk-takers who "see city-building as a supremely human art, and they see that they have a chance here to turn this prairie bog into a great city" (Chicago: City of the Century). Emerald City becomes a Utopia for the Wizard and, sadly, for the people whom he tricks. Appearances mean everything. The environment looks green and the people look happy. But this utopia is very different from the utopia that Dorothy encounters in the Munchkins' green fields and farms. Donald L. Miller points out this discrepancy in the American understanding of utopia: "this is an age that still believes in cities. Isn't it interesting that the utopia is a city? In England Robert Morris is writing at the same time that the utopia is in the countryside" (qtd. in Chicago: City of the Century). The Wizard tells Dorothy that everything appears green to the people because the city is "abounding in jewels and precious metals, and every good thing that is needed to make one happy" (Baum 222). Essentially, the Wizard claims that the people in the city understand survival and success in terms of their economy, not their natural environment. This puzzles Dorothy because life in Kansas has taught her just the opposite.

The Wizard promises to return Dorothy to Kansas in order to redeem himself from his history of deception. But he says, "'I haven't the faintest notion which way [Kansas] lies. But the first thing to do is to cross the desert, and then it should be easy to find your way home'" (240). The desert surrounds the Land of Oz and separates it from the
American Midwest. The desert protects Dorothy and the Wizard while they live in Oz, but it also prevents them from returning to Kansas. Eco-feminist critics understand deserts as both maternal and erotic bodies of land (Carr 182). In this context, the desert is the characters’ source of delivery into and out of a foreign country. But the desert is also a barrier. After the Wizard leaves in his balloon without her, Dorothy calls the Winged Monkeys to fly her across the desert. They say, “[W]e belong to this country alone, and cannot leave it. There has never been a Winged Monkey in Kansas yet, and I suppose there will never be, for they don’t belong there” (Baum 251). As Dorothy begins to understand the struggle between man and nature, she also begins to learn the laws that govern and separate the two worlds.

Ironically, despite the glorification of the Emerald City as a utopia, the urban atmosphere proves bad for the more natural characters. The Lion says, “[C]ity life does not agree with me at all... I have lost much flesh since I’ve lived there” (258). The Lion’s admission pits rural life against wild life. He seems much happier and much healthier when the group returns to his natural habitat. Upon their return to the forest, however, nature must defend itself from the urbanized trespassers once again: “the Scarecrow, who was in the lead, finally discovered a big tree with such wide spreading branches that there was room for the party to pass underneath. So he walked forward to the tree, but just as he came under the first branches they
bent down and twined around him, and the next minute he was raised from the ground and flung headlong among his fellow travelers” (262). The trees serve as the spokespersons for the forest. They stand at the edge of the woods to prevent human progression. The trees’ automatic response to throw the Scarecrow to the ground parallels the Tin Woodman’s automatic response to chop down trees as a solution to every problem. The Lion understands the trees’ reaction as instinct because he protects the forest, too. He says, “‘[T]he trees seem to have made up their minds to fight us, and stop our journey’” (262). In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, immobility causes fear. Throughout the story, the Tin Woodman fears that his joints will rust and he will be rendered immobile. Now, the travelers fear that they will be stuck in the outskirts of the forest. The trees are rooted in the ground, but this does not prevent them from fighting against human invaders. Dorothy and her companions become frightened because the trees overcome this immobility and fight while they are still firmly rooted.

Before Dorothy and her companions reach Glinda’s castle in the Land of the Quadlings, they discover the edge of the forest—the China Country. In this porcelain land, Dorothy becomes acutely aware of her effect on the environment: “the little animals and all the people scampered out of their way, fearing the strangers would break them” (Baum 276). While Dorothy recognizes that the characters are fragile, her self-interests prevent her from preserving the China Country. She asks a little china princess if she
can take her home and display her on Aunt Em’s mantle shelf. The China Princess begs Dorothy to leave her alone: “You see, here in our own country, we live contentedly, and can talk and move around as we please. But whenever any of us are taken away, our joints at once stiffen and we can only stand straight and look pretty” (275-276). Like the Tin Woodman, the China Princess worries about movement. She fears confinement. The China Princess does not want to be put on display—she does not want to be captured and colonized for the amusement of a human master. Her situation can be understood on a less political, more ecological scale. At the end of the nineteenth century, animal activists struggled against the popularity of zoos. Rahn relates the confinement of animals in zoos to the confinement of people in colonized countries:

the intense interest in nature . . . was often bound up with a desire to control it, or even exert dominance over it. Victorian zoos . . . not only provided exotic subjects for scientific study, but served as satisfying emblems both of human domination over nature and Euro-American domination over the ‘uncivilized’ world. Such displays of control and dominance often required the destruction of the natural object itself. (3)

Dorothy plans to take the China Country’s princess back to Kansas as a souvenir and place her on Aunt Em’s mantle. The princess would live in an unfamiliar, unnatural
environment and feel trapped, like a wild animal in a zoo. Dorothy tries to convince the China Princess that life on display will be fulfilling, but the princess knows better. At the end of her journey through Oz, Dorothy’s self-interest seems to take over again.

When Dorothy finally returns home, she must reconcile her newly-aware, Oz-influenced self with the self from her past life in Kansas. Culver concludes, “‘our hot-house urban life, [Hall] warned, ‘tends to ripen everything before its time,’ and one consequence of this was an American child who passed into and out of adolescence without learning to distinguish organic from mechanical forms” (614). But upon her return home, Dorothy demonstrates her new maturity and understanding when Aunt Em addresses her as a “darling child” and she responds “gravely” (Baum 307). Because she speaks seriously and answers firmly, Dorothy appears more grown-up than Aunt Em’s form of address acknowledges. Dorothy, like the land in Oz, ripens prematurely and unnaturally. During her travels through the plentiful farmlands, lush forests, and rich urban culture of Oz, Dorothy is challenged to reexamine her preconceived classifications. She learns that the lines are often blurred. Still, she tries to distinguish between what is natural and what is not, what is wild and what is not, and, more importantly, what is morally right. Moreover, she must decide whether she should act for herself or act for her environment. As she is influenced by the industrial Tin Woodman, the agricultural Scarecrow, and the wild
and predatory Lion, Dorothy discovers that her own allegiances lie in both places. At the end, Dorothy seems to have matured—she is no longer the innocent child from the gray lands in Kansas. She comes of age in the “utopian” Oz just as Americans come of age in the “utopian” Midwest. Though she has come to a deeper understanding of the industrially- and ecologically-driven mindsets, Dorothy ultimately prefers the real, agrarian Kansas, her beloved “home,” with its clearly defined distinctions between wild and domestic, protector and destroyer, and its strong natural—rather than industrial—forces.
Works Cited


