

The Shared Destiny of the Radically Other: a reading of *The Wizard of Oz*

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It's the one who doesn't lack me who is the Other. That is radical Otherness. (Baudrillard 1999b: 132).

Everything which is symbolically exchanged constitutes a mortal danger for the dominant order (Baudrillard 1993: 188, n. 7).

[R]ather than seeking out the identity beneath the mask, one should seek out the mask beneath the identity – the face which haunts us and deflects us from our identity (Baudrillard 1999b: 137).

The Wizard of Oz has long been one of my favourite films.¹ An early childhood memory is of watching it on Christmas day, its vivid images of good and evil, innocence and wickedness, merging with the spirit of Christmas such that the film seemed to partake of the sacredness of the nativity. If Jesus was there to help Dorothy she would be able to destroy the Wicked Witch of the West easily, but in this alien world the absurd rag-bag of friends must help each other and accomplish this feat for themselves. Their task is, of course, completely impossible. They have no magic, they each lack knowledge of Oz, and are all outsiders without clear status. Further, each lacks the instinct or desire to kill and, perhaps worst of all, each possesses ridiculous weaknesses – tin man keeps seizing up, scarecrow can barely walk, the lion from whom we might expect ferocity is actually permanently

¹ As this is a jointly authored paper it is sometimes necessary to specify which of us is designated by the 'I'. In this case it is W.P.

terrified. Dorothy is lost and is prone to tears, and Toto is a tiny, pathetic excuse for a dog. Even to the most optimistic child the odds against this strange group's success must seem utterly overwhelming. So, in a sense, the narrative presents the well-worn theme of triumph over adversity, 'don't give up, it will be alright in the end' – but how the friends triumph is very peculiar and very suggestive. In exploring this narrative we draw upon Baudrillard's notions of symbolic exchange, destiny and radical otherness. Symbolic exchange occurs between these characters, in their first meetings, in the risks and sacrifices they make to help each other even as they accept that they may never get what they desire. Symbolic exchange emerges in their pact, much stronger than their individual desires, and in their shared destiny to kill the witch – without even trying. Symbolic exchange, for Baudrillard, is an act within a relation of giving, receiving and reciprocation, its meaning(s) are located within the relation, are singular and cannot be abstracted from the relation (Baudrillard 1993: 133). Symbolic exchange cannot be the property or attribute of any individual or character, nor can it be accumulated or deployed, it is always relational. Symbolic exchange takes place in the space established between the characters, a singular space that consists of both great *distance* – they are not of the same race, species or even universe – they are, in a sense, radically Other and yet a space also of great *intimacy*. This is not a space of 'respect', not one of embracing 'difference' or 'diversity', it is, we argue, a space of the unfolding of destiny. Each of the characters retains what Baudrillard terms 'singularity' or radical otherness, both for themselves and for their friends (Baudrillard 1993b: 111-174). Further they are not restored, normalised or 'corrected' by the Wizard's 'gift' of their hearts' desires. Throughout the quest and beyond, their pact endures producing shared metamorphoses or becomings.

In exploring Baudrillard's notion of radical otherness through a journey into Oz we are certainly not making claims about the 'truth' or identity of the film.. Just as Baudrillard wasn't looking for the 'real' America but its 'otherness' (Baudrillard 1988: 5), what is at stake is the *otherness* of the film, not the directors' or the studio's intentions, not the cultural

particularities of audience reception, not the film's position in the history of popular cinema, but something else. We seek neither the universal nor the particular; rather we offer a singular reading of the film's narrative, images, songs and dances.

The film certainly visualises strangeness; it confronts us with the remarkable, fantastical; once we see Oz we never forget it. Yet in suspending reality and rationality the film does not lapse into the merely irrational or senseless. This gives the film a curious relation to Baudrillard's work since symbolic exchange is presented as that which prevents, ruins or makes volatile and ambivalent any binary opposition, such as those of real/unreal, rational/irrational, human/animal (Baudrillard 1993: 133; Pawlett 2007: 55-9). The notion of symbolic exchange is used in two distinct ways by Baudrillard. Firstly it is presented as the organising principle of pre-industrial societies where everything must be given and returned (what Baudrillard, drawing upon Mauss (1990) calls the 'symbolic order'). Secondly concerning modernity, where symbolic exchanges are dismantled, foreclosed or diverted into commodification and simulation by the capitalist system, symbolic exchange is described as the only genuinely revolutionary principle, the only effective defiance of the system. Symbolic exchanges cannot be ascribed a value, they cannot be designated or reduced to commodity signs. Moreover symbolic exchanges threaten the capitalist system of power and control by corroding or annulling the binary oppositions and ordered exchanges upon which the system depends. Symbolic exchange ruins the systemic opposition between self and other, good and evil, male and female, human and animal, real and imaginary, even, according to Baudrillard, living and dead (Baudrillard 1993: 134). Indeed it is the desperate attempt to safeguard these oppositions, which are constitutive of 'reality' itself that leads the system into simulation: the synthetic and 'panic-stricken' generation of 'reality' from pre-existing bytes, codes and models. The system is so desperate to maintain these binaries it now allows passage from one pole to the other, on condition that the two poles are treated as 'real'. The system even offers simulacrum promotions of the repressed term of the opposition in order to

prevent genuine change: this is how the feminist movement was neutralised, according to Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1990; see also Grace 2000). Baudrillard is quite clear, though the capitalist system can be seen as hyperreal – as increasingly characterised by simulation – it understands itself as ‘real’ (Baudrillard 1994: 20-1). This is because the system stands or falls with ‘reality’, power always ‘opts for the real’ as its force is utterly dependent upon this faltering illusion.

In Oz, as in life, binary oppositions do not hold. In Oz everything has its place and everything unfolds according to destiny. Destiny, for Baudrillard, occurs only within the space of symbolic exchange, and it is destiny which provides an alternative sense, not merely preventing a lapse into the irrational but tearing binary structures to shreds. In Oz any event at all, any apparent coincidence or accident works, magically, to fulfil the shared destiny of the radical Others that find themselves together. For Baudrillard, ‘[i]n this predestined world of the Other, everything comes from elsewhere – happy or unhappy events, illnesses, even thoughts themselves ... [t]his is a universe of fatality not of psychology’ (Baudrillard 1993b: 141).

Baudrillard and Film: Illusion and Simulation

I like the cinema. Of all spectacles it’s even the only one I do like (Baudrillard [1982] in Gane Ed. 1993:29).

Baudrillard did not claim to provide any particular way of theorising film yet, clearly, he prized cinema as a site of illusion, myth, ‘the dream’ and the play of the imaginary (Baudrillard 1987: 92).² Nevertheless, Baudrillard located cinema within his speculative classification of the orders of simulacra (Baudrillard 1994: 43-60). For Baudrillard contemporary cinematic production has, by and large, accelerated into simulation and hyperreality. While delighting in early cinema, silent films and American films of the 1930s, Baudrillard asserts ‘the films coming out today are no longer so

² As Le Dœuff suggests, philosophical argument itself relies on the imaginary for its force. For an application of Le Dœuff’s perspective in a defence of film theory as ‘impure, perspectival and imaginative’ see Constable (2000).

interesting ... [though] technically sophisticated ... they fail to incorporate any element of the make-believe [*l'imaginaire* or the imaginary] ... cinema has become hyper-realist,' (Baudrillard in Gane Ed. 1993: 30).

For Baudrillard hyperreal culture performs a crucial post-ideological function within the capitalist system, that of 'saving the reality principle' (Baudrillard 1994: 13). Cinema, for example, does not simply distract audiences from the grim realities of work, exploitation and inequality, it enables audiences to consume and enjoy these 'realities' as *signs*. In consuming such signs, Baudrillard asserts, audiences are comforted with the belief that something at least *is* real. Much contemporary cinema works very hard to persuade us of its realistic nature and if the signs are 'realistic' that must be because they seem to refer to a reality beyond the screen (Baudrillard 1987: 13). And if audiences can no longer be persuaded that 'reality' is a just or ordered place, perhaps they can be persuaded that it is a horrifying and disgusting place. Hyperreal cultural production, unbound from the moral and ideological restrictions of earlier phases of capitalism, draws upon any notion, any fear or horror to safeguard the faltering sense of 'reality' on which it depends. As examples of hyperrealist cinema we might include *Quantum of Solace* (2008) where the opening scenes of a car chase do not merely signify speed, technology, danger but attempt to show more than any 'real' experience of a car chase could possibly encompass. Both cars are shown from many different angles, capturing an accumulated 'reality' that no human being, either driver or spectator could ever experience. There is little tension because the scene does not feel 'real'; it feels determined by technical and special effects criteria, what Baudrillard calls simulation models. The illusion or imagination of speed is replaced by the hyperrealisation or hyper-visualisation of speed. It is not a case of being able to experience the chase from the perspective of both drivers; rather 'perspective' is re-fashioned by special effects technology. It is not a case of the audience being granted a God's eye view of the chase, but of a demand on the viewer to *keep up*, forcing them to see more of 'the real' than there is to see. For this reason Baudrillard often describes hyperreality as pornographic (Baudrillard 1990:

28-36, 1994: 28). The evoking of the 'real' of representation through cinematic technique (that is the effect of 'the real' enabled by the oppositions between signifier and signified and the sign and the referent) is no longer what is at stake here. The scene works so hard to capture the real, far too hard, and it fails dismally. In working so hard to maintain these 'realities' the film exhausts them, draining away the real's power of illusion, '[t]he impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real is of the same order as the impossibility of establishing illusion' (Baudrillard 1994: 19). For Baudrillard, as for Nietzsche, without the power of illusion the real is nothing, real and apparent are abolished simultaneously (Nietzsche 1990: 51 [1889]). Hyperreality, for Baudrillard, is an unexchangeable or residual surplus, an accumulation of signs of the 'real' to an excess that could never exist and cannot be broken down by the audience: a toxic oil slick polluting cinematic illusion.

The most consistent or defining feature of the third order (simulation), and the fourth order (virtualisation) is, for Baudrillard, that they are devoid of the imaginary.³ The imaginary, a term Baudrillard adopts from Lacan (1977: 75-81), refers to the power of the image to enchant and fascinate, to stimulate the imagination and produce identifications within the self. For Lacan the self is always alienated in these identifications. For Baudrillard the era of the imaginary, of the signified and referent, and of alienation, is now fundamentally over. It is important to emphasise that Baudrillard's thought

³ We might suggest an example of the fourth order in the recent monster movie *Cloverfield* (2008). This film tries, very hard, to convince us that it has grasped the importance of new media. A group of attractive young New Yorkers are terrorised by a monster that is never clearly seen but which leaves a trail of devastation and horror that is recorded in 'real-time' by the characters' mobile phones and video cameras. The effect is close indeed to what Baudrillard termed 'integral reality' in that the distance between an event (the monster's attack) and its representation or mediation disappears in 'real-time'; 'Integral Reality' has no imaginary' (Baudrillard 2005: 18). The 'real-time' footage is not, strictly speaking, hyperrealist because it does not show more of the real (chaos and carnage) than there is to show, it actually shows very little: grainy, shaky footage of concrete floors and walls, the grey sky line and very little else. For example, what does the monster symbolise? What fears are secreted within it? The monster is merely an inconvenience; it gets in the way of a fuck between the lead characters. But at least the film preserves the fiction that there is some 'reality' worth filming on your mobile phone when your friends' gossip about their sex-lives begin to bore: reality safe-guarded, the system defended!

does not privilege the imaginary *per se*, nor does he mourn it as a ‘lost object’, a common mis-reading. The opposition of real and imaginary is important for Baudrillard only insofar as symbolic exchange is able to erupt through these terms, making each annul or dissolve the other in ceaseless exchange (Baudrillard 1993: 133). The phase of simulation repudiates the possibility of symbolic exchange far more effectively than can ‘real’ structures, because simulation abolishes a ‘real’ structure that might be challenged. Nevertheless defiance, revolt and symbolic exchange will always emerge in new forms (Baudrillard 1983: 14). For Baudrillard the media reduces the power of the image to captivate and stupefy, the image is ‘degraded’; cinema is corrupted by television such that the two forms ‘implode’ and can barely be distinguished (Baudrillard 1987: 25). Further, in the age of the internet the power of the image is further depleted, the image is reduced to a flow of information, websites contain so many images, text, links, streamed video, and pop-up adverts that the image is never given time to arrest and enchant the viewer, indeed the viewer is now user of information, not spectator of images. This condition, Baudrillard asserts, is far worse than alienation; it is one of dispossession, exhaustion and ‘irradiation’ (Baudrillard 1993b:122).

The Wizard of Oz, as cinematic production, is perhaps a film of the second order of simulacra, before the contamination of image and reality, before the implosion of real and imaginary, of cinema and television in the relay of coded or modelled signifiers of simulation (Baudrillard 1987: 30). For Dorothy, and for the audiences she seduces, there is still a clear distinction between the ‘real’ (the dust and poverty of Kansas) and the imaginary (‘*somewhere over the rainbow ... where troubles melt like lemon drops, way above the chimney tops, that’s where you’ll find me*’). The Technicolor world of Oz is not real, but nor is it hyperreal, it engages the imaginary, it is Dorothy’s dream and ours, it provokes our identifications, it speaks to our alienations.⁴ It is tempting to present *The Wizard of Oz* as an

⁴ There is a commonplace mis-reading of Baudrillard which assumes his argument to be that all constructed images are hyperreal or simulacry. However Baudrillard’s essay *The Order of Simulacra* (1993: 50-86) presents clear distinctions between

example of cinema before its acceleration into simulation and its loss of the power of illusion. But the greatness of the film seems, as Rushdie (1992: 26) argues, to have been the result of accident, coincidence or rather *destiny*, not intention.

We're off to see the Wizard!

The film begins with a great, whirling roar. Before Dorothy appears, before Kansas appears, we hear the twister, the hurricane, the gale that is Dorothy – Dorothy's Otherness, her double, her destiny. Dorothy, we learn, is fleeing Miss Gulch and naturally she seeks the protection of her family, Auntie Em and Uncle Henry. But the opposition of Good and Evil, the polar structure of many a lesser tale, is immediately shown to be out of kilter; Miss Gulch is not unproblematically 'evil', she speaks with the backing of the Law, she has a warrant from the local sheriff demanding that Toto is handed over to be destroyed after allegedly biting her. Gulch is not evil, she is hyper-moral, she is the force of Law applied without compassion (*'That dog is a menace to the community'*, Gulch says). Uncle Henry and Auntie Em can do nothing to challenge this power structure as they are honest, law-abiding folks. In the opening scenes, Auntie Em's professed Christianity prevents her from speaking her mind to Miss Gulch; here Christianity is utterly compromised, reduced to the service of the Law. Adult beliefs and principles are revealed to be impotent and contradictory; they cannot be relied upon in difficult times. Moreover adult principles and laws can be perverted and misused to harm those we love the most and, sure enough, Toto, scheduled for destruction, is taken by Gulch. These are hard lessons indeed. The system leaves Dorothy and Toto with no protection and no recourse, yet destiny intercedes and

orders with hyperreality as the major characteristic of the third order only. Applying this scheme to the film, the fantastical land of Oz, though clearly constructed, is imaginary or make-believe which are characteristics of the second order. The film's evocation of Kansas is achieved through elaborate theatrical staging, including hand painting and the mechanical production of the twister effect, not the *re*-production of digital code and so, in Baudrillard's scheme, are again second order simulacra and *not* hyperreal. For production details on the creation of Kansas and Oz see Scarfone and Stillman (2004). The capacity of the film to engage us in our alienated identities is developed in the sophisticated and convincing 'queer' reading offered by Davis (2001).

Toto escapes and returns (*'Toto, you came back!'* Dorothy cries). The return of the dead, the overcoming of death and the challenging of injustice – some of the most powerful fantasies of the human condition are dramatised by the opening scenes of the film.

The farm hands, Hunk, Hickory and Zeke, are ambivalent figures, as are their counterparts in Oz. Hunk *acts* clever, advising Dorothy to avoid Miss Gulch's property on her way home, to use her brains: *'Your head ain't made of straw'* he says to Dorothy. Yet one suspects that he is actually not very smart, and, stupidly, he has just had his thumb hit by a hammer because he was not paying attention. Zeke *acts* tough, telling Dorothy to *'have a little courage ... next time walk up to her [Gulch] and spit in her eye – that's what I'd do'*. Zeke talks big, yet almost straight away we learn that he is scared of the pigs, nevertheless he does rescue Dorothy when she falls into their pen. Finally, Hickory indulges in posturing, claiming *'one day they'll erect a statue to me'*. And in Oz he becomes a kind of statue, rusted solid, while Hunk and Zeke are depicted as lacking precisely the qualities that they over-emphasised in the early Kansas scene. The film, released in the last days of Sigmund Freud's life, clearly offers something like a dream-work in the Freudian sense. The film version introduces the device of the dream, in the children's story Dorothy is literally blown into another, parallel world (Baum 1900: 13-4).⁵ The farm hands, Gulch and Professor Marvel are all transcribed into Oz, a process that remains just below the level of Dorothy's conscious awareness during 'the dream', but is realised on her wakening. Further, Toto, in Kansas, pulls away Professor Marvel's sausage from the toasting fork just as he pulls away the great humbug's curtain in the palace of Oz, a gestural and dramatic transcription, not merely one of character. While undoubtedly part of the appeal of the film, these neat conversions do not account for the film's seductiveness. The realities of Kansas are not merely projected into Oz, they are suspended, annulled, indeed almost forgotten, lost in the mythic and

⁵ As a mother and a philosopher, I see the imagery of Dorothy's journey as a passage through the birth canal. This resonates with another reading where Dorothy Gale has been described as 'a hero whose voyage(s) to Oz are births and re-births symbolised over and over again...' (Duncan 2008: 56). M.D.

imaginary world of Oz. In confronting the fighting trees, Dorothy says '*I keep forgetting I'm not in Kansas*' and after Tin man snuffs out the fire ball thrown by the witch to burn the scarecrow, Dorothy feels that she has known them both for a long time: '*Still I wish I could remember*'. Memory seduces, pulls back or diverts, making the path to the Emerald city that much harder for Dorothy than her fellow-travellers who do not once remember their past.

The world of Oz is truly spectacular and the shift, early in the film, from the eerie monochrome of Kansas to the saturated Technicolor of Oz remains stunning. One of the most powerful moments of the film is when the Munchkins' song of jubilation at the demise of the Witch of the East rises to a crescendo, and is then shattered by the absolute horror of the appearance of a new, more potent evil – the Wicked Witch of the West. Rushdie contends that Oz is a place without religion, a land without transcendent values; the wizard may be feared but is certainly not worshipped: '[t]his absence of higher values greatly increases the film's charm' (Rushdie 1992:12). We are not convinced by Rushdie's argument. One of the most stunning, dizzying moments of the film for me, a sociologist⁶, is that the land of Oz possesses a distinct, quasi-feudal division of labour, and a definite state, military and ceremonial structure. And Oz is clearly not a secular society; it appears to have a priesthood as well as a judiciary. There is a coroner whose role it is to establish that the Wicked Witch of the East '*is not merely dead, but is really most sincerely dead*'. Further, the roles of Priest, Mayor and Coroner, from the evidence of their marvellous costumes, seem to be reversed or altered: the character in black priestly robes is the coroner, the character addressed as Mayor wears country tweeds, a character in purple, ecclesiastic robes and dog-collar speaks of legality, while it is left to another, distinctly grey and ineffectual looking character, to raise the issues of morality and spirituality. If these sources of authority are not revered as such, the Munchkins do, quite clearly, bow their heads in reverence when Glinda speaks the Wizard's name. So far as 'politics' is concerned we are

⁶ W.P.

confronted by an incomprehensible yet manifest structure as we meet the nominated ‘representatives’ of The Lullaby League and of The Lollipop Guild. Oz, like Kansas, has a state religion, it is simply that state religion has such limited power; it has lost the charge, ambivalence and volatility of the sacred. Like Auntie Em’s Christianity the institutional religion of Oz is powerless against the Wicked Witch of the West.

The Wicked Witch of the West seems not to mourn her sister, she desires only the possession of the ruby slippers, magicked from her sister’s feet to Dorothy’s by Glinda. The Wicked Witch of the West desires power, or rather seeks to compensate for her lack of power (*‘You have no power here, be gone before someone drops a house on you too’*, says Glinda to the Witch). By possessing the ruby slippers – which it seems enabled her sister to dominate Munchkinland, the Wicked Witch of the West will become more powerful than both Glinda and the Wizard: *‘I’ll be the most powerful person in Oz’*, she shrieks. Destiny has brought Dorothy into the power struggles over who rules Oz; it was by destiny not volition that her house landed on the Witch of the East. Further, she is given no choice by Glinda as the ruby slippers are ineluctably fastened on her feet, just like the unfortunate Karen in Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Red Shoes* (2004 [1845]: 207-212).

Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, is, as Rushdie puts it, ‘soppy’ and saccharine. Yet as a magical force she is exterior to the state religion of Munchkinland, just as is the Wicked Witch of the West. We disagree with Rushdie’s position that ‘[i]n the moral universe of the film ... only evil is external’ (Rushdie 1992: 42). Rather ‘good and evil’, as binary opposition, is severely shaken by the narrative, ripped by the twister and by Dorothy Gale who is, in a sense, *beyond* good and evil.⁷ With her friends Dorothy overcomes both the ‘hyper’ good/evil of Gulch/Wicked Witch of the West, and also triumphs over the ‘good’ of the ‘great humbug’ himself the Wizard. The film does not resolve or displace the good/evil opposition, as Structuralist analysis might contend, thereby making evil more palatable, less

⁷ See Duncan (2008) for a convincing study of successive moves in the cultural incorporation of Dorothy into ‘a needy adult’ in ‘dramatic contrast to Baum’s vital and vigorous female child-hero’ (p. 60).

threatening, to young viewers. Rather, the film's narrative shatters the opposition; it exposes its simulatory nature and, in doing so, sets up the play of symbolic relations between and beyond these poles, symbolic relations of radical Otherness, or what Baudrillard termed 'the dual principle' (Baudrillard 1999: 90-102).

Like Baudrillard's thought, the film challenges and subtly undermines the notions of identity and non-contradiction, the operative forces of binary disjunction. Only a short distance down the Yellow Brick Road, Dorothy encounters Scarecrow, destiny brings them together.⁸ Dorothy has reached a crossroads: there are three possible routes, all of them equally yellow. She doesn't know which way to go, she cannot decide, but she doesn't need to because, immediately, impossibly, fate intervenes as Scarecrow speaks to her. It could be objected that the notion of radical otherness, as Baudrillard poses it, is invalidated by the fact that Dorothy and her friends share a common language – they all speak English and so are not radically Other at all. While language barriers are not common in dreams (I frequently converse with aliens⁹), a great strength of the film is its dramatisation of the suspension of referential language. For example, scarecrow speaks to Dorothy ('*Pardon me, but that way is a very nice way. That way is quite nice too*') but Dorothy does not reply because, of course '*Scarecrows don't talk*'. So scarecrow *as scarecrow* (as an identity position in referential language) is inaudible to Dorothy, it is only scarecrow as beyond 'scarecrow', as radical Other that is audible.

SCARECROW: That's the trouble. I can't make up my mind. I've got no brain, only straw.

DOROTHY: How can you talk if you haven't got a brain?

SCARECROW: I don't know. But some people without a brain do an awful lot of talking, don't they?

DOROTHY: Yes, I guess you're right.

⁸ I'd like to express my gratitude to Marcus Doel, David Clarke, William Merrin and Richard Smith for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. W.P.

⁹ W.P.

No further confirmation is needed. The friendship is sealed when Scarecrow falls down and Dorothy rushes to help him, exclaiming: ‘*There goes some of you! Aren’t you hurt?*’ and Scarecrow replies: ‘*No, I just pick it up and put it right back*’. Once the pact is forged they do not need to decide which way to go, and they don’t, they simply dance together and go wherever the dance may take them. This is an initiation, a mutual seduction that delivers them from themselves and that opens them to destiny.

We might say that Dorothy rescues Scarecrow from *remaining a scarecrow*. Similarly Tin man left alone cannot speak, because he is made of tin and because his mouth has rusted. Like Scarecrow he speaks with the force of impossibility, and the response of Dorothy and Scarecrow is to accept impossibility. Lions, of course, do not speak, they roar, but this lion roars in order not to speak. When his roaring fails to impress anyone he speaks, and when he speaks he is not a lion but a friend. Friendship delivers them from the confinement of identity, from their condition of ‘discontinuity’, to borrow a term used by Baudrillard but taken from Bataille (Bataille 1986: 15).

Fate brings Scarecrow and Dorothy to the Tin man. Tin man is initiated through his dance and the three become friends. During his dance Dorothy and Scarecrow are seen whispering to each other, evidently deciding to ask Tin man to join them. Tin man and Scarecrow are presented with a choice (unlike Dorothy who was not given a choice by Glinda) and must make a decision. But the Tin man’s decision is, in a sense, made for him by the Witch’s attack on the Scarecrow. Tin man stifles the fire-ball hurled by the Witch to burn Scarecrow. The pact is forged:

SCARECROW: I’ll see you get safely to the Wizard now, whether I get a brain or not!

TIN MAN: I’ll see you reach the Wizard, whether I get a heart or not!

DOROTHY: Oh, you’re the best friends anybody ever had ... and its funny but I feel as if I’ve known you all the time. But I couldn’t have, could I?

Later, when fate brings the party to the Lion they are all terrified. Dorothy finds the courage to slap Lion’s face only because he has threatened both

Scarecrow and Toto, accusing him of ‘*picking on things weaker than you are*’. Only seconds after being threatened, Scarecrow and Tin man extend the invitation to find the Wizard to the cowardly Lion. Lion is relieved and delighted:

My life has been simply unbearable ... It’s been in me so long. I’ve just got to tell you how I feel.

[Sings] Yeah, it’s sad believe me missy, when you’re born to be a sissy, without the vim and verve.

The friends deliver each other from identity and from ‘reality’; they are opened to destiny and it is their shared destiny to shatter the power structure of Oz.

Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain

[P]ower is in essence no longer present except to conceal that there is no more power (Baudrillard 1994:26).

Even after the realisation of their individual desires, after the Wizard’s conferring of tokens of ‘courage’, ‘brains’ and ‘heart’, their pact rooted in radical Otherness, remains. On being given a medal to signify courage Lion is still not ‘a lion’, he remains of the pact, begging Dorothy to stay with them, and still proudly wearing a red ribbon in his hair. This Lion is still queer, still soft and still friendly, he still would not ‘pass’ for a ‘real’ lion. Similarly, Tin man has not become a ‘real’ tin man, this is fundamentally impossible because there is no such ‘thing’. Nor is he made whole or complete in gaining his testimonial. Indeed Tin man is even more prone to tears and rust now he is able to acknowledge that he has feelings. And Scarecrow is still not ‘a scarecrow’, nor has he become *homo sapien* (true, thinking man), after the conferment of the diploma, he is still above all Dorothy’s friend. The friends cannot be *made* complete, because in their singularity and radical Otherness, they are already perfectly complete. The friends then cannot be reduced to the proper identity position that language ascribes them: they remain

radically Other and it is not magic or fantasy that maintains them, it is their symbolic pact – once forged it is never broken. Even after Dorothy awakes from the ‘dream’ she will not submit to the rationalisation that it was all just a dream. It was, Dorothy insists, a ‘truly live place’ – not merely real but ‘live’, and the live relations with her friends endure because they are still with her, both figuratively and in the persons of Hunk (Scarecrow), Hickory (Tin man) and Zeke (Lion).

In Oz Dorothy becomes radically Other. She is not a traveller, she is not merely away from home; she is away from her universe. Her status in Oz is not comparable to her status in Kansas; fate has made her a goddess. Her transformed status, from ‘small and meek’ farm girl to avenging angel is utterly incomprehensible to her; it cannot be assimilated to her identity or subjectivity. It cannot be assimilated because as avenging angel she is also small and meek, as she re-iterates to the wizard; she exists in a state of ambivalence and radical Otherness, not of ‘identity’.

Dorothy accepts, without reservation, the friendship of Scarecrow, Tin man and Lion and they immediately become ‘the queer party ... so strange a company’ (Baum 1900: 56, 67). Dorothy accepts them in their state of loss, incompleteness and unintelligibility: a scarecrow who can talk but barely walk, who has no brain but is remarkably thoughtful and astute; a man of tin who apparently was once flesh and blood, who has no heart but possesses remarkable sensitivity; a talking lion with no courage who keeps fighting for the sake of his friends.¹⁰ They are radically other, unencumbered by the banal illusions of knowledge, and its concomitant of misunderstanding, or even hyper-understanding, understanding oneself or the other *only too*

¹⁰ For an excellent study of the change in audience reception from ‘cowardly’ to ‘sissy’, of the ambivalent characterisation of the Lion affected by repeat viewings, see (Davis 2001). Davis argues that ‘ultimately the Lion’s wish isn’t only about courage, it’s about gender, and desire’ (2001: 5). Where we depart from the initial common ground of affirming ambivalence in the characterisation of the Lion, is in focusing on the way the Lion is engaged in a pact with Dorothy and her mates, a pact that delivers each not only from their individual ‘lack’, but from the confines of individuality itself.

well.¹¹ Their pact is a deliverance. The queer party deliver each other from the determinations and demands of self and identity and delivered of these burdens they are able to embrace destiny.

After accidentally (or by destiny!) killing the Wicked Witch of the West, the band returns to the Wizard. It is at this point that it is revealed that there is no wizard: *'pay no attention to the man behind the curtain'*. Here the film dramatises the last, desperate resort of power; just before it is annihilated power says 'ignore the evidence of your own eyes, just accept what power wants you to do'. Power is already dead in this enunciation, but power purports to be alive: it lives on after its death in a hyperreality.

What the exposed non-wizard offers the friends is not the imaginary signified 'thing': the brain, the heart and courage, but rather a signifier, and abstract token which merely stands for or signifies these qualities. These token signs are efficacious because, of course, each of the friends already demonstrated their desired attributes to a remarkable and admirable degree – they simply did not 'real-ise' this. But as 'non-wizard' he does demonstrate wisdom of sorts: once his 'power' is exposed as illusion, he goes on to show how all power, and all identity positions and attributes are simulatory, dependent upon signifiers. His wisdom here is an echo of the wisdom he had shown in Kansas, when he helped Dorothy albeit through trickery, having recognised her need for her family.

The non-wizard's conferring of tokens might suggest a hyperrealisation of the characters' desires; they might be seen as the poisonous or potlatching gifts of the consumer system (Baudrillard 1998: 46). However, their pact, their mutual seduction, prevents the dangers implicit in the fulfilment of desire (what Baudrillard termed 'the despair of having everything')¹², from being realised. Too much courage might endanger the Lion, too much

¹¹ Acknowledgement of radical otherness, if such a thing can occur, would dissolve the problem of understanding/misunderstanding, transforming the epistemological stance into an ethical one. In responding to the Other the barrier of difference is broken. For a discussion of the nature of acknowledgement in contrast with 'respect' see Dhanda (2008: 170-190).

¹² Baudrillard's essay 'The Despair of Having Everything' is available at <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/ baudrillard>.

thinking exhaust the Scarecrow, too much emotion shatter the Tin man. However the band is not susceptible to these dangers because the conferring of tokens does not result in any incremental change, rather it leads to metamorphoses: each one transforms into an Other. Mere change presupposes the logic of identity: an underlying discretely continuing entity, which changes. Metamorphosis, on the other hand, eschews this presupposition: whatever anything is, it can also become something else; symbolic exchange makes this happen. ¹³ The gift giving relation is one of symbolic exchange. The conferring of ‘gifts’ cannot potlatch or incur a debt that wounds, humiliates or obligates, because the non-wizard *gives nothing*. Further he does not give *as* wizard, he gives as exposed fraud, he gives *as nothing*. Nor are the queer party indebted to each other because they gave only of that which they did not know they possessed, their absence, alterity or radical otherness, that in themselves which only the Other can perceive.

The pact of symbolic exchange is, indeed, a mortal danger for the dominant order. Power is tied to the ‘real’, it cannot function without it but symbolic exchange suspends the real and reveals that ‘*law and order themselves might be nothing but simulation*’ (Baudrillard 1994: 20, emphasis in orig.). Their pact destroys the Wicked Witch of the West, without resort to violence, and the ‘all powerful’ Oz becomes, once more, an elderly man blown off course by a gale.

One can offload one’s will, one’s desire, on to someone else and, in return, become free to take on responsibility for someone else’s life. A symbolic circulation of affects and destinies is created, a cycle of alterity – beyond alienation and all the individual psychology in which we are trapped. There is in this symbolic circulation, in this sharing of destinies, the essence of a subtler freedom than the individual liberty to make up one’s mind (Baudrillard 1999: 85).

¹³ For a discussion of the important distinction between change and metamorphoses, see Baudrillard (1999: 77-89)

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