

# utopia

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FEMINIST UTOPIA

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### **The Wizard of Oz: Book by L. Frank Baum and Film by Victor**

Utopias are the Author's point of view of what a perfect society is and are often generated as a form of critique against criticisms prevailing in the Author's world. They present, among others, the time and cultures in which they were written, concepts, hopes and ideas for a better world (Muñoz, 2019). Frank Bauma, between 1900 and 1920, wrote the Wizard of Oz, which depicts many utopian aspects of society as noted by different scholars. These aspects include eliminating poverty, communal sharing of needs, a shortage of punishments for wrongdoings, an absence of greed, reminiscent of sir Thomas More, and elimination of death and diseases. The book is a utopian society with a lot of fairy tale paradise rife with superstition. The film was, however, made in 1939 by Victor Fleming. It is an adaptation of characters from Baum's novel. The book and movie have differences in the way they explain the concept of female heroism.

Baum's novel, Wizard of the Oz, takes us through different ideas of feminine utopia. The author shows us the terrifying experiences that Dorothy goes through as she is taken away from her home farm in Kansas into a strange magical world of wizards and witches (PUTRI, 2017). When Dorothy is taken to the unknown land, she protects herself and helps solve the problems of some characters with whom she becomes friends. She is determined to return home to her aunt and uncle, but for this to happen, she is tasked to hunt and kill the witch of the west who was causing trouble for everyone. Frank's novel portrays various feminist ideologies through the construction of character. According to Baum, power should not only be associated with masculinity as it is usually done since women are also capable of achieving great things.

The novel brings out Dorothy as a brave, fearless and courageous young girl who is not afraid to defend herself. When attacked by the witch from the west, she purposefully throws

water on her. While she did not know that the action would lead to the witch's death, it revealed her as a brave heroine. After killing the witch, she proceeds to free the lion, the scarecrow and Tim Woodman (Baum, pg. 109-111). This action further portrays Dorothy as a helpful, sensible, friendly and brave girl who is deeply attached to her friends and family and is resolute to chase her goals. According to Baum's perspective, Dorothy enjoyed all the adventures she underwent and returned home as a heroine, realising her full potential. Generally, the novel portrays a world in which great and powerful women are determined to achieve extraordinary things (Murphy, 2020).

The film by Victor, however, contradicts Baum's idea of feminism. In the movie, Dorothy does not go to the mysterious land in reality, and everything only happens in a dream. The film gives a picture of a typical young girl who has a strong need to go back to her family. She does not accomplish anything in the movie since everything is just a dream. The film, therefore, dissects the image of the strong independent girl created in the novel as a weak, emotional creature. The film's theme is that Dorothy is nothing without her family, and that's why she felt empty when she was not in Kansas. Generally, it depicts women as weak creatures who are nothing without their homes.

Although there are many differences between the film and the novel, there are also some observable similarities. Both Baum's and Victor's views display some similarities in perspective on female authority since, in both cases, females are dominant in the country, and they exercise power and leadership. Even though the film is just a dream, it still portrays Dorothy as a brave and determined young girl. In both cases, she manages to kill the witch from the west and free the lion, scarecrow and Tim. Hence, she is still portrayed as self-reliant and brave here in both cases.

The idea of feminism in the Novel the Wizard of Oz goes hand in hand with the different opinions of feminine utopia. Feminine utopias usually depict female roles in literature and their influences on different cultures. The fictional characters used to reflect what society expects females to be like and their roles. Others are used as bad examples and warnings of what may happen to a woman who fails to meet societal expectations. An instance in Baum's novel is the witch from the west who is killed because of her evil deeds.

Further, utopias show the stereotype concepts that different cultures have on the role of men and women. Besides, they give ideas of a perfect future and advice on how we can achieve them. An example of utopia is Herland, written by Charlotte. The book shows the overall female role in society where men have been excluded. The women live independent of men as they have even learnt to reproduce by parthenogenesis (Auðardóttir & Magnúsdóttir, 2020). It exclusively brings out female power and relations in society, just like Baum's novel.

To conclude, a feminine utopia such as The Wizard of Oz brings out the concept of female power. They encourage women that they can also be great in this male-dominated world. They also form the first language experience for a child and impact their general view of the world.

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