

à propos de l'électrification rurale en Ontario lui aurait permis d'éviter des inexactitudes concernant les installations de Niagara Falls. Enfin, sur le plan esthétique, l'auteur aurait eu intérêt à évoquer davantage l'influence du style moderniste, ainsi dans l'architecture des centrales hydro-électriques et dans le design des équipements pertinents.

Fondé sur des sources originales – les référé-

rences aux documents visuels, films, photographies, œuvres d'art, et aux enquêtes orales s'avérant particulièrement appréciables – *Electrifying America* offre un style clair qui facilite la compréhension des thèses exposées et se lit aisément. L'ouvrage peut être recommandé aux chercheuses et chercheurs intéressés à une introduction à l'histoire sociale de la « Galaxie Edison ».

**Paul Nathanson,
*Over the Rainbow:
The Wizard of Oz as a Secular Myth of America***

JEFFREY A. BROWN

Nathanson, Paul. *Over the Rainbow: The Wizard of Oz as a Secular Myth of America*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991. 432 pp., 10 illus. Paper \$39.25, ISBN 0-8357-1899-9.

Nathanson begins his exploration of the classic 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* with what appears to be a simple question: "Why is this movie so massively and enduringly popular?" The cinematic version of Frank L. Baum's children's story has indeed become a cultural phenomenon worthy of serious consideration. For over 50 years *The Wizard* has captured the imagination of audiences regardless of age, sex, race, class or religion. While acknowledging the film as a superbly crafted musical extravaganza, Nathanson goes beyond the superficial to investigate the underlying themes that contribute to the film's lasting popularity and its particularly American resonance.

Being that it is not the film in question but our fascination with it, one would be hard pressed to consider this book as a contribution to film studies alone. *Over the Rainbow: The Wizard of Oz as a Secular Myth of America* is an intricate analysis of American values woven around the study of a particular film as a "secular myth." Nathanson suggests that *The Wizard* is popular because it acts as a wish-fulfilling dream for the entire nation. It is a collective fantasy in which Dorothy, our proxy, enacts the themes of "growing up" and "going home." Nathanson argues that these themes, tied as they

are to American ideals, such as Dorothy's pastoral origins and her "pluckiness," reveal that *The Wizard* both reflects and affirms a deep-seated cultural myth for a country that is officially secular but still fundamentally religious.

Nathanson draws heavily (perhaps too heavily at times) on past scholarship from fields as diverse as psychoanalysis and architecture to construct his argument. Some readers will be disturbed by the detail with which Nathanson recounts the work of others. At times it is appropriate and engaging, but often the excessive re-presentation is simply repetitive leaving the reader to wonder where Nathanson's own contribution lies. When he does present his own ideas, in his own words, they are clear and insightful. Unfortunately there are times when we go for whole chapters only hearing Nathanson as an editorial link between other scholars. This matter of style aside, *Over the Rainbow* presents a uniquely interdisciplinary approach to a classic movie and the society that created and sustains it.

The first half of the book involves deconstructing the formal properties of the film to open it to psychoanalytic dream analysis. Nathanson carefully outlines three distinct stages of *The Wizard* as "Kansas Prologue," "Oz" and "Kansas Epilogue" by their variation in such cinematic conventions as sound, colour, *dramatis personae* and *mise en scène*. Based on the fantastical features that set the "Oz" stage apart from the more realistic "Kansas" episodes, Nathanson argues that Dorothy's journey

through Oz constitutes a dream-state ideal for psychoanalytic interpretation. Thus he recounts in detail several Freudian articles that have analyzed Dorothy's psychosexual maturation as it is played out in the symbolic landscape of the film. And finally we are given a Jungian interpretation that most universalizes *The Wizard's* story and links Dorothy's quest to the great American collective unconscious.

The second half of the book works to uncover the connection between Dorothy's adventures in Oz and their appeal to the national psyche. Jungian analysis has revealed that *The Wizard* is about "growing up," which is specifically associated with "going home." Nathanson argues that the film supports Americans' beliefs about their own landscape and their development within it. America has moved from a perceived garden paradise to an urban industrial nation and *The Wizard* plays out the collective feeling that "for Americans to 'grow up' as a nation (to realize their ultimate destiny as a garden paradise) they must also 'go home' (recapture their innocence in the original garden paradise)" (p. 173).

Nathanson relates this American belief in "growing up" and "going home" to universal religious patterns. He associates the American

pastoral ideal with mythical and religious conceptions of Eden-like states, with the film as a modernized appeal to timeless, universal beliefs of both social and personal development. *The Wizard* thus acts as a secular myth reflecting and defining a collective dream with the power of a religious doctrine. In an era where popular culture is often criticized for secularizing religion, Nathanson goes a great distance to show the other side of the coin. He carefully explains how a film like *The Wizard* can be read as a sacred text of a secular society. Nations are as much quasi-religions as they are political constructs, and like a religion they need their own myths to unite the masses.

Throughout *Over the Rainbow* one is aware that this landmark film is being used as a conduit to American culture itself. Along the way Nathanson contributes an in-depth study of the interrelation of popular film, religion and cultural myths. His reliance on recapitulating the work of previous scholars may prove daunting to the reader, but the end result is an exhaustively detailed consideration of *The Wizard* as a powerful reflection of fundamental American values and beliefs. Nathanson's interdisciplinary approach is an admirable model for further work in film and cultural studies.

**Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (eds.),
*American Home Life, 1880–1930: A Social History of Spaces
and Services***

ANNMARIE ADAMS

Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (eds.). *American Home Life, 1880–1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992. 256 pp., ill. Cloth \$34.95, ISBN 0-87049-759-6.

The study of the American middle-class home has been central to the development of material culture studies. This is evident both by the sheer number of scholarly articles devoted to the history of home life and by the inclusion of middle-class domestic topics in the field's growing list of texts. *American Home Life, 1880–1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, edited by Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J.

Schlereth, makes a substantial contribution to this well-established subfield, while at the same time suggesting new avenues for future research.

American Home Life is a collection of 11 papers by scholars from a range of fields in the humanities, presented in 1989 at a Texas conference entitled "Life at Home, 1880–1930." Collectively, the authors attempt to explain why and how the late Victorian, middle-class household became a more rationalized, modern site over the course of five tumultuous decades. This question has been addressed by other scholars, such as Gwendolyn Wright in *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and*