Once upon a time,
*The Wizard of Oz* was a populist fable

By Peter Drexler

Many reviewers have criticized *The Wizard of Oz* for its appropriation of one of America's most treasured fantasies, *The Wizard of Oz*. Some disapproved of replacing Judy Garland's youthful Kansas farm girl with Diana Ross' 36-year-old New York schoolteacher. Nevertheless, for example, a review in *The Kansas City Star* read: "Dorothy and her pigtails have been replaced by a black worker-owned baseball team trying to survive in the racist South (Moses and the Traveling All-Stars). The Wizards of Hollywood have led American film-goers on a course on film and politics. He wishes to acknowledge his reliance on an essay by Henry M. Littfeld, "The Wizard of Oz: Paradox on Revolution," *American Quarterly*, 1954.

Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, the Witch, and the Wizard of Oz themselves. What most Americans' don't know is the political allegory to be found in *The Wizard of Oz*. Many reviewers have criticized *The Wizard of Oz* for its appropriation of one of America's most treasured fantasies, *The Wizard of Oz*. Parable on Populism, "American Quarterly, 1964.

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Axiety? Fear? Loathing? At Christmas? Do we dare mention such feelings at a time when the message we are hearing and trying to convey is one of good cheer and happiness? Once again most of us are searching frantically for those gifts we must give our friends and relatives.

We've been watching television commercials about glorious goodies to buy and serve at the fabulous parties we will give and attend. We are talking to relatives about attending Christmas Day celebrations. Some of us are even planning trips to lovely vacation spots to bask in the sun or ski in the snow. Some of us. Others will do without Christmas celebrations—too poor or too alone. They will resent the Christmas cheer pressed on them by the relentless merchants for whom Christmas means the most cheerful time of the year.

Many, neither poor nor lonely, will suffer Christmas angst, the pain of celebrating a holiday that is not truly theirs for this is the day that the world celebrates the birth of Christ and there are many who are unwilling to join the celebration but who are yet unwilling to demur, participating instead because the social pressure is too great to resist.

At the same time, those for whom Christmas is an empty ritual suffer great anxiety, fear, and even loathing, hating themselves for looking forward to the gifts they hope to receive, having difficulty buying appropriate gifts for those they feel indebted to, even buying a tree that has no meaning for them except nostalgia, which by itself arouses ambivalence.

Who does not recreate the symbols of the past without a few shudders? Who does not engage in rituals without a sense of loss, lost childhood, lost joy? Particularly those rituals that have lost their meaning. Particularly rituals once celebrated in the heart of the family, as a child protected and loved, and now celebrated as an act of will.

Many celebrate Christmas with great good feeling, with the same pleasure they felt as children, perhaps even with more. But in this season of good will and cheer, we address those for whom Christmas is not such a happy time. To those people, the staff of IN THESE TIMES extends its sympathy. Endure, for it will soon be over. And to all the rest, to those who will be saying “Happy holiday!” with sincerity, we extend a Merry Christmas and many another to celebrate. To both the anxious and the merry, we dedicate Yeat's poem.

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds,
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

William Butler Yeats