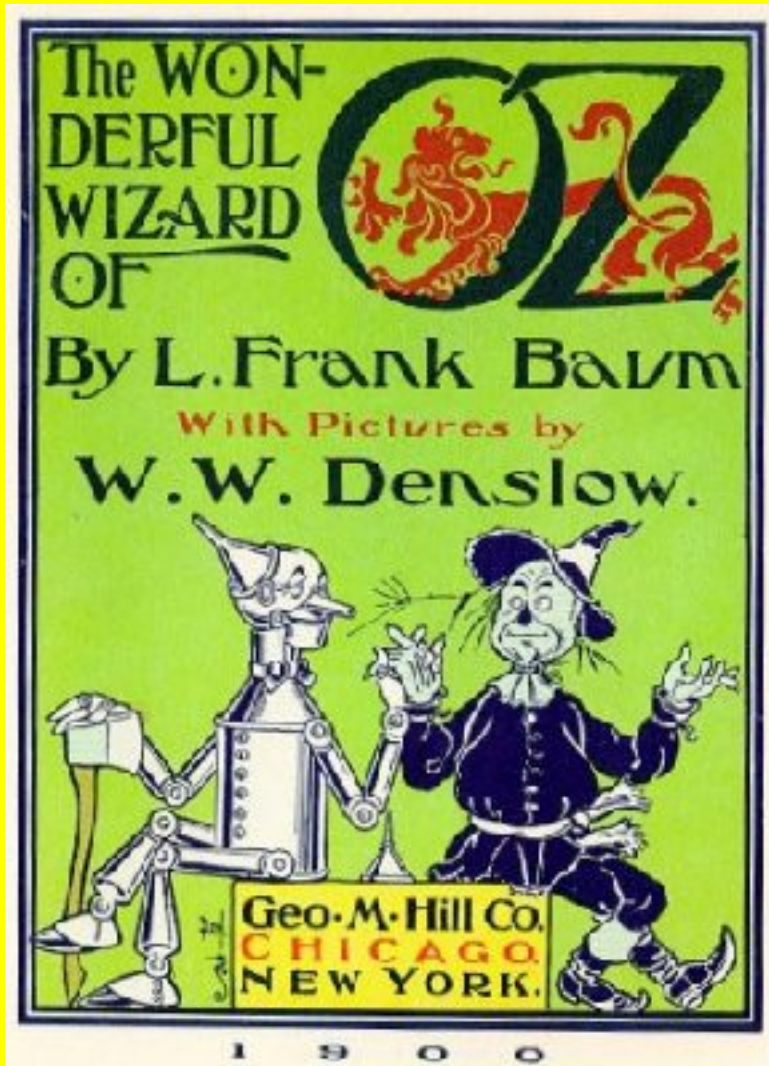


The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism

Written by Lyman Frank Baum (1900)



Baum's family moved to South Dakota in 1887 and took part in the hardships of Western farmers

Baum moved to Chicago and participated in torchlight parades for William Jennings Bryan in the election of 1896

Henry Littlefield

Was a teacher from California

Interpreted Baum's children's book as a parable for the Populist movement

Dorothy as "Everyman"



From Kansas

Could look at her door and see nothing but gray prairie on every side

Aunt Em came to farm as happy wife, now is old and depressed

Death of Wicked Witch of the East

Evil once ruled in west and east

After Dorothy's coming it only rules in the West



Tin Woodman as the laborer



Once an independent and hardworking laborer; put under a spell by Witch of the East so that every axe swing made him chop off a different part of his body

Eastern witchcraft dehumanized a simple laborer - better he worked more quickly he became a machine

Shows Populist view of evil Eastern influences on honest labor

Tin Woodman rusts with rain

Stuck for a year in same position before Dorothy shows up

Tin Woodman's condition is similar to Eastern Workers after depression of 1893



Dorothy's Silver Shoes vs. The Yellow Brick Road

In the book, Dorothy's slippers were SILVER, not red

Symbol for Bryan's Populist calls for coinage of silver
Dorothy, Good Witch of the North, nor Munchkins understand power of her silver slippers

"All you have to do is knock the heels together three times and command the shoes to carry you wherever you wish to go"



Scarecrow as Kansas Farmer

Needs real brains

Response to 1896 article by William Allen White accusing Kansas farmers of ignorance and irrationality

Shows sense of inferiority and self doubt



The Lion as William Jennings Bryan



How is the Lion like W.J. Bryan?

In Baum's story, Lion originally struck at Tin Woodman and made no impression but that the Tin Woodman fell over in the road and lay still

Refers to Bryan's 1896 loss of the vote of Eastern labor though he worked hard for their support

In 1896 workers were often pressured into voting for McKinley and gold by their employers

Emerald City as Washington DC

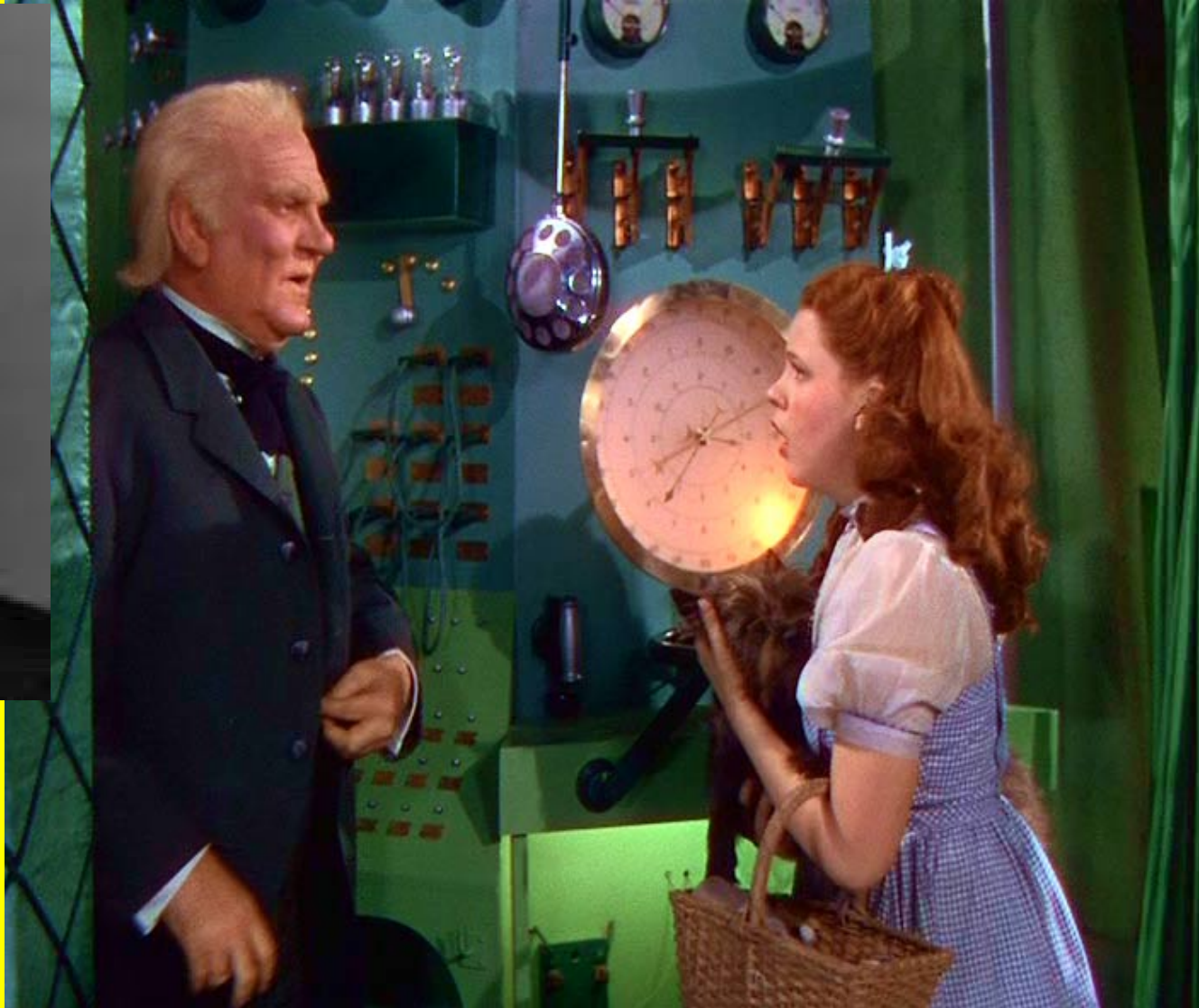
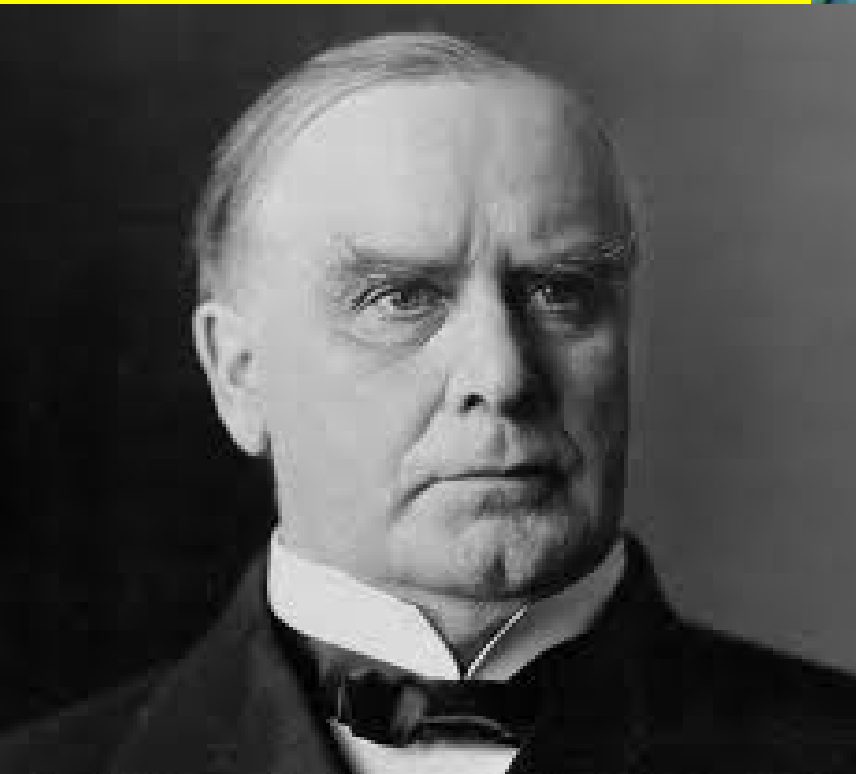


Emerald City as Nation's Capital

Four characters naively going to seek help from the Wizard are similar to Coxey's Army

1894 group of tramps marched to DC to seek help from President Cleveland

The Wizard as the President



Wizard as President

Wizard hides behind facade of paper mache and noise

Could be any President from Grant to McKinley

Wizard comes from fairgrounds in Omaha, Nebraska

He symbolizes the America criteria for leadership - able to be everything to everybody - appears differently to each of the four characters in the original book

Wizard orders them to kill Witch of the West

Golden road does not lead there - they must follow the Sun

Just like pioneers in the West

Witch of the West represent's Baum's view of "malign nature"



Flying Monkeys as Plains Indians

"Once we were a free people,
living happily..."

"We belong to this country
alone, and cannot leave it."

Monkeys not inherently bad,
but do evil when under
control of an evil influence



Dorothy kills the Witch with WATER!!

Water, which helped Plains farmers fight the meanness of nature (drought), helps Dorothy kill the Witch



Back to the Wizard...

The Wizard was formerly a mimic, ventriloquist, and circus balloonist

He could use his circus balloon from on high to trick people to paying money to see him

Shows the tricks necessary to nineteenth century politics

Could be Benjamin Harrison, Grover Cleveland, or William McKinley hiding behind the White House

The SILVER slippers

They allow Dorothy to return home and brighten up her family's (FARMERS) lives

Leadership of Oz after the Wizard

Scarecrow reigns over the Emerald City

Tin Woodman rules the West

Lion protects smaller beast in " a grand old forest"

What does this mean?????

FAMERS achieve national importance

INDUSTRIALISM moves West

BRYAN commands only a forest full of lesser politicians