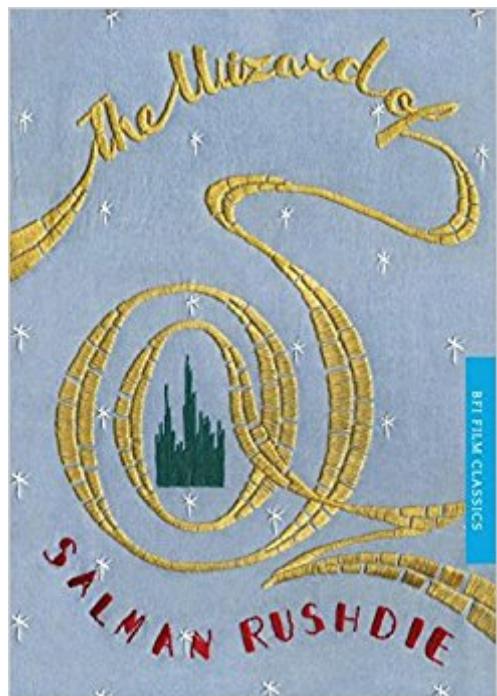


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# The Wizard Of Oz (BFI Film Classics)



## Synopsis

The Wizard of Oz 'was my very first literary influence,' writes Salman Rushdie in his account of the great MGM children's classic. At the age of ten he had written a story, 'Over the Rainbow', about a colourful fantasy world. But for Rushdie The Wizard of Oz is more than a children's film, and more than a fantasy. It's a story whose driving force is the inadequacy of adults, in which 'the weakness of grown-ups forces children to take control of their own destinies'. And Rushdie rejects the conventional view that its fantasy of escape from reality ends with a comforting return to home, sweet home. On the contrary, it is a film that speaks to the exile. The Wizard of Oz shows that imagination can become reality, that there is no such place like home, or rather that the only home is the one we make for ourselves. Rushdie's brilliant insights into a film more often seen than written about are rounded off with his typically scintillating short story, 'At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers,' about the day when Dorothy's red shoes are knocked down to \$15,000 at a sale of MGM props. In his foreword to this special edition, published to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the BFI Film Classics series, Rushdie looks back to the circumstances in which he wrote the book, when, in the wake of the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses* and the issue of a fatwa against him, the idea of home and exile held a particular resonance.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While Salman Rushdie has treasured The Wizard of Oz since his boyhood, the movie's idea of returning "home" has had a special resonance for him as an adult. In this lovely appreciation of the

MGM classic, Rushdie does not dwell upon his continual flight from any "home" after writing *The Satanic Verses*. But his affinity for Dorothy and her predicament comes through in his analysis. This is a marvelous little book, full of wonderful tidbits about the making of *The Wizard of Oz*. Rushdie also talks about the movie's contrast of black and white and color, order and disorder, good and evil. The volume ends with "At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers," a surrealistic short story in which Rushdie meditates on the value of fantasies like *The Wizard of Oz*. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This is one of the first in a new series of monographs pairing writers and film scholars with a film of their own choosing from the BFI archives. At first glance, the controversial author of *The Satanic Verses* might seem an odd pairing with the MGM musical classic, but Rushdie proclaims that the Judy Garland film was "my very first literary influence." The essay that follows this confession is sprightly, witty and surprisingly deeply felt. Like the embattled Rushdie, Dorothy is an exile looking for a way back home, the victim of a wicked witch not unlike Rushdie's nemesis, the Ayatollah Khomeini. Rushdie revels in the film's "joyful and almost complete secularism," while confessing his debt to it for the style of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. He also offers an idiosyncratic feminist defense of the Wicked Witch of the West and some mordant humor, as in his dismissal of Toto as "that little yapping hairpiece." The second half of this slender volume is a short story that inflates the ruby slippers into a bloated and portentous metaphor. The tale's failure, however, isn't enough to take the luster off the essay that precedes it. Illustrations not seen by PW. First serial to the *New Yorker*. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

A great book for Rushdie -- one can feel the limitations perhaps set by the editors on him -- usually Rushdie runs on, but here all of his insight and enthusiasm is pared down into an economical essay one can enjoy in less than an afternoon. Oh, it's a wonderful book on the Wizard movie, too. Rushdie, as outsider/insider, helps one return to the joy of first seeing the movie; he also provides some of the more delicious gossip and facts about this movie -- unlikely as I am to ever read a full book the film, Rushdie captures surely some of its best behind-the-scenes stories (yes: midgets, sweating, original actors, and the slippers). This book is a great read: the author is able to remind us how so many good elements (the visual storytelling, Garland's voice, the lyrics, the political incorrectness) bleed together into this wonderful movie.

One of the first long pieces Salman Rushdie wrote after the fatwa issued against him by the Ayatollah Khomeini, this charming little 1992 study of THE WIZARD OF OZ is one of their most charming in the BFI catalogue, and tells us perhaps more about the workings of one of the most important living novelists (himself a kind of wizard exiled from home) as it does about the 1939 MGM classic. The monograph consists of two halves: an extended essay on THE WIZARD OF OZ itself, and Rushdie's by-now famous short story "At the Auction of the Ruby Slippers," a fantasia on the famous early 70s purchase of one of the many pairs of slippers crafted for the film for what was then the unbelievable price of \$15,000. The essay on the film brings up all kinds of intriguing departure points for Rushdie: he emphasizes its importance to his own imaginative work (the depiction of the Widow in MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN, he now realizes, owes much to the unforgettable appearance of Margaret Hamilton as the Wicked Witch of the West), offers surprising analyses of the film's treatments of exile and return, and compares it to the musicals of Bollywood. The essay disappoints only by being too short: you wish it would go on longer and tell you even more.

Intriguing insight into a movie that is basically part of our DNA. Alas, the short story that closes the book is forgettable.

I really enjoyed this book. I had to read it for a film analysis and aesthetics class, along with many other BFI books, and it was my favorite one. I would have read it even if I weren't in the class -- Rushdie offers a personal take on a classic movie, and his reading (one that says youth is constantly looking for a technicolor world far away from their grounding, drab home life) is one easily relatable. I recommend it to any fan of Rushdie's, The Wizard of Oz and/or film.

I am so happy a friend turned me on to this read. Truly enjoyable and a great way to re-visit the story and the art of character and story development from a different angle. Really wonderful.

Salman Rushdie is pure genius - one of the greatest writers of the modern age. A brilliant take on The Wizard of Oz - a good read.

Rushdie takes an iconic classic film and synthesizes it to its core. The author of Imaginary Homelands provides his reader with a wonderful lesson in how to analyze film.

Over rated. Skip.

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