

## **Interlude: From East to West; the Life of Frank Baum**

Valentin Andreae wrote down the "Chemical Marriage", in which really deep occult knowledge was hidden, but behaved afterwards in a very remarkable fashion, Not only was he unable to explain certain words he had spoken in connection with writings which he had produced at the same time as the "Chemical Marriage", but in spite of having transcribed this great work, he appeared to be entirely without understanding of it.

*Rudolf Steiner*

Who was Frank Baum? Why did the inspiration of the Wizard of Oz reach America through him? When we explore his life, a theme which we have been following becomes apparent; the journey from East to West of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, echoed in Baum's life. Though Frank Baum was born in New York State his curiosity and restlessness drove him first to the Midwest, then to the West. At the end of his life he was very contented in his Los Angeles home.

Matilda Gage, Frank Baum's mother-in law was a well-known feminist and Theosophist. She played an important part in Baum's life, among other things awakening his interest in Theosophy, which at the time was no more than two decades old. Matilda died on March 18, 1898. Just before that time she had announced "I am to live on the plane that shall be above all things that dishearten. And I shall have courage and force out of the Unseen to do the things that I am asked to do. When I receive instructions from those who are in the Invisible, I will receive them willingly, with a desire to put them into practice to the extent of my spirit light and potency."<sup>1</sup> Her courage in the face of death inspired Frank to write the poem *Who's Afraid*. Matilda had faith in Frank as an author, witness a letter in which she prophesied "Now you are a good writer and advise you to try ... a fiction which comes with a moral without, however, any attempt to sermonize."<sup>2</sup> She even suggested a Dakota blizzard or a cyclone as part of it.

As Matilda was dying, at the end of a snowy day, Baum remembers experiencing a most singular moment of inspiration. "Suddenly, this one [story] moved right in and took possession," is what he wrote to the publisher.<sup>3</sup> He was experiencing a vision coming with great clarity. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Evan I. Schwartz, *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered the Great American Story*, 263.

<sup>2</sup> Evan I. Schwartz, *Finding Oz*, 253.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 263.

children came, who were used to hearing him tell stories, but he had to send them away since he was hardly able to speak.

What he declared in a later interview only confirms something that would make sense from a spiritual scientific perspective: "It was pure inspiration. It came to me right out of the blue. I think that sometimes the Great Author has a message to get across, and he has to use the instrument at hand. I happened to be that medium, and I believe the magic key was given to me to open the doors to sympathy and understanding, joy, peace and happiness. I grabbed a piece of paper that was lying there and I began to write. The story really seemed to write itself."<sup>4</sup>

Baum was so absorbed in the writing that he would not hear people around him. He also realized that he couldn't change the direction of the tale: "The characters surprised me. It was almost as though they were living people." And thus he had to let them do what they wanted.<sup>5</sup>

Frank Baum lived at a time and in close proximity of important events in American history. The state of New York was the hotbed of spiritualism, since the year 1948 on one hand and of religious revivals on the other. The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875. Alongside this was the rise of feminism, suffice to remember that 1848 was also the year of the Women's Convention at Seneca Falls, NY not far from Baum's residence. Frank Baum was made part of a larger karma than his own, a little like Steiner says of other figures, such as Martin Luther. Of him and others in his position Steiner tells us "In such cases a destiny is thrust upon men which need have no relation to their past karma."<sup>6</sup> A little like Baum himself intuited. The fact that Frank had an artistic bent, had been home-schooled and thus retained a more pliable imagination, and that he had been exposed to the Theosophical worldview made him an ideal candidate.

America faced a watershed; the closing of the frontier, which signaled the need for an inner frontier, the exploration of new territories of soul and spirit. Failing this it would continue in a purely externally materialistic fashion and turn into the temptation of imperialism and economic exploitation, and into the lure and seduction of new technological innovations. It is quite interesting to behold how the life of Frank Baum became a cocktail and blending in both directions.

### **Frank and the East**

Lyman Frank Baum was born in Chittenango, close to Syracuse, NY, on May 15, 1856, the same year as Sigmund Freud. He immediately survived an epidemic of diphtheria in which his brother Edwin died.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 264.

<sup>5</sup> Evan I. Schwartz, *Finding Oz*, 271-72.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Manifestations of Karma*, lecture 8 of May 25, 1910, "Karma of Higher Beings."

Already his paternal grandfather John had experienced a spiritual crisis and transformation in 1834, becoming an itinerant Methodist, or maybe a self-appointed, preacher, living a very harsh and dangerous life, and dying at age fifty-seven. The father, Benjamin, struck on the path of business. His earliest one led him to producing barrels for alcohol and dairy products. It wasn't long lived because the banks foreclosed on his business loan, and this was followed by a fire in the warehouse. The business closed in 1859, just in time to follow the oil boom in Pennsylvania. Benjamin soon started manufacturing kerosene for lighting, and from there to establishing the Commonwealth Oil Company with a group of investors.

The allure of speculation could not be resisted, and by 1866 Benjamin became the president of the Syracuse Second National Bank. Economic crisis hit in 1873, leading to the collapse of multitudes of banks that were overstretched with loans to railroad companies. The Syracuse Second National Bank was one of them. Economic depression hit for many years, and the financial losses likely impacted Benjamin's health.

The young Baum changed residences, but always within a close geographic area. In 1861 he moved to Syracuse, and five years later to the so-called "Rose Lawn house," which was to leave many fond childhood memories. The child was left-handed, and remained so in spite of educational attempts to the contrary. Frank was homeschooled and learned to play some piano and sing, discovering he had a good voice. Most of all he loved stories and among these the Grimm fairy tales and stories of H. C. Andersen stood at the top. Among others were John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and Dickens, whose dramatic reading the child probably heard in Syracuse.

At age twelve Frank was sent to the Military Academy at Peekskill. The transition was hardly to his liking. For the first time he discovered punishment, inflicted on him for not concentrating enough. At one point, under stress, he collapsed with chest dizziness and pains, a kind of reaction that would return in times of stress. By 1870 he gladly returned to Rose Lawn.

With his brother Harry, Frank developed the *Rose Lawn Journal* with a toy printing press. He started showing fondness for wordplay, silly puns and also scary stories. Quite symptomatically he also showed some interest in and understanding of the working of nature. The passion for writing accelerated in 1872-73 with another journal, *The Stamp Collector*. After that he attended Syracuse Classical School and started to write stories and poems, though he never finished high school.

In 1874 the Rose Lawn house was put out for sale, marking the end of a golden period of youth and Frank's passage into adulthood. Baum was finding more and more artistic outlets to his pursuits. He acted in *The*

*Banker's Daughter* with some success, and wrote articles for the *New York Tribune*. In an eclectic manner which would accompany him lifelong he helped to found a poultry association and wrote articles about bird breeding in a journal he called *The Poultry Record*. Showing his early interest in technology Frank also bought one of the first Kodak cameras and learned to develop photos. This trained an already practical man to keenly perceive details.

In 1880 Baum tried his fortune in the opera houses his father owned in the Pennsylvania oil towns, temporary settlements which looked themselves like stage sets. This lasted some three years and a half. Knowing the audience he would meet Baum wrote musical melodramas and registered copyrights for three plays. In these he often assigned himself lead roles. Another part of Frank's personality and interests emerged at this point. He was not only interested in writing scripts; he also followed the staging in great detail, fully understanding its mechanics.

It was at this time that he also met Maud Gage, who will soon become his wife, introducing her mother Matilda in Baum's life with great consequences for the future. Apart from being a radical feminist, Maud was also active in the Underground Railroad, and was friends to many among the Onondaga and other tribes of the Six Nations. She had encouraged Maud to be one of the first women to study literature at Cornell University.

As responsibilities increased and his son Frank Joslyn was born, Baum realized he could not survive with theater alone. He joined his brother, Benjamin Jr., in selling Baum's Castorine, a "great lubricator, the best axle oil in use." Coincidentally a great fire engulfed the opera house of Gilmour, Pennsylvania, where Baum was performing his own *Maid of Arran*, bringing his theater days to a close.

### **Frank and the Midwest**

Frank started exploring a move to the Midwest, and went to Aberdeen, South Dakota, in 1888. Once there he opened Baum's Bazaar in October, in what was a smartly planned business. In fact he initially did very well with it. The sale of luxury articles, however, did not factor in the possibility of drought threatening the economy of the town. When that happened sales immediately took a hit. Frank went back to his realm of expertise in 1890, buying off the *Dakota Pioneer* and renaming it *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*.

A civic-minded Baum was soon enlisted to promote the new town and its growth. As an editor and local journalist he displayed a contrasting set of skills. The newspaper carried an editorial column and another called "Our Landlady." In its columns he spoke through the voice of Mrs. Bilkins, presenting ideas in fiction. On one hand he shone as a storyteller, humorist, political and spiritual commentator. On the other he could at times display intolerant, contradictory or opinionated stances, which had their origin in

biography or volatile emotions. An example, clearly coming from family's circumstance, were his strong views on women's vote. His radical views about spirituality became at times strongly anti-religious. Frank would often rally to one cause or another, prey to the atmosphere of the moment, and/or his own strong feelings, which he could not temper with cool reason or room for doubt.

An example. In an attack against Christian denominations he wrote: "While everything else has progressed the church alone has been trying to stand still, and hang with a death-grip to medieval or ancient legends. It teaches the same old superstitions, the same blind faith in the traditional Bible."<sup>7</sup> Since he also questioned the sincerity of church-goers, and lamented the churches' attempt to hide the blending of Pagan and Christian traditions, he created enemies all through town. True to his Theosophical leanings, Christmas was important for Baum as were its connection with ancient Pagan festivals. No matter how cogent his thoughts, they could hardly be understood, or supported, in a frontier village at the end of the century.

Frank had also conflicted and ambivalent feelings towards the Sioux, while immersed in an atmosphere of constant hate and fear he did little to defuse. While on one hand he was aware of how the press amped up strong emotions concerning the Sioux, Baum himself was scared about the Ghost Dance and Aberdeen's unpreparedness to face the situation of an uprising at a time when Maud was pregnant. Under these added pressures he gave vent to racism and fear, writing: "... the best safety of the frontier settlers will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians. Why not annihilation? Their glory has fled, their spirit broken, their manhood effaced; better they should die than live the miserable wretches that they are."<sup>8</sup> This was repeated later on, after Wounded Knee, where uncontrolled emotions surfaced leading Baum to further aggravate his stance: "having wronged them for centuries, we had better... follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth."<sup>9</sup>

With Aberdeen suffering a great deal from the draughts, the bank failures, and settlers leaving, the paper faced loss of subscriptions and advertising revenue. With another child coming Frank had to once more take a deep look at his future. This time he decided to settle in a larger town, far from the upheavals of the frontier. He found employment with *The Post* in Chicago, and moved his family along. Soon after he switched for a more lucrative position as a buyer for Siegel and Cooper, finally settling for salesman with Pitkin and Brooks, a glass and china company.

---

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 124.

<sup>8</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 123.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

As a salesman he was assigned the Midwest. Being away from wife and children was a real trial for Baum and a source of unhappiness. Still, he made the best of it and continued to write, even if in jest, developing stories around *Mother Goose* in answer to questions from his children, while also writing short stories and poems for an adult audience. In the Wind City he had the opportunity of joining a network of writers, artists and publishers, and this created a connection with the publisher Chauncey Williams who was interested in publishing Baum's *Mother Goose* stories under the title *Father Goose*. The surprising success of the book allowed the aspiring writer to retire from the life of a salesman.

Through Williams, Baum also published *The Show Window* magazine, whose first issue came out in November 1897. The stated purpose of the magazine was "to arouse in the observer cupidity and a longing to possess the goods you offer for sale."<sup>10</sup> It featured very elaborate, sophisticated, technically ambitious and theatrical displays, speaking about "illusion windows." It coupled many of Baum's passions: writing, photography, technical innovations and illusion. Examples of displays counted: "a steam train, a Venetian palace with gondolas floating along a model canal, a grand pillared arch, like one from the false White City [Chicago's World Expo], and a Thanksgiving Turkey."<sup>11</sup> Baum excelled in the use of trapdoors, invisible mirrors, false walls, and altered perspectives. While he may have been very savvy in his advice, Frank was questionably at variance with many of his most cherished beliefs in the pursuit of expediency.

While working on the follow up project, *Father Goose in Prose*, Baum met with William Wallace Denslow, the talented illustrator who would collaborate to the success of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. This was a very productive time in Baum's life. He continued to read fairy tales to his children, revisiting his childhood memories. He came to question the wisdom of sharing the most gruesome stories with the younger children, echoing concerns of others, the brothers Grimm included, but acknowledged that the child, or everybody for that matter, needs things to fear in the stories.

In 1893 Matilda Gage had written her magnum opus *Woman, Church and State*. It seemed the creative juices of two writers were soon to converge in the tale that marked all of Baum's life moving forward. In March of 1898 the mother-in-law passed away. She had written confidently "What is called death by people is not death, you're more alive than ever you were after what is called death. Death is only a journey, like going to another country... After people have gone a while they come back and live in another body, in another family and have another name. Sometimes they live in another country."<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 155.

<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 155.

<sup>12</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 162.

*Father Goose* went on to become the bestseller book of the Christmas season. Baum had been spurred by its success, though he knew he had much better writing in store. He had already shared his ambition of writing a great story with his sister Mary-Louise. He finished *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* on October 9, and it was published in September 1900. Denslow's illustrations, blending with the text, were a welcome innovation.

Rebecca Loncraine persuasively argues that "Baum's relationship with his own imagination became increasingly peculiar, complex, and troubled after 1900."<sup>13</sup> An example: in 1902 the author decided to turn *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* into a musical extravaganza, an elaborate opportunity to indulge in special effects on stage. The experience was quite disorienting because the soul of the tale was completely betrayed and eviscerated. Baum had turned to this strategy even before it was needed due to the bankruptcy of his publishers and the wrangling over money with the illustrator Denslow. The musical turned into a great success and was the source of royalty income for Baum until 1910. Baum, now able to write full-time, moved into a large house in Chicago, and quickly became accustomed to a wealthy lifestyle. In a short time he became used to luxury hotel suites and first-class carriages, tailor-made suits and the best cigars. He was among the first to buy a Ford automobile, a pre-Model T, handmade in Detroit.

### **Frank and the West**

In 1903 Baum started to explore California, whose name had been coined by a Spaniard who dreamed the idea of a matriarchal island filled with gold and diamonds, populated by amazons and ruled by a queen called Califia. For seven years the Baum couple spent time between Chicago and California.

Riding on his previous success Baum decided to write *The Marvelous Land of Oz* in 1904 with the intention of converting it into another musical extravaganza. In 1905 he inaugurated animal stories that blended with Native American folk stories themes; they were published in *The Delineator*. At the time he signed a contract under which he agreed to write stories under various pen-names, and did so prolifically under as many as five aliases.

The success of *The Wizard of Oz* led to a children's fan club, and launched Baum into more sequels: *Ozma of Oz* in 1906, *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*, the darkest of the Oz stories in 1907. In 1908 he went on tour nationwide with the show *Fairylogue and Radio-Plays* in which he ushered in a new development. In following his fascination with technology, Baum became interested in the illusions conjured up by Georges Méliès, who had accidentally discovered "stop-motion trick photography" and started to

---

<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, xiv.

develop “trick films,” illusion films packed with special effects. Méliès devised moving pictures that gave life and semblance to the most unlikely dreams or figments of the imagination. Some of his projects included fairytales, such as “Cinderella” and “Bluebeard,” or the first ever horror movie, *The House of the Devil*. With Méliès Baum produced *Fairylogue and Radio-Plays* in which he portrays the land of Oz, rendering it a seeming three-dimensional reality. In the show he blended all his Oz stories, while Méliès produced the special effects. The whole was accompanied by a live orchestra.

Baum knew the art of photography and was involved firsthand in all the technical aspects of the collaboration with Méliès, and he blended in his version of magic, which he called “fairy photography.” In order to assure the show’s production the writer went heavily into debt. Though it was a success the costs were so high that the show could not pay for itself. The outcome obliged Baum to resume his prolific writing under various pen-names. Under his own name emerged the fifth Oz story: *The Road to Oz*. And after the writing of *The Emerald City of Oz* in 1910 he permanently moved to California, choosing to live in Hollywood. No other city could have exerted the pull of the new art of illusion.

The Baum house was north of Hollywood and Sunset Blvds. There were movie sets everywhere in Hollywood and in the streets, real life was blending with movie characters set loose, a remake of the Pennsylvania days or the Chicago World Fair, but now on a larger and permanent scale. In June of 1911 Baum was obliged to file for bankruptcy, and to turn many of his copyrights—including *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*—to a friend. The remaining copyrights were signed over to Maud. Because of these events Baum had to face humiliating stories in the Los Angeles and Chicago press. Baum’s literary voice was further fragmented in his many alter egos pen-names. The author could not but be aware of his divided, inconsistent nature.

Because of the financial pressure Baum returned to write about Oz, producing *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* in 1913. In 1913 Baum took another risk, investing in the show, *The Tik-Tok Man of Oz*, which premiered in Los Angeles. It closed in January of 1914 at a moderate profit, but a somehow sobered Baum finally realized there was no more money in the musical extravaganza, only to launch himself into producing a movie of Oz, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. The company raised \$ 100,000. In spite of bankruptcy Baum went ahead and bought a new car.

Using all his knowledge of photography and stagecraft Baum produced in quick succession *The Magic Cloak of Oz* and *His Majesty, the Scarecrow of Oz*. The new producer had marketed his movies to an adult public, who simply was no longer interested. By then he found himself obliged to first



rent his studios to other filmmakers, then close both company and studios in 1915. By this time a studio had opened just behind Baum's house.

After 1915 Baum started to produce one Oz book per year, while also devolving himself to gardening with ornamentals. He loved to combine both talents and became an expert in growing dahlias. In biographer Rebecca Loncraine's estimate Baum's stories now became sort of daydreams, and Oz became a bureaucratic Big Brother nightmare, tinged with the war atmosphere background.

### **Themes in Baum's Life**

In Frank's life we find the inherent tension of the self-made man who is ready to try his luck in many ways and the temptation to cut corners to reach status and wealth.

Frank lived a lifelong fascination with technology and illusion. He expressed his own torn mind through the fictitious Mrs. Bilkins of Aberdeen days. In her lines surfaced both the excitement for the new and the anxiety at what machines would do for the human being. Later on he became interested in the contrast between the "living force of electricity" and the dead objects it set in motion.

Baum was attracted to Chicago at the time it was opening the World Fair, where he could experience firsthand the wonders of electricity. The fair was dubbed the "White City" because of all the electric light that constantly radiated from it. On the heels of this experience the mesmerized Baum wrote *The Master-Key: An Electrical Fairy Tale, Founded Upon the Mysteries of Electricity and the Optimism of Its Devotees*. The term "master-key" is a terminology borrowed from Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and the story is partly a cautionary tale. What attracted Baum to Chicago anticipated the same kind of pull that would cause him to move to Hollywood. There around Baum's house real life was blending with all the artifacts of illusion.

Frank held little interest in organized religion. The Episcopal church was the only one he and Maud ever affiliated with at the time of their marriage. What drew Frank to it was their theatrical productions alone. On the other hand the interest in Theosophy was real, though its depth varied in time. He started to read *Isis Unveiled* in the summer of 1888 in a reading group under the inspiration of mother-in-law Matilda, who had joined the Theosophical Society in 1885. Frank himself joined in 1892.

In his columns, and in his most lucid moments, Baum the journalist deliberated that "the age of faith is sinking slowly into the past," to be replaced by an "unfaith" that is not "atheism" but "rather an eager longing to penetrate the secrets of Nature, an aspiration for knowledge we have been taught is forbidden."<sup>14</sup> He wanted to show how this universal longing

---

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz: The Life and Times of L. Frank Baum*, 113.

had been preceded by a multiplicity of religions and their prophets, Confucius, Buddha, Muhammed, Christ who had given it shape. He differentiated Theosophy from religion as a simple search for the truth. This was a far from common position at the time. He criticized "The severe restrictions of religion against penetrating into the unknown restrained many intelligent people from exercising this natural and reasonable desire."<sup>15</sup>

From Theosophy Baum took in notions such as: elementals, astral travel, hidden spheres, occult powers of nature. He wrote: "The creatures of the atmosphere are microscopically and otherwise invisible to ordinary humanity... This invisible vapory beings are known as Elementals, and play an important part in the lives of humanity." He was also strongly influenced by the work of mediums and/or the practices of seances, even though he understood that a medium is someone whose individuality is supplanted or taken possession by an elemental. He realized the danger and "liability of the soul not returning, in which case the Elemental will continue to inhabit the body until death."<sup>16</sup>

Baum was a very tender father. Only once, after smacking his son at Maud's request, he felt very sad and apologetic. He loved to read stories to his children: among these the tales of the Grimm Brother, the Andrew Lang collections, and also Mother Goose. From the combined love of fairy tales and the interests in the supernatural that were raised through Theosophy, we can understand how someone who had not been exposed to the intellectualism of the age in his education was chosen from the spiritual world to be the conduit for this unique and novel American fairy tale. Not having been intellectually educated his prose was closer to vernacular, rather than literary, which made it better suited for fairy-tales. He also wrote intuitively, organically, without much previous planning. The timing of the unique American tale also luckily coincided with the greatest influence of Matilda Gage, in whom Theosophy acquired greater depth. Baum was greatly inspired by her presence and strength, and no doubt committed more deeply to Theosophy as long as she was alive. All things considered, judging in hindsight, Baum can be seen as a sort of Johann Valentin Andreae, the one who could write *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, only to later look at it as something extraneous to his being.

In his expressed political/social views, Baum inveighed against the "age of deception" in relation to America's love of illusion. He drew the conclusion that "Americans love to be deceived."<sup>17</sup> And he joined in for good measure on both ends of the deception for a variety of reasons. The same Baum, who had criticized the deceptive arts of selling, published *The Art of*

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 113-14.

<sup>17</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 102.

*Decorating Dry Goods Windows and Interiors*. This persistent inner dichotomy may explain why the child Baum was amused by the contrast of his two names Frank vs Lyman, which he dubbed 'who lies'. Though Lyman was his first name he was always called Frank.

First among a few of the reasons that fed Frank's split of soul was his "live and spend worldview". In "The Return of Dick Weemins" he writes "All occupations, to my notions, is gamblin' or speculatin', which mounts to the same thing. Did anybody ever question Gould's or Vanderbilt's money?"<sup>18</sup> Another element was self-doubt. Frank was acutely aware of not having finished his high school education or not having gone to college. He showed his lack of confidence when writing novels, rather than fairy-tales: "I will have to be published under a pen name (if it has the luck to be published at all) because I cannot interfere with my children's books by posing as a novelist." The specter of the humbug lay always close.<sup>19</sup>

Frank was the perfect eclectic. He focused on many issues at the same time, relishing diversity. He was perceived by the media as eccentric, vague, remote and otherworldly. Part of this was due to the fact that he mixed reality and fiction in his own self-assessments or disclosures to the press, ending up believing his own made-up reality. He often sold a fabricated version of himself to the media, so much so that the result, according to Loncraine, was a "a warped hall of mirrors." This also explains how Baum's literary voice became fragmented in his many alter egos pen-names. Baum, aware of his divided, inconsistent nature, often refused to face reality, clinging to an optimistic denial in his artistic/business pursuits.

In reminding us of the genesis of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Loncraine writes: "The tale came easily, as if it were being written through him. He began to construct an alternative country that in some ways took its shape from U.S. geography, as though this new land was being dreamt up by the American landscape itself."<sup>20</sup>

The story is both in line with tradition and quite original, not to mention a reflection of the American soul and the American Dream. It blends the reality of the sensible and supersensible worlds. The story avers to portray a real experience, which is made clear by Baum saying that Dorothy falls asleep only once and in so doing dreams of Kansas. Baum combined realism with old archetypes brilliantly. Nothing is out of place or extraneous to the story, and each character is both a unique individual and an elemental or archetypal force.

In Baum's assessment the book presented a departure and something new: "The winged fairies of Grimm and Andersen have brought more happiness

---

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 150.

<sup>19</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 219.

<sup>20</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 160.

to childish hearts then all other human creations... Yet the old-time fairy tale, having served for generations, may now be classed as 'historical'... for the time has come for a series of new 'wonder tales.'"

At the time in which American wilderness is closed, Oz maps the new wilderness. Loncraine again evokes: "Uncivilized wilderness is alive and kicking in Oz even if Frederick Jackson Turner was right when he said that the American frontier had closed, the wilderness civilized, populated, and plowed. The inner geography of Baum's mind had to conjure a spacious place of wilderness because there was no wilderness left outside the imagination."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Rebecca Loncraine, *The Real Wizard of Oz*, 176.