Griswold, Jerry, ***There's No Place but Home: "The Wizard of Oz"*** , Antioch Review, 45:4 (1987:Fall) p.462

there's no place but home: *the wizard of oz*

BY JERRY GRISWOLD

"Is it real or is it a dream?" This question has been raised over and over again about the land of Oz. In the 1939 MGM movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is hit on the head during the cyclone and dreams up the magical land. Nothing like this happens in L. Frank Baum's book. Judy Garland may wish to go "Somewhere over the Rainbow," but in the book the cyclone takes Dorothy there against her wishes and while she is wide awake. In the book Oz is a real place, not a land created by Dorothy's fertile imagination.

The land of Oz is certainly one of the most memorable things about the book. After the publication of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), children wrote Baum to ask how they might buy tickets to travel to that marvelous place; and when readers demanded more from Baum, they did not ask for more "Dorothy books," but for more books about Oz. This central importance of place is also indicated in the list of titles Baum considered before he arrived at the present one: *The City of Oz, The City of the Great Oz, The Emerald City, From Kansas to Fairyland, The Land of Oz.*

Scholars have, in general, viewed Oz as a utopian dream. Baum's landscape has been seen as a Jeffersonian agrarian paradise, evidence of his interest in the Populist movement, and an exemplification of the ideas of such utopian thinkers as William Morris and Edward

Bellamy. To support their views, these scholars have pointed to the heavenly ideals of Oz: freedom of the individual, voluntary acceptance of responsibility, the equal enjoyment of work and play, the folly of war, the need for sharing, and so forth.

But what can't be ignored is how much the land of Oz is a reflection of actual circumstances at the turn of the century. At that time, America must have appeared a kind of fairyland to foreigners and natives alike. As impossible as it might seem, in America, as in fairyland, any boy could become president of the country. Like some lucky spell, fortunes could be and were made overnight. Merchant princes of the Gilded Age built or bought castles for their private homes. P.T. Barnum, as much a master of hokum as Baum's wizard, was a national hero. Immigrants believed streets were paved with gold, only later to discover, perhaps, that they were really made with yellow bricks. And if Baum's green paradise in the midst of a great desert seemed remarkable, what could be more remarkable than Brigham Young's building the land of milk and honey in Salt Lake City?

In a recognizable fashion, the map of Oz is a map of the United States. To the west is the land of the Winkies: a wild, untilled region full of marauding prairie wolves and not unlike South Dakota where Baum lived for a time as a shopkeeper and newspaperman. To the east is the land of the Munchkins: a place that resembles the Pennsylvania "Dutch" country where many Germans settled (Baum's ancestors came from Bavaria). To the south is the land of the Quadlings: it is inhabited by hillbilly-like Hammerheads and white-frocked ladies and gentlemen known as the China People (two classes of people with whom Baum became familiar while he was a traveling salesman in the South). To the north (in later Oz books) is Gillikin Country: a place of mountains and lakes, not unlike the Michigan where Baum used to vacation.

Since the wizard's kingdom is in the very center of Oz, it is hard not to think of Chicago as its complement. Baum was living in the Windy City when he wrote his story about his cyclone-transported girl (named, significantly, Dorothy Gale). And like other writers, he was very impressed by the Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 — which, according to observers, was a very Oz-like affair: "with streets thronged with characters straight out of the Arabian Nights, 'hootchy kootchy' dancers, a cyclorama of the Swiss Alps, a full-size knight in armour on a full-size horse (both made out of dried California prunes), a Ferris Wheel, a Lapland village, a collection of

nasty-tempered ostriches and a chinese theater." "The Great White City," as the fairgrounds were known, seems to have been the inspiration for the wizard's Emerald City.

A few intrepid scholars have suggested, however, that more than middle America, Oz is a portrait of California—or, at least, the dream of California, that verdant vision that haunted dirt-farming families in the Dust Bowl even before *The Grapes of Wrath* and the Great Migration of the thirties. As Jordan Brotman observes: "The Oz books [have] a kind of California extravagance about them, and I [can] remember the time when California with its sunshine and its golden oranges and movies was an earthly paradise hankered after by people all over the country, certainly in the midwest."

Midwesterner Frank Baum apparently shared this dream. A few years after his success with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, he began to spend his winters on Coronado Island in San Diego. In an interview in the *San Diego Tribune* in 1904, he would say: "Those who do not find Coronado a paradise have doubtless brought with them the same conditions that would render heaven unpleasant to them did they chance to gain admittance." In the books that followed, he deliberately included California locales in his paradisaical geography.

In 1909 Baum moved permanently to the Golden State, and in 1910 he purchased a home in Hollywood. As if to make more obvious the connection between Oz and California, Baum called his home "Ozcot." And he went about re-creating a miniature Oz there—building his home around an enormous cage of songbirds, daily writing the "history" of Oz in his garden courtyard, cultivating flowers and earning the title of Dahlia King of California.

Baum settled in Hollywood during the very beginnings of the motion-picture business, and he became involved in new and experimental forms of entertainment — moving from the stage to magic-lantern presentations to one-reel films and founding his own movie company (The Oz Film Manufacturing Company). But the public was not yet ready for him, and his half-dozen films brought him only financial problems, even though they are said to have had special effects almost as dazzling as MGM's *The Wizard of Oz* some twenty-five years later.

Baum also anticipated Walt Disney. In 1905 Baum informed the press he planned to build a pleasure park, a miniature Oz, for children and their families on an island off the California coast. An idea whose time had not yet come, this particular magic kingdom was never built.

In 1916 he conceived a musical version of "Snow White," but the idea never got off the ground. Twenty-one years later Disney would release such a musical and establish the cash foundation that would lead him, among other things, to build Disneyland in Anaheim.

Baum and Disney were kindred spirits, as the resemblances between Oz and Disneyland make clear. In both places the homespun facts of America are made dreamlike, and dreams are made palpable facts. In Oz, turn-of-the-century America (be it Greater Chicago or California) becomes a visionary landscape and, at the same time, the utopian future already exists. In Oz, a familiar thing like a scarecrow is magically a person and, at the same time, a magical person like the wizard is actually a balloonist from Omaha. Oz is an eclectic place like Disneyland, where visitors can walk through an idealized small town of turn-of-the-century America and meet (in the flesh) Snow White or Alice (from Wonderland), can pass by castles or under futuristic skyways, can travel through Frontierland and Tomorrowland. In Oz, as in Disneyland, Americans find themselves actually living a fairy tale.

Baum has to be taken seriously when he says in the introduction to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* that "it aspires to being a modernized fairy tale." As his later essay "Modern Fairy Tales" indicates, Baum was no mean folklorist, was intimately familiar with his genre, and knew what he was about; the essay reveals his thorough acquaintance with the history and techniques of Perrault, the Grimms, Lang, Andersen, and subsequent writers who deliberately set out to write fairy tales. Baum's contemporaries acknowledged his claim: shortly after its publication, a reviewer in the *New York Times* would say that the book seems "like a leaf out of one of the old English fairy tales that Andrew Lang or Joseph Jacobs has rescued for us" and predicted it would achieve the classic status of "The Story of [Goldilocks and] the Three Bears."

Like fairy tales, *The Wizard of Oz* ("Wonderful" was dropped from the title after the first edition) can no longer be regarded the work of a single author. It has been taken over by the folk. Baum recognized that this was what happened to true fairy tales; while they were "collected" by the Grimms and Perrault and Lang, these tales were, in

fact, the community property of the oral tradition and "told by professional storytellers, and sung by wandering minstrels."

Baum would have been pleased to learn, consequently, that the wide acceptance of his story has likewise moved it into the public domain. There are Oz coffee cups and Oz T-shirts and a kind of doughnut called a "munchkin." There is, of course, the famous MGM movie, which (it is estimated) has been seen more than a billion times. But there have also been more than a dozen other film versions (including the all-black version *The Wiz* and, most recently, Disney Studios' *Return to Oz*) and it has inspired dozens of others (including *Gremlins* and *Star Wars*). And there have been songs, from Judy Garland's "Somewhere over the Rainbow" to Elton John's "Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road." And there are coloring books and postcards and Oz novels written by other authors. Like the classic fairy tale, private dream has become public dream.

If *The Wizard of Oz* is genuinely a tale that belongs to the folk, then it is surprising that there has been no rigorous interpretation of the story in the same manner, for example, that Bruno Bettelheim and others have interpreted the classic fairy tales. Perhaps part of the problem, as with folklore, lies in establishing what is the "text." If there are more than 345 variants of "Cinderella," in an analogous fashion, critics must choose between various versions of *The Wizard of Oz* — once Baum's fairy tale became communal property and was retold (and continues to be retold) by dozens of other storytellers.

Following the example of folklorists, it might be possible to identify a "core" story by comparing two popular versions of the tale, Baum's novel and the famous MGM movie version of 1939. To be sure, there are many differences that can be explained by their different forms: those who encounter the film, after first reading the book, sometimes complain that the story has been sullied by dance numbers and songs; those who come upon the novel, after having made first acquaintance with the film, complain about Baum's needless addition of adventures so that (in his words) "something is doing every minute." Still, this is needless disputation if Baum is taken at his word when he said he was writing a fairy tale, and if the MGM film is considered another retelling of a tale that will be revised by generations of storytellers. To understand what is (and what is likely to be) the unchangeable heart of the story, it is worth considering how the film differs from the novel and what this retelling adds and repeats.

The movie omits a great deal. In general, the film converts the

tale into a linear story by doing away with Baum's fascination with things in fours and twos. Throughout the book, sometimes tediously, Baum creates a situation and then tells the reader: (1) how Dorothy reacted, (2) how the Scarecrow reacted, (3) how the Tinman reacted, and (4) how the Lion reacted. The land of Oz is divided into quadrants, and Baum's story line is sometimes obscured by a similar four-part vision. The movie telescopes a good amount of this in favor of straightforwardness.

The movie also does away with many of the twos of the book. As Michael Hearn points out in his keen *The Annotated Wizard of Oz*, the book is full of dichotomies: the first and last chapters deal with Kansas; in the second chapter Dorothy gets her magical shoes, and in the next-to-last chapter she learns how to use them; the center of the book is the discovery that the Wizard is a humbug, and it is preceded by a journey to him and (after his balloon ascent without Dorothy) by a journey away from him; there are two Good Witches and two Bad Witches; and so forth. The movie proceeds in a more linear fashion without Baum's geometrical sense of literary structure: the two Good Witches are collapsed into one (Glinda), and the mirrored second half of the book — Dorothy's further journey to the south and through the lands of the China People and Hammerheads — is deleted so that the film ends shortly after the Wizard's balloon departs.

The second telling of the tale in the movie also adds some things. To be sure, much of this seems unessential and the result of translating a novel into a technicolor musical extravaganza; much more time is spent in M nchkinland, for example, so an audience can be dazzled by spectacle, music, and special effects. Still, there are at least two major things that the movie adds to the tale.

The first is that Dorothy's entire trip occurs as a dream, brought on by being hit over the head during the cyclone. This adds a psychological dimension to the novel. The other major addition is a more important role for the Wicked Witch. She makes more frequent appearances in the movie than in the book: issuing her threat ("I'll get you, my pretty"), throwing a ball of fire from the rooftop, skywriting above the Emerald City ("Surrender, Dorothy"), monitoring the progress of Dorothy's expeditionary party through the woods on the way to the castle. But perhaps one of the most significant additions in this regard — one that adds another psychological dimension to Baum's version and brings the story closer to the classic fairy tale — occurs when Dorothy stares into the crystal ball and sees a distraught Aunt

Em searching for her and then watches as the picture changes to that of the cackling Wicked Witch.

This last transformation offers an entrance into *The Wizard of Oz* and suggests how it might be interpreted in the same way that fairy tales have been interpreted. It is a commonplace that the stepmothers of fairy tales are often a result of a child's twofold picture of mother: the Good Mother who loves and protects (the fairy godmother) and the Bad Mother who threatens and punishes (the witch). The movie provides the slightest hint that Dorothy sees her own stepmother (Aunt Em) in this twofold way—as Glinda and the Wicked Witch. In fact, *The Wizard of Oz* might be seen like many other fairy tales—"Snow White," for example, or "Hansel and Gretel"—as the story of a girl who suffers under the domination of a mother figure, who wishes to replace or otherwise be rid of that rival, and who finally achieves independence. At the same time, Dorothy's adventures in Oz, her oedipal dream, resemble the ur-story discoverable in other American childhood classics.

Like many juveniles in America's childhood classics, Dorothy is an orphan. Like many others, she is being raised by guardians (her Aunt Em and her Uncle Henry) in a cheerless environment. While Huckleberry Finn chafes under the restrictions of Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas, while Pollyanna and Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm have to suffer the hardheartedness of their aunts, Dorothy's own circumstances are described in a way that links the desiccated landscape with the cheerlessness of her guardians:

> When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.
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> When Aunt Em came to live there she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray, they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray

also. She was thin and gaunt and never smiled now. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at.

Dorothy's own lively spirits are at odds with this grayness and graveness. Her pet is a symbol of that spiritedness: "It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog." Toto is not simply an antidote to Kansas and Aunt Em, he is (throughout the story) something like Dorothy's animus — her spirit of play, which leads her on to further adventures when, for example, Dorothy is about to return to Kansas in the Wizard's balloon, and Toto leaps from her arms and she pursues him.

While "Toto played all day long," Dorothy's guardians "worked hard from morning to night and did not know what joy was." Work, especially housework, comes to be associated with arid Kansas and the cheerless Aunt Em. In a later Oz book, Dorothy seems to view herself as dispossessed royalty: she observes that while she is a princess in Oz, "when I'm back in Kansas I'm only a country girl, and have to help with the churning and wipe the dishes while Aunt Em washes them." Indeed, when Dorothy is captured by the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, instead of being sent to the dungeon, the girl is taken "through many beautiful rooms in [the] castle until they came to the kitchen, where the Witch bade her clean the pots and kettles and sweep the floor and keep the fire fed with wood."

These connections between dryness and Aunt Em and the Witch and housework become all the more significant in the events that follow. As if tired of housework, almost in answer to a wish, Dorothy watches as a cyclone comes and uproots the house. Dorothy and Toto and her home are transported to the land of Oz, a green world that is the complete opposite of anhydrous Kansas. But this wish fulfillment goes even further: the house falls on the Wicked Witch of the East and kills her, and she dries up and shrivels away. It is a symbolic matricide: in the book, the equally desiccated Aunt Em is the only one who takes shelter in the storm cellar under the house. Feeling guilty, perhaps, for this oedipal hostility, Dorothy protests her innocence; but as the Munchkins observe, whether the witch was killed by Dorothy or by her house, "That is the same thing." The Munchkins congratulate and honor the girl, and these childlike creatures (Baum

stresses that they are exactly the same size as Dorothy) celebrate the end of their bondage.

Like the destination reached by children who make journeys in the fairy tales (a Great Forest in which lies, for example, a gingerbread house or a cottage occupied by seven dwarves), like the twofold settings reached by the traveling juveniles in American children's books where the great outdoors coexists with palatial homes (Huck's river and the Grangerfords' mansion, for example, or the Secret Garden and Misselthwaite Manor), Dorothy arrives in a Green World populated by castles. In all these works, the Green World seems to be an arena of independence where the child is free from parental authority, but such freedom is both exhilarating and frightening. No matter how carefree Huck's drifting on the river may seem, there are plenty of occasions when he witnesses wanton violence and has occasion to be anxious. As liberating as the jungle is for Tarzan, it is also a region of omnipresent danger. Like a child on its own for the first time, Dorothy finds her own Green World is wonderful fun but she must also face the threats of fearsome beasts and such things as attacking trees.

The counterpart of the Green World are special homes associated with parent figures. Like the witch's gingerbread house in "Hansel and Gretel" or the cottage of the fatherly protectors of "Snow White," the March sisters in *Little Women*, for example, shuttle between the palatial homes of their mean-spirited Aunt March and their fatherly benefactor Mr. Lawrence. A similar geography can be seen in *The Wizard of Oz*. At opposite ends of the quadrant are castles of the Good Mother and the Bad Mother, the good witches and the bad witches. In the midst of this quadpartite rivalry (bipartite in the movie), at the very center of the land of Oz, is the axis mundi of this oedipal dream: the Emerald City, which is ruled over by a father figure, the paternal Wizard. It is there that Dorothy goes first, thence outward to kill (again) the Wicked Witch.

Typically, in American childhood classics and in the fairy tales, after arriving in the Green World the child is adopted by parental surrogates, engages in an oedipal struggle with the parent figure of the same sex, and has the limited but not quite sufficient protection of the parent figure of the opposite sex. Tarzan, for example, is adopted into an ape family, struggles with and finally kills his ape stepfather, and enjoys the safety afforded by his ape stepmother until he grows older and she dies. Likewise, Snow White finds another home with

the dwarves, struggles with and eventually slays her stepmother the witch, and for a time enjoys the paternal protection of her companions whose diminutive size suggests that they can be of only limited help. In the same way, Dorothy is adopted, too, by her three traveling companions, vies with her same-sex antagonist the Wicked Witch, and enjoys the help but limited protection of her opposite-sex companions; the Scarecrow and the Tinman and the Lion are males who are all deficient in some way—lacking a brain, a heart, and courage.

The climax is prepared for when (in the book) the Wizard tells Dorothy she must kill the Wicked Witch of the West. The movie, perhaps, presents the oedipal nature of this task in more symbolic terms: Dorothy is told she must acquire the broom of the Wicked Witch—that is, as in the oedipal dream, the child will take over housekeeping, replace her mother, fill her mother's shoes. In fact, it is because Dorothy is already in the shoes of the Wicked Witch of the East that there is a rivalry between the girl and the Wicked Witch of the West.

When Dorothy and her party depart for the witch's castle, they are attacked by the witch's minions, and the Scarecrow is torn apart and the Tinman is disjointed. At this point, *The Wizard of Oz* comes to resemble "Hansel and Gretel." Like Hansel, the Lion (Dorothy's one remaining companion) is held in a cage in the yard where he starves. Like Gretel, Dorothy is forced by the witch to do housework. Like Gretel, too, Dorothy slays the witch.

But while Gretel's act is forthright when she deliberately pushes the witch in the oven, Dorothy's own action seems more accidental when she splashes the Witch with a bucket of water (something that makes the witch begin to melt away). As if dimly conscious that this is matricide, as if guilty and defensive, Dorothy protests her innocence (as she had earlier when the Munchkins congratulated her for killing the Wicked Witch of the East) and insists to the dying witch that she had no idea that water would have that effect. But as the Munchkins might say in this circumstance, whether Dorothy or her water were the agent of this death, "That is the same thing." Moreover, this girl—whose laughter so troubles her grave aunt that the woman "would scream and press her hands upon her heart when Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears," whose wish to be somewhere over the rainbow seems to evoke a home-wrecking cyclone that kills one witch—notably makes use of water to slay this witch. Aunt Em has been associated with an aridity at odds with Dorothy's own fertility, and

Dorothy is (Baum says) "a well-grown child for her age."

Once she has killed the Wicked Witch, it is interesting that Dorothy becomes, voluntarily, a housekeeper:

> Seeing that she [the witch] had really melted away to nothing, Dorothy drew another bucket of water and threw it over the mess. She then swept it out the door. After picking out the silver shoe, which was all that was left of the old woman, she cleaned and dried it with a cloth, and put it on her foot again.

In a sense, this is the child's oedipal wish fulfilled: she has slain the mother, replaced her as housekeeper, filled her shoes, and now has the father all to herself. Then, the triumphant and liberated Dorothy returns to the Emerald City, confronts the Wizard, and the twosome make preparations to return to Kansas in his balloon. But at the moment of departure, Toto (that animated part of Dorothy's personality), as if sensing how this is an oedipally inappropriate solution, hops from the balloon's basket and Dorothy gives chase and the Wizard ascends without her.

But something equally important also occurred when Dorothy and her three companions confronted the Wizard upon their return to the Emerald City. When he had sent them to kill the Wicked Witch, the Wizard would not abide Dorothy's protests that she had never killed anything willingly, and he responded simply: "Until the Wicked Witch dies you will not see your Uncle and Aunt again." Read in a psychological fashion, the Wizard's statement amounts to this: until Dorothy works through her oedipal dilemmas, until she does away with the fantasies that every child creates where parents are seen in hyperbolic terms (as the All-powerful Father and the Weak Father, the Good Mother and the Bad Mother), until that time she cannot see her parents as they really are, free of her projections.

This suggests the importance of the scene when Dorothy and her companions confront the Wizard in the Throne Room and find out who he really is. At that time, there is a simultaneous decline and elevation of Dorothy's father figures. On the one hand, the Wizard is exposed and shown to be a balloonist from Omaha whose power really comes from sleight-of-hand magic; as he says, he isn't all-powerful: "I'm just a common man." On the other hand, Dorothy's three companions are elevated to the average and recognized as they truly are; instead of being deficient males, it is made clear, they have always possessed what they thought they lacked.

Having dispensed with exaggerated notions about the father, the

story turns to consider equally hyperbolic notions about the mother. Dorothy has already come to grips with the Bad Mother; that concept is no longer important and has melted away. It remains for her to confront the equally exaggerated concept of the Good Mother, and the last section of both the movie and the book involves Dorothy's meeting with the Good Witch Glinda.

In the movie, Dorothy is disappointed to discover that Glinda cannot transport her back to Kansas, that this Good Witch is not all-powerful as Dorothy had thought. But this diminution is followed by something else when Glinda points out that the girl has had the ability to return all along; no longer needing to depend upon others, even upon the Good Mother Glinda, Dorothy comes into her own and recognizes her own power. With the click of the heels of her shoes (which are lost in the journey), Dorothy's adventures in Oz and her oedipal dream come to a conclusion. Through her own means, she transports herself back to Uncle Henry, Aunt Em, and Kansas — where people and places are, finally, what they are and not what they seem.

> *"The real apocalypse comes, not with a vision of a city or kingdom, which would still be external, but with the identification of the city or kingdom with one's own body."*
> — Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*

In the film Dorothy wants to escape to "Somewhere where there isn't any trouble," somewhere where Miss Gulch isn't trying to get her dog Toto, somewhere over the rainbow. Her subconscious answers her desire in the dream — remaking Kansas into Oz, the hired hands (Hunk and Zeke and Hickory) into her companions (the Scarecrow, Tinman, and Lion), Professor Marvel into the Wizard, and Elvira Gulch into the Wicked Witch. All these transformations make a subtle point: Dorothy cannot escape her troubles by going elsewhere. The last words of the movie ("There's no place like home") really amount to "There's no place but home."

This is a message that is repeated over and over again in American children's literature. Huckleberry Finn's journey is one long escape from Pap, but all along the river he encounters various versions of his father. Toby Tyler runs away to join the circus but finds that the prob-

lems he hoped to have left at home reappear in a carnival atmosphere where they are enlarged to freakish dimensions.

The Absolute Elsewhere, America's childhood classics make clear, is identical with one's own self. The Holland of Mary Mapes Dodge (that land ever in danger of being flooded if the dikes give way) is the mirror image of Hans Brinker (a stalwart youth who preserves his ego from tidal waves of emotions). The Africa of Tarzan (where tigers found on the Indian subcontinent are pelted with Hawaiian pineapples) has no objective correlative; it is the Dark Continent of the id where violent and erotic impulses are unchecked. The quarrels between England and America in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* are coextensive with the domestic squabbles between the boy's paternal and maternal relatives; the two countries are, truly, the fatherland and the motherland. The macro and the micro coincide, so that, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel, the Secret Garden comes back to life when the children do and vice versa.

But perhaps no other work makes this so clear as does *The Wizard of Oz*. Near the end of the movie Glinda asks Dorothy what she has learned, and the girl replies: "If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any farther than my own backyard because if it isn't there I never really lost it in the first place." According to Baum's son, this is also what his father had in mind when he wrote the book: "What we want, the moralist whispers, is within us; we need only look for it to find it. What we strive for has been ours all along."

In years to come, storytellers may reshape this fairy tale in ways unrecognizable to present generations, but what cannot be altered is the core of the story:

> A little girl falls asleep and dreams she is lost and cannot find her way home. She is harassed by a Witch she must kill, and the solution to this problem is easier than she imagined (perhaps something as simple as throwing a bucket of water at her). Then she travels to a Wiseman only to learn that he can provide her with no solutions, though he gives her a hint when he tells her three companions that they already possess what they believe they lack. Finally, a Fairy Godmother tells the girl she has always had the power to solve her own problems, and the child finds her way home and wakes up.

If this is the unchangeable heart of *The Wizard of Oz*, then what is this story about? That we already have what we sometimes think we lack. That we sometimes make mountains out of mole hills and that such problems are easily dissolved. That the search for solutions is, for similar reasons, a fruitless enterprise. That we cannot be given

what we already possess. That we are already home.

These are large truths. But every thoughtful person at one time or another has encountered them, has had a lucid moment when the world seemed perfect and nothing seemed absent. We wake up, as if from a momentary daydream, and find ourselves right where we wanted to be and where, in fact, we have always been. We are already in heaven. And strange as it may seem, Kansas has always been Oz.

These are mighty truths that we have to be reminded of over and over again. And *The Wizard of Oz* reminds us. Margaret Hamilton—the Wicked Witch of the West in the MGM movie—put it this way:

> What the picture tells me... coincides with the wonderful lesson Dorothy says she has learned at last, about feeling she has lost her home. Her answer to the Good Fairy [amounts to this]: "If I have lost something and I look all over for it and can't find it, it means I really never lost it in the first place." That is subtle, but finally I understood. If you can't find it, it is still somewhere—you still have it. I pondered over that for years. I used to think, "but I never really *had* it!" Then I listened and thought and remembered, and then, one time, I knew. I had been there. And I still am.

This is what P. L. Travers, the author of the *Mary Poppins* books, means when she says every great children's tale is the homecoming story of the Prodigal Son all over again. Travers has her own interpretation of the story. There is a part of us, she explains, that is like the Prodigal Son—that leaves the father, makes mistakes, goes to the depths, but finally returns to the father. And there is a part of us that is like the brother to the Prodigal Son, the one who never left the father's side. There is in all of us, in other words, a Dorothy who must go to Oz, must desire a way home, wrestle with problems to learn they are easily dissolved, seek solutions to find they cannot be found outside herself, and finally wake up. And there is a sometimes sleeping Dorothy who never leaves Kansas, nor wishes to, because she realizes in her heart of hearts that "There's no place like home."