

## A New Fable: Lost Frank Baum?

By Roger W Spencer, Trinity University, April 2012

*Recently, a new short story, reminiscent of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, was uncovered. While not a find on the scale of a long lost Van Gogh painting, the new fairy tale, if authentic, offers fresh fodder for political-economic analysis as accorded Baum's 1900 masterpiece. A panel of three experts was assembled at a recent economics conference to discuss the authenticity of the piece, each offering separate views as to whether Baum is indeed the author. The new story, entitled "The Wizards of Twelve," and the discussants' impressions follow this introduction.*

### The Wizards of Twelve

King William paced the Great Hall nervously. He had sent for his son, knowing that what he had to tell him would place the boy in grave danger. Phillip, almost twelve years old, was growing straight and tall. He was already a good horseman and good at the other physical games he would play with his friends at the palace.

When Phillip arrived, the King put his arm around the boy and said, "Son, I know you have been wanting to prove yourself, but you were not ready. You may still be unready. Yet, I have no choice but to ask you to ride to the faraway country of Eagleland to stop them from civil war. The wicked Wizard Richpole has somehow incited hostilities between the Lowlanders and the Highlanders of Eagleland."

Phillip's eyes brightened at the prospect of demonstrating his bravery. "Isn't that the wizard who caused the troubles in our country years ago?" he asked.

"Yes, he is," said the King. "It happened about the time you were born. He tried to turn our citizens of Chago against me, but with the help of the sorceress Caroline, we were able to defeat him. She said at the time that some day she might ask me for a favor, and that day has come."

"I have heard of her," Phillip said. "The people call her the charmed sorceress. Was she here?"

"Yes," said the King. "She has not visited our small kingdom in recent times because of the worsening situation in Eagleland. She works most of her magic through others, and this is why she asked for you. She believes your courage will overcome your youth. Caroline said you should reach Eagleland by the time of your birthday. I will have my best warrior, the faithful Tedroo, ride with you. One last thing: Caroline also said she will attempt to find help for you, help that might appear on the journey or in Eagleland itself."

Thrusting out his chest, Phillip said, "I will make you proud, father."

"I know, son; you are becoming a man before my eyes. Yet, I fear for your safety. Be careful of the tricks of the Master Wizard Richpole. He is as cunning as you are brave. Now, you must rest before your long journey."

Across the Kingdom of Chago, far from the palace, a dark-skinned mule peered through a small window. "Mona, wake up," he said quietly.

"Why are you making that noise?" asked Mona, a girl of Phillip's age. "It's dark outside and I want to go back to sleep."

“You can sleep while we travel,” said the mule. “You remember that sorceress I told you about, Caroline?”

“Yes,” Mona said to Wilama, the mule. “You told me a dozen times how you used to be her wizard apprentice before Wizard Richpole turned you into a mule.”

“Well, it’s all true,” said Wilama. “I was an important person to her, learning the magic trade. She woke me up to tell me we are needed in Eagleland to help her defeat Richpole and his plans of destruction of the country.”

“That’s silly,” Mona said. “What can a girl and a mule do to stop a powerful wizard who has already ruined your life?”

“I don’t know. But if Caroline thinks we can help, I believe her. She also said we must leave quickly to arrive there by the twelfth of the month, your birthday.”

“All right, Wilama,” Mona said. “I see you are going to be stubborn about this. Life here at the orphan’s home is dull, and this sounds like an exciting adventure. You and I work in the fields every day until mealtime, in exchange for food and a place to sleep. I am grateful to the Home for that, but perhaps it is time to go. I will leave them a letter of gratitude.”

Wilama had indeed spoken the truth about his wizard apprenticeship with Caroline, but he had not told Mona all about the circumstances that led to his transformation into a mule. It occurred at the time of the great battle for Chago. King William’s queen had given birth while he was away from the palace. The queen died giving birth to twins, a boy and a girl. While Wilama and others defended the palace, Wizard Richpole magically appeared. Wilama spirited the baby boy to safety, but when he returned, he saw Richpole holding the blanketed little girl. Wilama ran toward them, but Richpole pivoted, pointed a long finger at Wilama, and shot a stream of fire at him. The fire turned Wilama into a helpless mule.

Richpole laughed. He handed the baby to another man, who looked like a tall alligator, and said “Quickly, get rid of this baby.” The man could not bring himself to kill the child, so he ran into the nearby woods and left the little girl on the main trail in the hope that she would be found soon. Wilama, having followed the man, picked up the little bundle carefully with his teeth and carried her to the door of the orphanage. The little girl was later named Mona.

Because he felt responsible, Wilama stayed at the orphanage, working in the fields and looking after Mona. He shocked her at a young age when he began talking to her, with no one else around. He never told Mona she was a princess because there was no way either of them could prove it. Yet, he always planned to reveal the truth to her at the right moment. King William had returned to the palace in victory, but upon learning of the apparent death of both his wife and his daughter, he fell into a time of great depression. He forbade anyone to talk of his loss, and later saw no reason to tell Phillip of his twin sister.

As Mona and Wilama rode through the lush, green countryside toward Eagleland, a flock of chattering bluebirds flew alongside, startling the girl. “Don’t worry,” Wilama said. “The birds are my friends, and they just told me the prince and his companion are coming up on us fast from behind. Since I know little about the prince and whether he might be helpful to us, let’s find out more about him without giving away our plans.”

Wilama headed toward some marshy lowland, walked into ankle-deep mud, then stopped. He turned his head toward his rider, Mona, saying “I can walk out of this easily, but the prince doesn’t know that.”

In a few minutes the prince and Tedroo rounded a sharp turn in the path and stopped, seeing the plight of a girl astride a mule in shallow mud. “Over here!” Mona called out. “I could use some help getting my mule out of this mud.”

Phillip called back: “I’m sorry you got stuck. But I am Prince Phillip on an important mission to Eagleland, and I must keep on my schedule.”

But the warrior Tedroo was already off his horse, pulling rope from behind the saddle. “This will only take a few moments, Phillip. Besides, it is your duty to assist loyal subjects stuck in mud.”

“All right,” Phillip said. He turned to Mona and shouted, “You know, if you had chosen a horse instead of one of nature’s dumbest beasts, you would not be in this fix.”

Mona smiled at this remark and Wilama chuckled to himself. Quickly, Mona and Wilama were back on the hard-packed dirt path.

Phillip said, “Now we must be off. Your mule could never keep up with us.”

Mona turned toward Tedroo, saying “Thank you for your gallantry. We are in your debt.” To the prince she said, “Phillip, you don’t know much about girls or mules. I am glad you have your friend to guide you.”

As Phillip and Tedroo galloped away, Mona asked, “What did you think of the prince?”

Wilama said, “I believe he is more immature for his age than he thinks. I would not confide in him. Yet, I sense underlying character that may emerge eventually. Also, as a prince, he could prove useful to us at some point.”

They continued through the thickening forest. After some distance, the path became more narrow and rockier, presenting no problems for the sure-footed Wilama. A strange sight loomed up ahead: it was Prince Phillip and his horse wedged between two enormous boulders.

Tedroo, who had ridden around the boulders rather than attempt to pass through them, was pulling Phillip's horse forward with great strength. But the horse would not budge. To make matters worse, giant angry bees, as large as grapefruits, were attacking them.

With Phillip and Tedroo swatting at the giant bees, Mona called out, "Hold on, Phillip. I am sending my mule to help you." Between swings at the bees, Phillip yelled back, "Thanks, but a mule that gets stuck in the mud couldn't help anyone. Don't get too close or the bees will attack you, too."

Wilama trotted toward them, braying loudly. The giant bees immediately flew off into the distance. Phillip and Tedroo looked at him in puzzlement. Then Wilama leaned as close to Phillip's horse as he could, whispering in the horse's ear. Instead of struggling forward, the horse squeezed backward with all its strength. Horse and rider Phillip popped free!

A chastened Phillip turned to Mona and said, "I am sorry for misjudging you and your mule. He seems to have some magical power that other creatures respond to. How does he do that?"

"Why, there's no magic involved," said Mona. "My mule's name is Wilama, and he communicates with other members of the animal kingdom as you and I communicate with each other. You could say he talks with them very convincingly."

"He talks with them?" asked Phillip.

"O, yes. And that is only a small part of his talent," she said with a sly smile. "By the way, my name is Mona. And we must be going."

"Pleased to meet you," said Phillip, offering his hand. "Look, I have been too hasty. It's one of my worst faults. Will you allow Tedroo and me to travel with you? I know it means

going at a slower pace, but your mule may help us reach Eagleland safely. Besides, I was told I might find help along the way, and you could be that help.”

“I don’t know anything about that,” Mona said. “But we are going in the same direction, and I see no reason we can’t ride together.”

As the little band trotted along, Phillip began to ask questions. “As you know, Mona, I am a prince and you must know all about me. But who are you, why are you on the road, and aren’t your parents concerned?”

Mona smiled. “Again, you think too much of yourself. I know nothing about the life of a prince. My reasons for travel are my business, and I have no parents. I live at the orphan’s home.”

“I’m sorry,” Phillip said in embarrassment. “I should not have asked. I do understand what it’s like to have only one parent. My mother died giving birth to me. My father is a good man, well-liked by our people, but burdened with a sadness beyond the loss of my mother. And now, because of the circumstances, he had to send me, a boy, on a mission to save the people of Eagleland.”

“I think I understand,” Mona said. “I wish you success, but I think you will have a difficult time of it.”

That night, all pitched camp, and Mona, with Wilama, walked to the nearby river for water. “Wilama, how *did* you get the bees and Phillip’s horse to cooperate?” she asked.

“Well, as you said, there was no magic involved. It was just the old carrot-and-stick incentive method. I told the bees that, unless they flew away immediately, I would loose their natural enemies, skunks and yellow jackets, on their entire families. And the horse; I spoke to

him about the necessity of backing up, not going forward, with all his might.” Wilama laughed and added, “I also told him that if he freed himself quickly, I would find him a large field of carrots, for which I have a fine nose. So maybe it was the skunk-and-carrot method!”

Late the next day, after another long ride, the little group of riders and mounts crossed a long, wooden bridge. Three different roads, all colorful, sprang up before them. The road on the left was outlined by red tulips, roses and carnations. The one on the right was delineated by gold or yellow daffodils, dandelions and sunflowers. The middle path featured green coneflowers, zinnia, and lilies.

“Have you ever seen such a sight?” Mona asked.

“Never,” Tedroo answered. “And I have traveled many miles, many places.”

“The colors are spectacular,” Phillip said. “But we must choose one of the three. Which one?”

A few small homes dotted the landscape. An old woman, head down, raked the ground of a garden outside her house. “Let’s ask her,” Phillip exclaimed, spurring his horse forward.

The woman, in a kerchief, and with a well-lined face, turned to greet them. Tedroo dismounted from his horse and bowed before the woman, saying “Madam, we are strangers here headed for Eagleland. The roads are equally beautiful, but confusing. Do you have any thoughts about which is best?”

“Of course I do,” she replied. “But I was about to go inside for some tea. If you will join me, I will tell you what I know.”

Once seated in her chair, holding her cup of tea, she said, “My name is Matilla Kane. I haven’t lived here very long, but long enough to acquire some knowledge of the roads. The



beauty of the red road masks its dangers. It spirals up a tall mountain, offering scenic views of the forest down below. But the way down is steep and hazardous. Horse and rider must leap from boulder to boulder.” At this, she made a leaping motion with her hands. “Not all survive.”

“The gold road,” continued the aged woman, “swings down through the marshland. During the dry season it is fine for travel but the rest of the year it presents deep mud and slow progress. Alligators prowl the land, preying on those who get stuck.

“The green road is marked by ups and downs. You must cross the river and climb rocky terrain, but I think you young people could handle the rigors,” she said with a smile. “I would say the probabilities of reaching your destination safely and in reasonable time would be about twenty percent for the red and gold roads, and sixty percent if you choose the green one.”

Tedroo placed his teacup on the table, saying “Then the green road it is. That will be the path we follow to find Wizard Richpole.”

The old woman grew angry. “Why?” she asked. “Is he a friend of yours?”

“Not at all,” replied Tedroo. “We have heard he is about to cause war in Eagleland, and we must stop him.”

The old woman sat back in her chair, more relaxed, and said, “An admirable quest. But you should know more about the challenge that awaits you. Do you have time for a brief story?”

“Of course,” Phillip said, leaning forward. “Anything you could tell us would be of value.”

“I am from Eagleland,” the woman began. “It was so peaceful, neighbor helping neighbor, until Richpole arrived. Soon afterward, he gathered different groups separately, telling them lies about each other. I do not know all of his methods but I do know he can be a mesmerizing speaker. Unlike others, I went to his various talks, and came to understand how he

was attempting to set those with power, influence and more than they needed against those who had less than their needs.”

Matilla Kane took a long sip of her tea and continued. “I could take it no longer. I stood up at one of his meetings and told the others of his vicious hypocrisy. At the end of the meeting, he called me over and said he wanted to walk and talk.”

She stopped speaking, and looked up at a picture on the wall. “Do you see that painting of the attractive young woman?” Her audience looked and nodded quietly. “That was me one year ago.”

The three visitors looked on in amazement. “You?” asked Mona. “How is that possible?”

“Once we were away from the others,” Matilla continued, “Richpole’s face clouded with a strange grin. His long finger shot fire at me, turning me into this ugly, old witch-like hag that no one would listen to. I came to this place to plot my revenge. Perhaps you are the instruments of revenge. But I think he may be too powerful for you.”

“Not for me!” exclaimed Phillip. “I mean, not for Tedroo and me. He and I represent the King of Chago. Where will we find this Wizard Richpole?”

“I will tell you, young man,” Matilla said. “But you must take caution. His castle is located on the highest peak. It is called the ‘castle of no return’ because some people who have gone in there never came out. The rumor is that maybe they escaped as chipmunks, squirrels, or deer. No one knows for sure. There are secrets locked in there, but also danger.”

The little group thanked Matilla for her hospitality and wise counsel before heading down the path marked by gorgeous green flowers and plants. Fat raindrops fell often during the days that followed, but they plowed slowly up and down hills until reaching a broad, fast-flowing

river. The bridge had been washed away. Mona spotted a family of beavers on the river bank and directed Wilama to ask for their help. The beavers responded by using their sharp teeth to cut down sturdy trees that Tedroo, with his ropes, could fashion into a raft. With much effort, they struggled across the watery obstacle to safety on the far side.

The sun popped out, drying their clothes as they rode onto higher ground. The narrow path grew steeper and rockier. They came to a sharp halt when they saw the road ahead completely blocked by a rockslide. Looking for an alternative, Mona and Wilama trotted back to some chipmunks they had just passed. The chipmunks chatted excitedly with Wilama. Mona motioned Phillip and Tedroo to follow them. The chipmunks led the group around a large bend into a cave hidden by dense foliage. They rode through the tall cave toward sunlight at its end, pausing only briefly as they passed in the dim light three slumbering bears just starting to waken.

After a few miles, the road opened onto a broad clearing. They could see in the distance many houses and farms strewn across the endless landscape. Eagleland! They saw that most of the structures in the low country appeared small relative to the large ones higher up. And in the far distance a castle at the highest point looked down on all below. Two large camps of people, one in the lowlands and one on higher ground, had gathered. “Warcamps,” Tedroo said. “I don’t think we have much time.”

“You are right,” Phillip said. “Wizard Richpole started all this. I think the quickest way to head off war will be to attack him in that castle up there.”

“Slow down,” Mona said. “It may be none of my business, but you would be best served to learn more about the wizard and what goes on here in Eagleland. You know very little of the people and their problems, or how the wizard fits into it.”

Phillip reluctantly agreed, and they decided to head for the warcamp in the lowlands first. Approaching the camp, they noticed the lowlanders' battle equipment consisted of little more than long sticks and apple-sized rocks.

"We are strangers here," Phillip called out to a group of men as they dismounted. "We represent the King of Chago who sent us to prevent war if that is possible."

"It will take more than the three of you," called back a thin, young man, who eyed them suspiciously.

"Just a moment of your time," Phillip said. "We heard Eagleland was a peaceful place not so long ago. Something has changed; we do not know what it is, but we understand it may have to do with Wizard Richpole."

An old man with a long nose pressed forward. "You are right about that," he said. "In the years before Richpole, both the Lowland and Highland folk prospered. Now, you may have noticed, most of us Lowlanders are not as well off as those who live in the hills above us. The valley seems to attract floods, drought, and twisters as well as some people who are just down on their luck. But we are hardworking. Most of us grow fruit to eat and trade. Before Richpole, I could trade my fruit for twice as many vegetables from the Highlanders as I get now. The problem is that there are far more of us fruit growers than wealthy vegetable farmers who live on the hill; they can set the trade any way they want, and we Lowlanders can do nothing about it."

"That's right," said a short man with a round belly. "They started to take advantage of us not long after Wizard Richpole arrived, but I don't know what he had to do with it. He seems to have a power beyond his words. When he met with us, he told us he is our friend, that the Highlanders are cheating us and we should do something about it. We tried. Unlike your kingdom, our country is run by a Council and Council Chief. They listened to us and some

progress was made, but there is little agreement about those who have far more than they need sharing with others.”

“Let me tell you about the final straw,” the long-nosed man said. “Last month the Highlanders suddenly diverted the river, which ran down through their land to ours, away from us. We have no water for our families. We had to take action. We prepared for war, and tomorrow we attack at first light!”

The little group rode away in silence to the camp of the Highlanders. Although there were fewer of them, the Highlanders carried better weapons in the form of swords, axes, bows and arrows. Answers to Phillip’s questions confirmed their suspicions of Wizard Richpole. He had told the Highlanders the Lowlanders were lazy and were taking advantage of their good nature. He was the one who first suggested changing the trade arrangements, and later promoted the notion of diverting the river away from the Lowlanders.

Phillip said, “Tedroo, we have heard enough. Richpole is the one who started this, and he is the one who can stop it. We must bring him here to a meeting of both Highlanders and Lowlanders.”

“That will not be easy,” Tedroo said. “As we have been riding, I’ve been studying his castle from afar. I see only one winding road up to the front of the place. It is nearly surrounded by sheer, rocky cliffs except for a small pasture to the front and side where his horses graze. Perhaps we can surprise him by entering from the pasture.”

“Yes, that’s it!” exclaimed Phillip. He turned to speak to Mona. “This fight is not your fight. Stay here in safety with Wilama. We will return with the wizard.”

“I can see arguing with you would be useless,” Mona said. “Be careful.”

As Phillip and Tedroo started the long, winding climb, Mona said to Wilama, “I don’t think they have much of a plan.”

“I have a better one,” Wilama said. “Let’s give them time enough to succeed. If they do not return, I will tell you what I have in mind.”

As Phillip and Tedroo neared the pasture to the side of the winding road, the huge front door of the castle opened. A man whose upper half looked like an alligator called out, “Gentlemen, come in. We have been following your progress up the road for some time. You must be tired. I am the butler, Allie, sent by Wizard Richpole to welcome you.”

Phillip whispered to Tedroo, “It looks as if we won’t be surprising anyone. We might as well go inside and make our move there.”

The butler escorted them into an enormous drawing room with a fifty-foot ceiling. The wizard, a spry, lean man with darting eyes, was seated comfortably in an over-sized chair. “Welcome to my humble castle,” he said. “Please sit down. I see you wear the colors of the Kingdom of Chago. I lived there for awhile myself, you know. I recognize you, Tedroo, as a gallant knight to the King. And you, young man, you must be Prince Phillip, now almost grown.”

Tedroo and Phillip were disarmed by the wizard’s hospitable nature. They remained standing, however, as Phillip told the wizard of what they had learned in Eagleland. He concluded: “Wizard Richpole, we demand you come with us to call off the war between the Lowlanders and the Highlanders. You started it and you have the power to undo it.”

The wizard rose slowly to his feet. “You are correct, young prince,” he said. “I do have my ways to affect the outcome, beyond anything you have seen so far. But you misunderstand me. I thrive on chaos! I derive my power from people’s unhappiness. Without it, they have no

need of me and I become just another amusing wizard. I am afraid your mission here is a failure.”

At this, Phillip and Tedroo both drew their swords. The wizard said calmly, “You will have no need of those weapons, but you do have value to me.”

He pointed a long finger at Tedroo. A stream of fire instantly transformed Tedroo into a pony. “Allie, show this animal into the pasture, please,” the wizard said, laughing. He turned toward Phillip. “As for you...” He snapped his fingers and an iron cage fell from the ceiling, knocking the sword from Phillip’s hand while imprisoning him.

The wizard smiled. “Perhaps you would like to try life as a parakeet? No? Don’t worry, I know your father. He will pay dearly to have you home as you are. You escaped me once when you were very young, but not again. I think Chago will be mine soon, and for this I am in your debt, as your father is in mine.” He laughed.

Far below the castle on a little knoll, Mona and her mule waited for Phillip and Tedroo. “I’m worried,” Mona said. “They’ve been up there a long time.”

Wilama said, “I was afraid of this. Now we have to find them as well as try to stop the war. I have a plan to get us to the door of the castle, and then it will be up to you. But you can do it. It’s time I told you who you really are. You are a princess, sister to Prince Phillip!”

Mona gasped. “How can that be? I am only an orphan!”

Wilama told her the whole story this time, as she listened intently. When he was done, Mona said “I understand, and forgive you for not telling me sooner. My life has been good, and I would do nothing differently. Except wear better clothes.” She laughed.

“All right,” Wilama said. “Here’s what you do. Make up a story to get invited inside. But don’t do anything until after midnight. Tomorrow is your twelfth birthday and your first day as a princess. This year may not be a great year for many, but tomorrow will be a great day for you. After everyone is asleep, find Phillip and Tedroo in the castle. Then see if you can locate the source of Wizard Richpole’s secret power over the Eaglelanders; there must be more than just his lying words. If you run into trouble, and this is important, think and do exactly as Richpole would – you must meet strength with strength.”

Mona said, “I think you give me too much credit. But you have boosted my confidence with all that you told me. Yet, I still don’t understand how we can approach the castle without being seen.”

“Why, didn’t I tell you I have friends in high places?” Wilama said, with a mule grin. He brayed three times, as loudly and sharply as Mona had ever heard. Suddenly, four giant eagles swooped from the sky. Three picked up Wilama and one lifted Mona onto its back. They flew in a high, circling pattern up the rocky cliffs behind the castle. The eagles circled to the front through the darkening twilight and let them down gently near the huge front door.

Wilama headed for the pasture as Mona walked the steps to the front door. Allie responded to her knock, saying, “Hello, my dear. What can I do for you?”

Mona was taken aback at the sight of a half man-half alligator, but recovered quickly to say, “I have traveled a long distance. May I see the person in charge?”

Wizard Richpole suddenly appeared at the door. “Who are you and why are you here? How did you get here?” he asked abruptly.



Mona was ready with her story. "I am but a poor girl passing through your country. I put my mount in your pasture; I hope you don't mind. I saw only angry people down below. I need a place to stay for the night, and I saw your castle with many rooms."

"Why should I agree?" the wizard asked. "What can a peasant girl like you do for me?"

"I can cook you an excellent meal or clean the castle better than anyone for a night's lodging," she said.

"No, I have servants to do those jobs."

"Then I can get you information. Here is a sample: tomorrow at dawn the Lowlanders will launch an attack."

A genuine smile creased the wizard's face. "I had suspected that could happen soon," he said. "That is indeed valuable information. Perhaps you can be of some assistance, after all. Allie, show her to the basement!"

As Allie and Mona descended the spiral staircase, the wizard thought: an innocent-looking girl like that could get people from both sides of Eagleland to talk to her. She has an intelligence about her. I could make use of a good spy. And if she fails, I will simply turn her into a fawn and send her on her way.

Much later that night, Mona crept quietly up the winding stairs. At the top, she made her way around two turns, then down a long hallway toward a source of light. She peered into a huge room illuminated by the blaze from an enormous fireplace. She saw in one corner a black iron cage in which someone appeared to be sleeping.

Seeing the sleeping form was Phillip, she tiptoed to the cage and whispered, "Phillip; you must wake up so we can think of how to free you from that cage."

Phillip turned over, rubbed his eyes, and asked, "Mona, is that you?"

“Shhhh. Not so loud, Phillip. The cage and the wizard are not your only problems. You now have a twin sister to contend with.”

“What?? Who?”

“Me,” Mona said with a smile.

“That’s wonderful,” Phillip said. “I always wanted a sister, but I thought for it to happen, she would have to start as a little baby.”

“It’s a long story,” Mona said, “but right now…”

From the dark shadows, the wizard leaped through the light to confront them, shouting “I never should have trusted you! I don’t know who you are, little girl, but I know what you soon shall be.”

The wizard started to raise his hand, but Mona was quicker. She pointed her finger at the wizard, shouting “Skunk!”

Fire shot from her finger, changing the wizard into a relatively harmless little black and white, furry woodland creature.

Phillip’s eyes grew wide in amazement; he was stunned by Mona’s new-found power.

“Well done,” someone said from the hall. The beautiful sorceress Caroline crossed the room into the light, followed by Allie, the butler.

“I am proud of both of you,” she said to Mona and Phillip. “You have broken the black spell of Wizard Richpole. Now we have a chance to save the citizens of Eagleland. But first, Allie, throw this skunk out. It was an excellent choice, Mona. No one will ever want to spend time talking with or being influenced by Skunk Richpole.”

“With pleasure, ma’am,” Allie said.

“And would you please bring in the mule from the pasture?” Mona asked.

“Of course, dear,” Allie said, as he pulled the skunk down the hallway, holding his nose.

“You must be the Great Caroline I have heard so much about,” Phillip said from inside his cage.

“I am Caroline,” she said. “Let’s get you out of that cage.”

Caroline drew a wand from the inside of her long cloak and waved it at the cage, which immediately disappeared.

“It feels good to be free,” Phillip said. “I’m not surprised you could remove a cage, but how did Mona transform the wizard?”

Caroline replied, “I asked Wilama to tell Mona that royal children, on their twelfth birthday and that day only, could have certain magical powers if used for good against evil. Since my own magic derives mainly from people acting in their own self-interest to help themselves and others, I could do nothing until Wizard Richpole and his spell were terminated.”

“Pardon me,” Phillip interrupted, “but did I hear you say that I too have magical powers today?”

Caroline replied “Yes, and I hope you have the opportunity to use them to avoid a civil war in Eagleland.”

Allie, followed by a mule and a pony, entered the room. “I brought your mule,” he said, “but I thought you would also wish to see the pony, who is, I believe, a friend of Prince Phillip.”

“Is that you, Tedroo?” Phillip asked, as Caroline waved her wand first toward the pony and next at the mule. Tedroo suddenly appeared along with a tall young man neither Mona nor Phillip had ever seen. Both men bowed to the sorceress Caroline.

“Are...you...Wilama?” Mona asked, haltingly.

“I am indeed,” responded Wilama, the tall young man. “And since you are here with Caroline, that can only mean you have dispatched the wily wizard. While in the pasture, I was telling pony Tedroo that he had nothing to worry about.”

“We can talk more later, Caroline said. Remember, our job here is not yet done. Let’s spread out and search the entire castle. We must find any secret weapon Wizard Richpole wielded over Eagleland’s people.”

Carrying candles, they headed in different directions through the castle, not knowing exactly what they were looking for.

A few minutes later, Phillip shouted down from the top floor of the castle. “Up here!” he yelled. “I found it. I found it.”

The others hurried up the ancient stone steps.

“Look at this,” Phillip said.

They stared at a mechanical structure, full of pulleys and winches, that occupied most of the available space. It had the great circle face of a clock laid flat with numbers one through twelve facing skyward. On each number rested a huge cup-shaped catapult that could launch its contents into the sky. At the far end of the floor under a partial roof cover stood many well-stuffed bags of some kind. A levered device allowed the bags to be lifted and carried to fill the cup-like catapults.

“Bring your candles over closer to these bags,” Caroline said. “They seem to be filled with seeds. Can you read the writing on them?”

“I can,” Wilama said. “It reads D-I-S-S-E-N-S-I-O-N. These are the seeds of dissension that Richpole launched to fall down below! They could permeate the atmosphere, polluting

everything and everyone they touched. The wind would carry them to all parts of the Highlands and Lowlands.”

“I know what to do,” Phillip said. “Caroline, is it all right to try my magical power now?”

“Of course, Phillip,” she said. “Here, use my wand.”

Phillip pointed Caroline’s wand at the bags, and shouted “Sension!”

Immediately the D-I-S fell away, leaving only bags of S-E-N-S-I-O-N.

“That should reverse the evil effects of Richpole’s seeds,” Mona said as Tedroo pulled on a long sash that hung from the partial roof. The machinery quickly began to hum. The bags of “Sension” were lifted and carried to the cup-like catapults.

“Ready to launch,” Phillip said. He pulled a large lever stationed under the cup marked “Twelve.” Rapidly, one after the other, the huge bags were launched high into the sky, opening as they reached their zenith. Winds scattered the millions of falling seeds to land in all parts of Eagleland.

They went back down the stairs to talk and await the dawn. At first light they looked out over the countryside and heard...nothing.

“Silence never sounded so beautiful,” Mona said, with a smile.

“If we are done here,” Phillip said to Caroline, “I would like to leave for Chago. It is time to introduce my new twin sister to our father. It will be good to see joy return to his face.”

“Of course,” Caroline said. “King William has had a difficult time of it. He deserves the happiness you two will bring him in the coming years. Tedroo and Allie will ride with you.”

“Allie also?” asked Mona.

“Yes,” replied Caroline. “Years ago, Wizard Richpole forced him to leave his service to a royal family in a kingdom well beyond Chago. Richpole turned Allie into a half-alligator, and threatened to change his whole family into alligators if he did not accompany him as his personal butler. It will be my pleasure to change him back into the man he used to be before he joins you in travel to his own land.”

“What about Wilama?” Phillip asked.

“Ah, yes,” Caroline said. “Mona has told me of his brilliance as a mule seeing you all here safely. He has proven himself worthy of a promotion.”

Turning to the surprised former mule, Caroline said “Wilama, for meritorious performance and distinguished service far beyond the call of an apprentice wizard, I hereby promote you to the newly-created position of Wizard, First Class. Congratulations.” She kissed the tall young man on the cheek.

Blushing, Wilama said, “I will do my best to prove that I am deserving of your trust.”

“I know you will,” Caroline said. “Your earlier job was not easy. You, as a wizard apprentice, had to assure two young people of reaching the age of twelve in opposing an evil, master wizard who wished to destroy them at twelve. Your new job presents an even greater challenge. The people of Eagleland are still distrustful of each other. Last night we merely stopped the launch of an attack. Much remains to be done to convince them to return to their days of mutual respect and sharing of the bounty with which they have been blessed.”

Wilama said, “I think if the people can remember when they worked not only for their own success but the success of their neighbors, I can nudge them in the direction they chose before the arrival of Wizard Richpole. It is my impression their basic instinct is that of good will, not anger and resentment.”

Mona laughed and said: “Wilama, those are fine words. But I know something about you the people of Eagleland don’t know: to get your way, you can be as stubborn as a mule. That is why you will succeed.”

And so he did.

## DISCUSSION

### **C. Fisher Marshall, Economic Historian**

I read this paper with great interest. Since the path-breaking work of Littlefield (1964), Rockoff (1990) and others in linking issues in political economy with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, scholars have become less reluctant to identify their fields of inquiry with the popular culture. Indeed, even we in Economic History have gained students anxious to comprehend the vagaries of turn-of-the-century monetary matters as described by the remarkable L. Frank Baum.

Could Mr. Baum have written “The Wizards of Twelve?” I believe so, and I will outline my reasoning in the remainder of this discussion. It is obvious that the frequent appearance of the word “twelve” is merely reference to the pivotal presidential election of the year 1912. As Baum exploited Populist philosophy in his wizard-based analysis of the election of 1896, he returned to a similar thesis in study of the effect of the Progressive movement on the election of 1912.

Both the Populists and Progressives supported the working man, the poor farmer, and the overworked and underpaid factory worker in opposition to the excesses of capitalism inherent in the term “Robber Barons.” When these poor folk were not voting for candidates of their own minority party, they viewed the Democratic Party as most sympathetic to their plight. By 1912,

the Progressive influence so permeated the country that all presidential candidates competed for their attention.

Democratic Party winner Woodrow Wilson received 42 percent of the popular vote. His candidacy gained from the shabby treatment at the Republican Party convention of Theodore Roosevelt which resulted in Roosevelt bolting to become the candidate of the Progressive Party. Roosevelt obtained 27 percent of the popular vote, more than any third party candidate in history, while Republican incumbent President W. Howard Taft received only 23 percent. Perennial Socialist Party candidate Eugene V. Debs received nearly a million votes, more than he attracted at any other election. The Progressive influence is also reflected in the fact that Democrats gained control of the Senate in 1912 while retaining their majority in the House of Representatives.

The evidence that Baum, who died in 1919, could have written this treatise in Progressive thought is drawn largely from the number of possible allegorical interpretations and the context within which they appear.<sup>1</sup> As we know, Baum left behind no notes, papers, or direct references linking his 1900 masterpiece with the political economy of 1896. Yet when one considers such enlightened interpretations of “Oz” as ounce of gold, or the “Emerald City” as Washington, D.C., or “Yellow Brick Road” as the gold standard, or the great orator William Jennings Bryan as the Cowardly Lion, only one conclusion is possible.

Starting with the more obvious interpretations, we observe the prominent role played in the story by a mule, symbol of the Democratic Party since, at least the Thomas Nast cartoons. Nor is the only appearance of a mule in a Frank Baum fable; the character “Hank, the Mule” was featured in, among other creations, Baum’s *Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914).



“Chago” is certainly Chicago. Baum experienced the greatest success of his career in writing *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* while living with his family in Chicago. Chicago was important in the presidential race of 1912 as it hosted both the Republican National Convention at which Theodore Roosevelt was rejected and the Progressive Party Convention at which he was successfully nominated. Symbolically, Chago represents a small kingdom run by a king, as the mayor of Chicago (with its strong mayoral form of government) presides over a city.

By way of contrast, the large country of “Eagleland” is the United States, governed by a Council Chief and Council, or President and the Congress. The eagle has adorned the great seal of the United States for many years. Eagles play a positive, supporting role late in the story.<sup>2</sup>

The warrior “Tedroo” is Teddy Roosevelt, who, as Colonel Roosevelt in 1898, led his Rough Riders in the charge up San Juan Hill. Roosevelt became a “trust-busting” president, to the admiration of progressives early in the new century. In 1912, as his hand-picked successor, W. Howard Taft successfully played to the Republican base, Roosevelt moved in the opposite direction to become the candidate of the Progressive Party. Although he failed to win the election, he contributed an important supporting role, as Tedroo did in the story. With respect to Baum, “Baum greatly admired T.R. and later inserted specific references to his heroism into the stage version of *The Wizard of Oz*” (Schwartz, 2009, pp. 116-117).

“Wilama” is the successful 1912 Democratic Party candidate, Woodrow Wilson. As the thinking-man’s mule, Wilama, an apprentice wizard, devised practical solutions to the problems posed by large, angry bees, boulders, a swollen river and a trail-busting rockslide. At the end of the story, he is the only character who remains to help the Lowlanders deal with the overbearing, more powerful Highlanders. Wilson, who had only been in politics two years (elected New Jersey governor in 1912), quickly addressed issues on the progressive’s agenda following the

1912 election.<sup>3</sup> For example, in 1913 he pushed through the first meaningful tariff reform in years to benefit consumers who had little choice but to pay the high prices required by domestic producers. In 1914, to curb further the monopolistic practices of big business, he promoted two major pieces of antitrust legislation, the Clayton Act and the Federal Trade Commission Act.

King William undoubtedly represents William Jennings Bryan, 1912 “king-maker” of the Democratic Party. Bryan, unsuccessful presidential candidate in 1896, 1900, and 1908, still controlled the liberal wing of the Democratic Party in 1912. At the party convention, Wilson was running second on most ballots until Bryan threw his support to him. Wilson succeeded on the 46<sup>th</sup> ballot and, following the election, named Bryan his Secretary of State.

I would venture that Matilla Kane (who appears old, but is young) is the twenty-nine year old John Maynard Keynes. Baum was a relatively sophisticated man, knowledgeable of the world of economics and publishing. He spent a few years in Aberdeen, South Dakota as publisher and editor of a newspaper. In Chicago, he joined the Chicago Press Club and wrote for the *Chicago Sun* for a period. By 1912, Keynes had published letters in the *Economist* and had been appointed editor of the *Economics Journal*. What convinces me is that in spelling out for the travelers the probabilities of each road being the correct one, Kane is echoing the Keynes of 1912 who spent much of that year working on his “Probability Treatise” that was published some years later.

You may perceive the next analogy as a bit more speculative, but bear with me. I identify the twins, Phillip and Mona, as fiscal and monetary matters, respectively. Note the use of the term “matters,” as opposed to “policy,” because neither fiscal nor monetary policy, as such, existed in 1912. Of course, federal government finance, which is one definition of “fiscal,”

was afoot, as implied by the government debt of slightly less than \$3 billion. The key fiscal issue at that time was the passage of the 16<sup>th</sup> amendment that re-established a federal income tax.

Populists had advocated the tax in the 1890s and progressive support helped place it on the Democratic Party Platform of 1908. Poor and middle income states of the West and South were among the first to ratify the amendment while wealthier Northeastern states resisted.

The election of 1912 provided the final impetus needed for ratification by 36 states, with that number being reached in 1913. Since the tax would be levied mainly on the basis of “ability to pay,” some perceived it as poor progressive farmers and factory workers, many of the Democratic Party, against wealthy bankers and businessmen, many of the Republican Party.

In the “Twelve” story, that battle is played out as the poor Lowlanders against the wealthier Highlanders. As written, it is easy to see which group Baum favors. Symbolically, Phillip, as fiscal reform, becomes stuck between giant boulders as state ratification, at times, seemed stuck with Republican-dominated states slowing the process. Phillip also had to contend with giant, attacking bees in the analogous form of Republican Senate majority leader Nelson Aldrich and Governor Charles Evans Hughes who provided income tax opponents a weak, technical rationale to justify their views.

The choice among the three colorful roads available to the travelers represents the critical monetary alternatives facing political decision makers prior to creation of the Federal Reserve System. Republicans favored a proposal that would have established a central bank dominated by private bankers, depicted in the story as the red road of uncertainty. Democrats, fearing the power of the Eastern bankers and brokers, preferred no central bank, or a status quo that perhaps resembled the gold road (money dependent on the gold supply) that was fine under normal conditions but dicey when the rains came. The green road represents the middle ground, or the

actual central bank created by Wilson's compromise solution of a Federal Reserve with decision-making power divided between "Wall Street" bankers and "Main Street" political guardians of the average citizen. Perhaps the best example in the story in reflection of Main Street fear of Wall Street power is the diversion of the river's flow away from the Lowlanders, demonstrating how wealthy bankers can halt the flow of credit to poor borrowers at any time.

Most fairy tales have worthy villains, and this story is no exception. The evil wizard Richpole is none other than Senator Nelson Aldrich. Aldrich, whose son-in-law was John D. Rockefeller, Jr., opposed nearly every major Progressive reform effort. One ploy was to introduce token reform change designed to forestall more sweeping Progressive legislation. The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act was constructed both to inhibit significant tariff reform and the income tax legislation sought by Progressives. Farmers, factory workers and others associated rising price levels with high protective tariffs, while their solution to the reduced tax revenue that would accompany tax reform was a progressive income tax levied mainly on the rich.

As anti-business sentiment mounted after the Panic of 1907, Aldrich formulated a plan to reform banking while advancing the interests of wealthy Republican financiers. In his position of both Republican majority leader and chairman of the powerful Senate finance committee, he had no difficulty in having passed the Aldrich-Vreeland Act (opposed by many Democrats) that appointed a National Monetary Commission to study and provide solutions to issues of bank liquidity and bank runs. Aldrich assumed chairmanship of the Commission which subsequently became known as the "Aldrich Commission," while its policy proposal became known as the "Aldrich Plan."

It has been speculated that much of Aldrich's plan for a new central bank (to be called the "Federal Reserve") was formulated by wealthy financiers, business executives, and powerful

politicians at the Jekyll Island Hunting Club of Georgia in November 1910. Because of the strong anti-business, anti-banking sentiment of the time, the plan, which favored private bank dominance of the new central bank, was developed in secret, far from either Wall Street or Washington. Experts still differ as to the extent to which the eventual Federal Reserve Act retained features of Aldrich's "Wall Street" plan vs. changes wrought by the Owen-Glass "Democratic" Bill and President Wilson's intervention.<sup>4</sup>

In any event, Progressive sentiment viewed the passage of the 1913 Federal Reserve Act as a significant achievement comparable to the 1913 Tariff reform act and the ratification of the 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment establishing the income tax.<sup>5</sup> All became possible with Wilson's election of 1912. All brought to a close Aldrich's long-time efforts to thwart Progressive reform desires. In Progressives' eyes, Aldrich had been transformed, by a combination of Mona, Phillip, and Wilama, from a powerful, evil wizard to a powerless, offensive "skunk."

Frank Baum's reaction to these changes is not known. Despite Populist-Progressive similarities, the national economic situation had changed enormously since 1896. In 1896, deflation and unemployment were key issues. Elected in 1892, Democratic President Grover Cleveland remained in 1896 a tight money man despite prices which were at a lower level than ten years earlier, an M<sub>2</sub> money supply lower than the 1892 level, recessions which occurred January 1893 – June 1894 and December 1895 – June 1897, and an 1896 unemployment rate of 14.4 percent.<sup>6</sup> Little wonder that he was not re-nominated by the Democratic Party in 1896, or that Republican William McKinley won the 1896 presidential election.

Despite Populist's concerns about economic well being and money being tied to Bryan's "Cross of Gold" lecture, the money stock rose rapidly 1896-1914, due largely to new gold discoveries in the United States and elsewhere. As a result, prices also increased substantially

from the late 1890s to 1914.<sup>7</sup> A two-year, relatively mild recession ended in January 1912. The economy bounced back strongly in 1912. The stock market rose, long term interest rates held steady at a low level, labor productivity surged, and the unemployment rate fell from 6.7 percent in 1911 to 4.6 percent in 1912.

As economic conditions worked against the Populists and Democrats in 1896, they should have worked against Progressives and Democrats in 1912. It is a measure of how much the average man, or “Main Street,” detested the long-term, high-handed measures of the Republican Party that, in a period of economic boom, the incumbent Republican Taft could only muster 23 percent of the popular vote. Baum and his fellow Progressives/Populists must have experienced at least as much satisfaction from their victory in 1912 as sorrow in their 1896 loss. That joy would have been reflected in the pleasure I am sure he gained from writing “The Wizards of Twelve.”

### **Paul Litztig, Macroeconomist**

Because I am in substantial agreement on a number of issues with my esteemed colleague, Clark Fisher Marshall, the pre-eminent economic historian of the 1890-1920 era, my comments will be more succinct. I concur with his view that the mule represents the Democratic Party, Chago is Chicago, Eagleland is the USA, twins Phillip and Mona represent fiscal and monetary policy, respectively, the three colorful roads pose policy choices, and that the overriding theme of the story is the income and power inequity that divides the Lowlanders and the Highlanders.

I respectfully disagree, however, with the identity of the author. The writer is not L. Frank Baum, but an imposter. I know this because the “Wizards of Twelve” is not about the election of 1912; it is a whimsical analysis of the election of 2012.

Wilama, the mule (Democrat) is President Barack Obama. As with Wilama, he took on a difficult position while relatively young and inexperienced, but with a history of service to others. Geographically, Chicago served as Obama’s professional base of operations for a number of years. He taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School, practiced civil rights law, became a community organizer, represented Southside Chicago in the Illinois Senate, and ran for U.S. President as Junior U.S. Senator from Illinois.

King William is William Jefferson Clinton, two-term Democratic President, the only one since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Clinton’s prestige rose in the years following his time in office. His relationship with Obama was complicated by wife Hillary’s race against Obama for the 2008 Democratic Party nomination. William Clinton’s standing as a party chieftain and campaigner for his wife greatly concerned Democratic strategists in the months following Hillary’s concession. At the party’s August convention, however, William Clinton’s enthusiastic endorsement of Obama helped provide Obama considerable momentum on his way to victory over John McCain in November.

The Sorceress Caroline is Caroline Kennedy. She famously endorsed Obama’s Democratic Party candidacy over Hillary Clinton in a January 2008 New York Times op-ed piece. Like the Sorceress Caroline, she has mostly remained in the background working through others, as with her “Profiles in Courage” program that cites others’ contributions, to achieve her objectives. She continued her support of Obama through 2012 as one of a number of re-election co-chairs.

Tedroo does not represent the living Teddy Roosevelt, but is, instead, the philosophic spirit of Teddy Roosevelt. Channeling Roosevelt's expressed concern for underprivileged Americans, Obama advanced his notions of the heavier burden that should be borne by the wealthy. In words that echo Roosevelt's advocacy of the "square deal" and graduated income and inheritance taxes "on big fortunes," Obama called for fairness and government action to address increased income inequality.<sup>8</sup> They were both addressing the issues that divided the Highlanders from the Lowlanders, or the powerful vs. the powerless, or the haves vs. the have-nots, or the privileged vs. the underprivileged; the labels are many for this timeless struggle.<sup>9</sup>

As with Roosevelt's role in the story, Matilla Kane does not represent the living John Maynard Keynes, but Keynes' driving spirit of governmental stimulus. Obama and the leaders of most European countries faced in recent years similar challenges of economic recovery at times of great financial and fiscal crisis. The larger countries of Europe, to include England, chose fiscal austerity for themselves and smaller (and more endangered) neighbors as the path to economic prosperity. Think of this as the story's Gold Road through a potential quagmire of sluggish growth. The Red Road represents the path of exceptional fiscal stimulus achieved through numerous bold, new federal government initiatives. Although there are inflationary dangers, I myself would have chosen this one. Obama selected the Green Road, what I think of as the middle ground, with targeted programs accompanied by reasonably stimulative fiscal deficits.

The three roads also depict monetary options. Although he was less sanguine about the stimulative effects of monetary actions during a protracted downturn, Keynes likely would have selected Green or even Red Road policies of monetary expansion in preference to Gold Road inactivity. I think the Bernanke Fed's creative initiatives in developing QE (Quantitative Easing)



I, QEII, and other unique responses to the financial crisis were indeed praiseworthy. I believe a case could have been made for even more extensive Red Road ease, but I understand the objections of many in the Congress who favored Gold Road restraint. Some countries, such as Japan, have experienced long-term Gold Road sluggishness and some, particularly among underdeveloped nations, have had to contend with roller-coaster Red Road gyrations. But our economic history has been one of ups and downs (as described by Matilla Kane) of normal Green Road business cycles with occasional flash floods or rockslides that call for imaginative solutions such as those advanced metaphorically, by the mule Wilama.

It is my conjecture that Wizard Richpole, the villain of the story, is a stand-in for Congressman Ron Paul. If left to his own devices, Richpole would have brought to an end the productive human lives of Mona (monetary policy) and Phillip (fiscal policy). The most obvious parallel is Ron Paul's book, *End the Fed* (2009), in which he proposes to do exactly that. He has also advocated a flat income tax rate of zero percent, the prevailing figure before the Sixteenth Amendment. By terminating both the Federal Reserve and the income tax, he would effectively extinguish both monetary and fiscal policy, returning the macroeconomic policy world to its nonexistent state as of 1912. A long-time disciple of the Austrian School of Economics, Ron Paul blames central bank credit policies for most monetary ills, and favors a market-based determination of the monetary standard, which could be a gold or gold and silver-based standard.

Ron Paul, sometimes called the "Godfather of the Tea Party," joined his son, Senator Rand Paul, in opposing an increase in the federal debt ceiling in summer 2011. As (fiscal policy) Phillip and his horse were stuck between two huge boulders in the fable, actual fiscal policy was stuck between Republicans opposed to a hike in the debt ceiling and Democrats opposed to large

spending cuts. Barack Obama eventually negotiated a settlement between the two groups, much as Wilama found a way in the story to free Prince Phillip.

Increases in the debt ceiling are normally routine events with a history in this country back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that some politicians, including the Pauls, would have preferred U.S. government fiscal bankruptcy to a debt hike is indicative of the hard line stands that have been drawn between political factions. As “Dr. No,” Ron Paul’s positions against progressive actions have become legend over the decades, and have posed mostly ineffective opposition to the will of the majority. They have had, however, some effect in moving the center of the Republican Party to the right as others also became more intransigent in their political philosophies.

Where the Tea Party founding may be characterized as a domestic event associated with Ron Paul’s 2008 primary party venture, the “Occupy Wall Street” forces emerged in September 2011 as part of a much larger international movement sympathetic to Progressive ideals. Protests against the way the poor, the politically oppressed, and the disadvantaged were treated surfaced around the world from Tunisia to Russia to Europe and to much of the Middle East in the form of an “Arab Spring.” The “Protester” was named Time magazine’s “Person of the Year,” and in the United States, the leaderless Occupy Wall Street Movement encamped in most major cities of the country. The analogy that jumps from the story is the camp of the frustrated Lowlanders.

The U.S. version of international protest raged against financial recklessness, cuts in social spending, a lack of employment opportunities, and rising income inequities that fostered the expression, “We are the 99 percent.” Obama indicated that in some ways he understands and shares their frustration, but he has been unable to do what he would like to alleviate it. Unlike

the election year of 1912, the 2012 election year features a progressive mood of short-term duration rather than one built upon long-standing persistence.

There remains some hope for collegiality in that even movements as disparate as the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street find common ground in their opposition to rising government debt and government bailouts of major corporations. Yet, the seeds of dissension and mistrust continue to divide the country on most major issues. Highlanders and Lowlanders miraculously learned to cooperate and respect one another by the end of “The Wizards of Twelve.” But, and this is the tragedy of the story, it is only a fairy tale.

### **Elle Frankenbaum, Relative**

As a distant relative, I have been asked to comment on the likelihood of Frank Baum having written “The Wizards of Twelve.” He would have been an uncle several generations removed, so I will call him “Uncle Frank” if that’s all right with you. All you need to know about me is that I am a lawyer by training, a failed novelist by inclination, and a lapsed Methodist by habit.<sup>10</sup>

There are two sides to this case, so let’s look first at the evidence in support of the thesis that he wrote this fairy tale. As to timing, it works out pretty well. Uncle Frank tried for the second time in 1910 to stop writing Oz books in favor of other, more interesting projects. Unfortunately for him, he found out what his public wanted from him, and was willing to pay for was more Oz books. So, in 1912, when his funds were running low, he is known to have written the book *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* (1913) and six short stories collected as *The Little Wizard Stories of Oz* (1913).

Although most people think of him only as a book writer, he authored 82 short stories. It's possible to see him writing "The Wizards of Twelve" at that time as a bridge to get back to the Oz stories, then using its premise later in another book, *Glinda of Oz* (1920), that shows some similarities. Another possibility is that he wrote it as a quick way to raise cash by selling it to a magazine. Another problem Uncle Frank had, for a bestselling author, was trouble getting magazines to buy his stories; so it might have just sat.

An additional point in favor of him penning this tale is that there are a number of coincidences that pop up related to other writings. For instance, Dorothy, like Mona, is an orphan. There is no description of what either of them looks like, and as honest, intelligent, courageous girls, they serve as models for young, female readers. A mule (named Hank) plays a pretty significant role in the stage version of *Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914) and in the book, *The Lost Princess of Oz* (1917). A butler (not named "Allie") is a character in the short story "The Glass Dog" (1901). Theodore Roosevelt is mentioned by name in the stage adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1902). Another series Uncle Frank had going concerned twins, as reflected in *The Daring Twins* (1911). Caroline's cloak in the "Twelve" fable played a minor role compared to the cloak that granted wishes in *Queen Zixi of Ix* (1905). At the end of the story, as with Dorothy, Phillip and Mona just want to go home, leaving a friend to help run the country.

Then there's the similarities in technique and interests. Uncle Frank loved colors, especially green, and you find that throughout Oz and "Twelve." Remember Wilama's "skunk and carrot" comment? That's a bad pun, and Uncle Frank really enjoyed puns and sprinkled them throughout his stories. He was fascinated by science and technology. He went beyond a basic tin man (he actually built one) or Tik-Tok man to incorporate advanced submarines and an

entire island that was raised and lowered with a mechanical device in *Glinda of Oz*. Compared to that, the clock-faced catapult that launched the seeds throughout Eagleland in “Twelve” was simple. Also, he defined his characters’ personalities more through action than description, and that is true of “Twelve.” Critics noticed that although his basic intent was to entertain children, he wasn’t above dropping little lessons, such as helping others, here and there without preaching, as you find in “Twelve.”

What about his social, religious, and political beliefs? He was much influenced by his mother-in-law, the prominent suffragette Matilda Joslyn Gage. Maybe she had something to do with his books (10 of his 14 Oz books were marked by female dominance) and the “Twelve” story where the character who defeats Wizard Richpole is Mona. She led Uncle Frank from his religious state of lapsed Methodist (like me) to Theosophy, which draws from Buddhism and Hinduism. It teaches, among other things, a respect and concern for animals who are typically friendly and trustful of people, as you find in “Twelve.” Its lessons are also consistent with equality among peoples, mirrored in the development of the little group in “Twelve,” and in what they try to accomplish across the warring factions of Highlanders and Lowlanders. Theosophy also deals with the end of the world and has some links to the Mayan culture, leading me to wonder if Wilama, in his comment “this year may not be a great year for many” was projecting the 2012 alleged Mayan forecast, or referring to the effect of the 1912 sinking of the Titanic.

Politically, because he favored women’s causes, and unusual religious beliefs, sympathized with farmers, advocated equality among citizens and opposed big business monopolies, most people labeled him a “Populist, Democrat,” or “Progressive.” And, if he was, they could see that as boosting the case for his authorship of “Twelve.”

Now let's look at the other possibility: that he did not write "The Wizards of Twelve." Take that last issue first; was he a politically-oriented Populist Democrat? No, Uncle Frank didn't care much for politics. And there is more evidence that he was a Republican than something else. His Aberdeen newspaper was Republican, as were most of the views he expressed in it. When it came to the 1896 election, he wrote a long poem in a Chicago newspaper supporting not William Jennings Bryan, but William McKinley, the Republican victor of 1896. He wrote poems about lots of things, over 200 of them.

He was a complex man, not easily labeled. He was a strong supporter of the suffragette movement, but he poked fun at it in the book *The Land of Oz* (1904). At times he wrote harshly of American Indians; on other occasions he praised them. In most of his Oz books, all are treated equally, everyone helps his neighbor, and no one owns property as might be found in a utopian socialist world, but a biographer points out "He believed the populist and socialist parties of his day were too impractical to be effective" (Rogers, 2002, p. 171). He opposed big business trusts and monopolies, but so did Republican presidents Roosevelt and Taft.

What about "Twelve's" Matilla Kane and the three roads, or policy choices? She would more likely represent Uncle Frank's spirited mother-in-law Matilda Gage speaking out against Wizard Richpole than she would John Maynard Keynes talking economic policy. He was no international scholar (never went to college) and likely, in 1912, to have known even less about John Maynard Keynes than Winston Spencer Churchill when it came to rising young British celebrities. Everyone, including Uncle Frank, would have known something about the gold standard in those days, but when it came to financial theory, all he knew about money was that he couldn't hold onto it. His wife Maud controlled the family finances because her creative,

industrious husband was a terrible businessman, declaring bankruptcy once and coming close on other occasions.

Apart from guesses at what Uncle Frank's background and character might have moved him to write, the other evidence of possible allegories comes from the number of times various items could conceal hidden meanings, such as all the "Twelve" references translating into 1912 or 2012. By analogy, I would just cite two of the better known references from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Littlefield began this game by identifying the "Wizard" as "...any President from Grant to McKinley," while Rockoff narrowed the field to Senator Mark Hanna.<sup>10</sup> Schwartz, a Baum biographer not inclined toward political-economic analogies, suggests the wizard was based on four characters who actually held some meaning for Baum: Thomas Edison, John D. Rockefeller, P.T. Barnum, and Swami Vivekananda. In contrast to "oz" as an ounce of gold, Schwartz lists four more plausible possibilities, including Maud's favorite: it, like his eccentric characters, just popped out of her husband's fertile imagination.<sup>11</sup>

Neither Maud nor any other Baum family members – from sons to great-great children – ever acknowledged hidden abstruse academic meanings in Uncle Frank's literary creations. No book critics of his era suggested alternative interpretations. No biographers uncovered secret passages. Until Littlefield advanced the allegorical concept in 1964, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was just one of the finest children's books ever written. Everything since built on his foundation. The story behind Littlefield's contribution is that he was a high school history teacher in New York state who wanted to make turn-of-the-century political events more meaningful to his students. When a Baum biographer reported, by way of the *New York Times*, that the book was not a Populist allegory, Littlefield admitted in a subsequent letter to the *Times* that the biographer was correct.<sup>12</sup>

In an admission of my own, I declare I am certain that Uncle Frank did not write “The Wizards of Twelve.” Why? Because I did! Remember, I told you that I’m a failed novelist. It’s even easier to be a failed short story writer. I wrote it because it was fun and to show how simple it is to find false allegorical clues when that’s what you’re looking for.

Let me be clear. I don’t object to Littlefield’s methods; I even admire them because he and a host of others wanted to make long-ago issues come alive for their students and, in some sense, to imbue a “coolness” or relevance of their discipline to a movie that is such a childhood favorite, most can recite the more memorable lines.

What does bother me are the pseudo-serious endeavors that trade on the Oz popularity to advance their own disciplinary agenda. Not just political-economic, and there have been plenty of those, but themes that link Oz with slavery, race, religion, modernism, Jung, the psychoanalytic, the psycho-spiritual, and the consumer culture.<sup>13</sup> Could anyone have had all those things in mind when writing a fairy tale for children? And a fairy tale is all it is. Or, as Sigmund Freud, a contemporary of Uncle Frank’s, used to say, “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

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<sup>1</sup> One measure of populist parallels found in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, as noted by Rockoff (1990, p. 739), is the amount of interpretative “pushing and pulling” required. Taylor (2005, p. 417) modifies this view slightly: “Although some of the parallels are more tenuous than others, many are so obvious and palpable as to defy coincidence. Their cumulative effect – not only in number, but in coherence – warrants a strong presumption that Baum’s fairy tale contains a conscious political subtext.”

<sup>2</sup> Baum was fond of birds, once keeping forty of them as pets in an aviary nearly twelve feet in diameter (Rogers, 2002, pp. 178-179).

<sup>3</sup> As a candidate, Wilson tried to balance progressive reform with more conservative concerns. He stated in his Democratic Party acceptance speech that Federal assistance to those who cannot protect themselves is not “class litigation.” However, he reminded workers in a Labor Day address that they should not become government ‘wards’, but should remain ‘independent men’ (Wilson and Di Nunzio, p. 341).

<sup>4</sup> Friedman-Schwartz (1960, p. 171) minimized Democratic influence on the eventual Act, while Meltzer (2002, p. 3) awarded considerable credit to Wilson’s proposed solution. See also Spencer-Huston (2006, pp. 9-12).

<sup>5</sup> Of the new central bank, Greider (1987, p. 278) wrote: “The bankers failed to defeat Wilson’s design, but their opposition left the indelible impression that when the Federal Reserve Act was signed into law two days before Christmas [1913], it was a great victory for Democratic reform over Republican special interests, a triumph for the popular will and defeat for Wall Street.”

<sup>6</sup> Data are taken from Gordon (2009, Appendix A).

<sup>7</sup> In subsequent years, the Federal Reserve effect on money can be seen from the fact that nearly 70 percent of high-powered money was comprised of Federal Reserve notes and deposits by 1920 (Friedman and Schwartz, 1960, p. 137).

<sup>8</sup> Bendery, 2012, and Roosevelt, 1910. Obama introduced some of the concepts of his 2012 State of the Union Address in a December 1911 speech in Osawatomie, Kansas, the same town that hosted Roosevelt’s August 1910 speech on “The New Nationalism.”

<sup>9</sup> Roosevelt described the age-old conflict in slightly different terms in his well-known “New Nationalism” speech: “At many stages in the advance of humanity, this conflict between the men who possess more than they have earned and the men who have earned more than they possess is the central condition of progress.”

<sup>10</sup> Littlefield, p. 54 and Rockoff, p. 739.

<sup>11</sup> Schwartz, p. 273.

<sup>12</sup> Parker (1994), p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> In order, Bell and Bell (in *The Universe of Oz*), Ritter (*Journal of American Studies*), Franson (in Rahn, p. 21), Gibson (in *The Universe of Oz*), Nathanson (in Rahn, p. 21), Osmond Beckwith (“The Oddness of Oz,” *Children’s Literature*, Vol. 5, 1976), Guitierrez (in *The Universe of Oz*) and Leach (“The Clown from Syracuse: The Life and Times of L. Frank Baum,” in L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*).