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The Wonderful Wizards Behind the Oz Wizard

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The Wonderful Wizards Behind the Oz Wizard

BY SUSAN WOLSTENHOLME

IN L. FRANK BAUM'S classic tale *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, when Dorothy asks the Good Witch of the North if the Wizard of Oz is a good man, the Witch replies, "He is a good wizard. Whether he is a man or not, I cannot tell, for I have never seen him" (p. 24).¹

Adult readers of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* have sometimes taken the Wizard as a surrogate for the book's author: as the Wizard employs illusion to create an Emerald City, so too does Baum as author create a fantasy world through his use of language. Just as the Wizard has conjured a spirit of fun and adventure in the text of the novel, so too has Baum acted within our culture as conjurer of this most American of fairy-tale worlds.

But what of the man behind the illusion? We know that he is a good wizard of words, but we don't know what kind of man he is, for we have never seen him. Dorothy learns about the Wizard, who is indeed a man, when Toto knocks down the screen that hides him from view. But how do we knock down the screen that hides Baum from his readers?

Knocking down that screen would seem to be what writing a biography is all about. The job of the biographer, at one level, is to pull down the curtain of time and distance to reveal someone. And yet, just as appropriately, we might see the biography itself as a screen, which hides even as it provides access to a historical person. Effacing its artifice, biography also presents (as it hides) the currents—personal, social, and political—that motivate it.

Published in 1961, *To Please a Child*, coauthored by Frank Joslyn Baum

1. L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, ed. Susan Wolstenholme (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24. Subsequent page references are to this edition and are cited in the text of my paper.

Susan Wolstenholme was in the Creative Writing Program at Syracuse University from 1973 to 1975. She is author of *Gothic (Re)visions: Writing Women as Readers* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993) and editor of *The World's Classics Edition of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). She teaches at Cayuga Community College in Auburn, New York.

and Russell P. MacFall, remains today the only biography of the wizard behind *The Wizard of Oz*.² The L. Frank Baum Papers in Syracuse University Library's Department of Special Collections contain a set of letters between the authors, between them and other writers, and between them and publishers regarding publication, as well as uncollected essays about Baum and the Oz books, other correspondence of MacFall and the Baum family, a file of material regarding *Wizard of Oz* illustrator W. W. Denslow, and other material of interest to Baum scholars. There is also a copy of Frank Joslyn Baum's original memoir on which *To Please a Child* is based. By studying the papers, one can see that this text is indeed a "screen" that both hides and reveals L. Frank Baum. The papers show how the screen was created and, at the same time, present a case study in collaborative writing. They suggest the origins of some accepted "truths" of the Baum legend and imply that what is sometimes accepted as a revelation—the figure behind the screen—is actually a part of the screen's construction. What becomes clear is that, in addition to the social forces that dictate the construction of any literary text, the two authors also had different agendas, motivating forces that were sometimes diametrically opposed: for Frank Joslyn Baum, to construct a fitting memorial to a father he idolized; and for Russell MacFall, to construct a literary biography that, in conforming to certain recognizable reader conventions, would become a commercial success.

Russell MacFall was a reporter and writer for the *Chicago Tribune* when he published an article on L. Frank Baum and his work in July 1956. Almost immediately (28 July 1956) he received a short but friendly thank you note from Frank Joslyn Baum, eldest of L. Frank and Maud Baum's four sons, then in his seventies. Frank Joslyn Baum added in his note that he'd be glad to help if MacFall wished to write any more about his father. MacFall must have jumped at the chance to learn more about L. Frank Baum, because Frank Joslyn wrote back to him on 10 August to discuss their mutual interest in writing a biography of the author of *The Wizard of Oz*. Thus began a correspondence that would culminate in the production of *To Please a Child* and extend over the next year and a half, ending only at the death of Frank Joslyn Baum when the biography was all but complete.

2. Frank Joslyn Baum and Russell P. MacFall, *To Please a Child: A Biography of L. Frank Baum, Royal Historian of Oz* (Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1961). Reportedly, Michael Patrick Hearn is currently at work on another biography. See Geraldine Luca and Roni Natov, "Researching Oz: An Interview with Michael Patrick Hearn," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 11, no. 2 (1987): 51–62.

Frank Joslyn Baum had already written an extended memoir of his father—"some 100,000 words," he suggests. Including appendices, it actually runs over 400 pages of typescript. Though the memoir was clearly a labor of love—as well, perhaps, as an opportunity to work through some personal family issues—Frank Joslyn had wanted to publish it. But, though he had sent it out to potential publishers, under the rather dull title "He Created the Wizard of Oz," it had been judged to be unpublishable. One letter (20 August 1956) suggests that he may have made a general nuisance of himself with potential publishers: he admits to having had a "running feud" with Reilly and Lee since 1921 over his father's royalties and other books that they had published; he warns MacFall not to mention his name if he contacts Bobbs Merrill (who had taken over the publication of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* after the original publisher had gone bankrupt), though he says they were "very nice" about their rejection. Frank Joslyn had, however, been encouraged by a polite note from Mrs. Knopf—who, while not wishing to publish the book in its present form, did suggest working with a collaborator. "This is a most interesting story," she concluded, "and I am returning the mms [*sic*] with the hope that ultimately we can work out a book about the most interesting life and writings of your father."³

Frank Joslyn's letters reveal him to be a rather modest and unassuming man, at least in regard to the art of biography. Sometimes he seems hurt or insulted that MacFall does not seem to take proper account of his work; and he responds in great detail, even a little defensively, to an original introductory chapter that MacFall inserts. But he freely admits on more than one occasion that he simply did not know what he was doing in writing "He Created the Wizard of Oz" and seems willing to take advice, including the advice to find a collaborator. Before he met MacFall, he had attempted to work out a collaboration with writer Jack Snow. But the association had not been successful, due evidently to Snow's lack of commitment to the project.⁴ Frank Joslyn was happy, then, to propose a similar arrangement with MacFall: "It would be up to you to take my material and put it in commercial form so it would attract a publisher" (10 August 1956). That was MacFall's charge, one that clearly coincided with what he wanted to do and one that he took very seriously.

The letters we have between Frank Joslyn Baum and MacFall are al-

3. Knopf to F. J. Baum, 20 August 1956, L. Frank Baum Papers, Department of Special Collections, Syracuse University Library.

4. L. Frank Baum Papers; see file of correspondence between F. J. Baum and J. Snow.



Decoration on Frank Joslyn Baum's stationery.

ways warm and friendly, suggesting that theirs was a model working relationship. In spite of his (justified) protestations about being a neophyte at writing biography, Frank Joslyn Baum was not really a bad writer. He comes across in his letters as intelligent and thoughtful. While he is happy to take advice, and for the most part likes MacFall's approach to the biography, he also has opinions of his own which he is not shy about expressing. MacFall and Frank Joslyn finally met in the summer of 1957, after corresponding for about a year, when Baum, who lived in Los Angeles, where his parents had moved in the latter part of their lives, traveled eastward to Chicago and New York in order to do some research for the biography and to speak to potential publishers. Baum spent a weekend with the MacFall family in Chicago, and thereafter the correspondence becomes more cordial still; it moves to a first-name basis and includes references to family.

In later correspondence, MacFall would claim that he had to scrap the memoir and start over, but in fact a reading of the original typescript of the memoir reveals that that was hardly the case. Overall, the outline of the narrative, the sequence of events, and even the demarcations of individual chapters—with the exception of the first chapter, which appears to be MacFall's original work—follow the sequence of Frank Joslyn's mem-

oir. Certainly MacFall rewrote Baum's memoir extensively. The final version, published as *To Please a Child* in 1961, is structurally tighter as well as stylistically livelier.

MacFall completely revised the beginning of the biography. He begins with a dramatic scene, opening night of the 1902 Broadway musical version of *The Wizard of Oz*: "Deafening applause and calls of 'author, author' rang through the Grand Opera House in Chicago as the curtain fell on the second act of *The Wizard of Oz*" (p. 1). He depicts Frank Baum as himself a sort of leading man attending the performance, "slim and elegant in a dark suit," who immediately launches into a monologue thanking the audience and acknowledging the contributions of the other artists who made the production a smash success. Then the chapter backs up to describe the play version in some detail, with bits of dialogue ("Heartless and poisonous flowers, dare you defy the power of the Witch of the North?"). Verses from the play's original music are quoted in detail. When the play was over, "one spectator recalled that as he walked home, he saw groups still standing on downtown street corners, whistling tunes, comparing impressions, and generally reliving parts of that first performance" (p. 5). The chapter closes with a retrospective look at the play's composition and Baum's role in working on the project: his first meeting in Chicago with Paul Tietjens, a young musician recently arrived from St. Louis who would write the music for Baum's play; and hints (quickly denied by Baum) of Baum's struggle with Frederick Hamlin as business manager and Julian Mitchell as stage director. The chapter concludes: "Thus, after having written to please a child, Baum found that he had written to please a good part of the nation" (p. 16).

MacFall had added a dramatic flourish to the biography that was lacking in the memoir. And there was a particular reason for this sense of the dramatic: not only to grab the attention of the book's reader, or to suggest to the reader the degree to which Baum's love of the theater continued to motivate his life, but also hopefully to inspire another musical theater production. MacFall evidently hoped to hear cries of "author, author" directed at himself. The papers include a synopsis of the book for Richard Rodgers, clearly intended to show off the potential that the life of L. Frank Baum itself had for production—a life that spanned "years of great financiers . . . of the social splendors of the Four Hundred . . . of the chicanery and violent social injustice of the period known as the Gilded Age; of the rise of American industrial power and the growing conflict of farmers, labor unions, and industrialists; of the last Indian wars and the last frontier." L. Frank Baum was "a man who embodies in his adventur-

ous life much of this brilliant and brassy age.” What MacFall had in mind was the creation of a literary legend, a P. T. Barnum or Will Rogers showman whose literature recounted the hardly less fabulous life he lived.

In addition, as published, *To Please a Child* suggests an overall narrative direction that the original memoir lacks. While the memoir of course takes note of births, deaths, and transitions, these seem to act merely as a sort of frame on which hangs a series of anecdotes about Baum family life, amusing episodes about Maud, Frank, and the boys. There is, for example, the story of the Affair of the Bismarks: Maud disapproves when her husband brings home one day a dozen jelly donuts (“Bismarks”)—and, in retaliation, she refuses to eat them but insists that her husband must finish them off. The first two days Frank eats them cheerfully enough; but when the stale Bismarks reappear on the table yet a third day, he protests. Frank hides them, but they reappear; he buries them in the garden, but they are resurrected, dusted off, and take their place back on the table. Finally Maud agrees to let Frank off the hook if he promises never to buy any food without her approval.

There are family legends about visits from relatives. And the manuscript seems to be the written source of the story, most likely spurious, about the origin of the name Oz: as Frank told neighborhood children stories of Dorothy and her friends, one little girl asked him where they lived. As he cast about for a name, Frank’s eyes lit upon two nearby file cabinet drawers, labeled “A–N” and “O–Z,” and answered that they came from the Land of Oz. The memoir suggests that telling stories must have been a way of life for the Baum family; there appears to have been a large repertoire to recycle over and over.

The published version of *To Please a Child* recounts these same tales, but it makes them secondary to narrative considerations: no longer the very point of the story, they are now enlivening details. The Affair of the Bismarks is recounted but considerably shortened. The story of the origin of the name Oz is rewritten and inset in a surrounding narrative about the book’s construction. The narrative gives some minimal sense of historical context: when the Baums are living in South Dakota, for example, before their move to Chicago, the biography describes Aberdeen, a “small prairie community” (p. 64) and at least mentions the Indian massacre at Wounded Knee—which occurred, coincidentally, ten days after Baum published a newspaper column satirizing United States/Indian relations. The biography, guided by MacFall, inserts parts of the senior Baum’s newspaper columns from the Dakota years, his “Our Landlady”

columns, which Frank Joslyn Baum had relegated to an appendix. MacFall added to the biography discussions of the columns and of the elder Baum's literary work, including a more substantive critical discussion of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Both the "Our Landlady" columns and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* become episodes in the ongoing adventures of L. Frank Baum. For, more centrally to the narrative, MacFall gives a plot structure to the biography. The papers contain a typescript of an article that was published in *Young Readers* magazine (spring 1962), which is a condensed version of chapter nine of *To Please a Child*. Both printed and typescript versions (they differ somewhat) make explicit the overall plot of the biography, which does not really emerge from the memoir: that Baum tried a number of trades before hitting on his true vocation and the real road to success in writing stories for children. The cliché obvious in this theme both reflected and reinforced one version of the American success story: the complementary ideas that success is inevitable if one only discovers one's true vocation, and that one magically finds that vocation in the quest that life offers.

MacFall had learned his lessons in writing from the subject of the biography. In MacFall's reconstruction, L. Frank Baum's life resembled that of his most beloved characters in that he himself travels a road to find his heart's desire—which is all the time within him. L. Frank Baum was the man with brains, heart, and courage, who had found his way to the Emerald City of Hollywood, finally, and a "home" in the hearts of children everywhere. As the typescript of the *Young Readers* article puts it: "After half a lifetime spent stumbling through the Gilded Age and half the vocations a man can try, he had found fortune within himself in the humble gift of storytelling." *To Please a Child* is carefully plotted so that this theme, which reaches a climax in chapter nine, runs through the entire narrative. As readers have often noted, in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* the Tin Woodman's gentle heart is apparent long before the Wizard grants his request; the Scarecrow is the source of ideas even before he gets his brain; the Lion always has the courage to lead the little band; and Dorothy has the means to carry her home, her silver shoes, from the outset of her journey. Likewise, Baum clearly has within him the very gift which he seems through the early part of the narrative to seek: he tells stories to his own sons when they are babies; when the Baums are in South Dakota and Baum is trying to run a dry goods store, the children of Aberdeen, who love him and are drawn to Baum as to the Pied Piper, clamor after him for stories; later, he entertains the neighbor children when he is home in

Chicago from trips as a traveling salesman. As with the characters Baum created, his own success in writing children's stories becomes the outward sign of the inner gift which he has always had.

We should understand this structure not as a deliberate lie on MacFall's part nor as a central revelation about Baum's life which the biography reveals, but rather as a construction of the narrative of the biography, employed to make the life more readable and indeed more publishable, neither exactly a falsehood nor a truth. How deliberately MacFall made these parallels with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* may be impossible to say, although the structure of the biography's narrative seems clear. In any case, plotted this way, the story of L. Frank Baum held a special charm for readers who had grown up reading *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the obvious target audience for the book. That MacFall was aware of this target audience is clear in a later letter (1961) to publisher Henry Regnery, where MacFall, in discussing his (now completed) book's title, says: "I should hate to have the biography mistaken for a child's fantasy, as that would injure its selling appeal to the audience of middle aged people who were brought up on the Oz books."⁵ We may conclude that he equally saw selling appeal to those same people in a plot structure that mirrored the Oz book. And this plot also repackaged the Oz story for a post-World War II boom period, which had recently seen the MGM film on television for the first time. MacFall creates a legend of a man, which feeds right into what the film had called L. Frank Baum's "kindly philosophy" (as the epigraph of the film puts it), as it reconstructs him in the image of his literary characters. That audience was confirmed in the idea that Baum's "kindly philosophy" would assure them also of their hearts' desires.

L. Frank Baum's life could certainly be interpreted differently. His career was that of a nineteenth-century entrepreneur. He had some success in almost everything he tried, and actually had about the same amount of success in his writing of children's stories as in some of the other careers he attempted. For example, while his first play *The Maid of Arran* was a hit, his theatrical company never did quite so well again. When Baum undertook the management of a family business, his product, "Baum's Castorine," sold well. In South Dakota, the newspaper he ran had over three thousand readers at one point. The later waning and waxing success of these ventures had as much to do with the rise and fall of the economy, and pure luck, as anything else; but Baum himself seemed to do best at the

5. L. Frank Baum Papers.

beginning of a new enterprise, in a first flush of enthusiasm. Similarly, in writing children's books, he never repeated the achievement of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and ended up repeating the Oz formula in books for children to make money, though he would have preferred to devote himself to other writing and other projects.

A later letter, from MacFall to Justin Call, M.D. (1974), acts as a post-publication commentary on the biography. Call, professor and chief of child psychiatry at the University of California at Irvine, had written to MacFall for information about Baum's health and his childhood, as he was writing a paper, "Baum and the Wizard: A Clinical Note," for a conference that September on The Media and the Mind of the Child. Curiously, in answer to Call's questions about Baum's heart ailment, frequently alluded to in *To Please a Child*, MacFall suggests that possibly Baum never really had a heart problem. He also clarifies a point about L. Frank Baum's father: that family legends about the oil production of Benjamin Baum may have been exaggerated, that the senior Baum had merely skimmed crude oil from the surface of a creek and that, while he had certainly made money, he was far from an oil giant.

Both the oil fortune and the heart problems may well have been matters of family legend which MacFall could not verify beyond Frank Joslyn's account of them. But both are still often assumed to be true by Baum's readers, critics, and scholars. What MacFall says to Call in the letter about Baum's heart is surprising, because it directly contradicts the biography, where Baum's recurring heart problems are taken as fact. That Baum always feared for his heart had long come to be taken as a critical gloss through which to read the Tin Woodman in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*: the Tin Woodman's concerns about his heart are read as Baum's commentary on his own physical state. But why would MacFall uncritically seem to accept Frank Joslyn's account of his father's physical state in the biography if he did not really believe it?

Perhaps MacFall felt he had no choice; it may have been difficult to contradict Baum's son's testimony. But it also suited MacFall's purpose to recast Baum in the image of his characters. Whether or not he physically resembled the Tin Woodman in having "heart" problems, the L. Frank Baum of *To Please a Child* has become the historical embodiment of his main characters; but the physical detail reinforces the resemblance. What MacFall has done is the inverse of what biographical criticism does: producing not a biographical "reading" of the text but rather a textualized biographical subject in conformity with the texts his subject has produced.

But perhaps MacFall's most interesting comment suggests that one point of Frank Joslyn's hidden agenda was to demonstrate "that his father was a saint and his mother a devil" because of an argument with her over the proceeds of the MGM film. To describe Maud Gage Baum, as depicted in either the memoir or the biography, as "a devil" may be an exaggeration. MacFall may well have softened Frank Joslyn's portrayal of his mother. But Maud Gage Baum certainly comes across as a strong-willed woman, as the *Affair of the Bismarks* demonstrates. Other family tales reveal that she, not her husband, was the disciplinarian and that she did not hesitate to use physical punishment on her children. Some tales show her personally spanking the children with a hairbrush, after which her husband comforts them. Frank Joslyn Baum may have used the biography as a therapeutic tool—not just because of his argument with his mother over film proceeds, but possibly because of childhood resentments as well.

But the picture that emerges is certainly not that of a monster. In an early letter to MacFall (6 May 1951), Frank Joslyn describes his mother as "a very pretty young girl, rather tall—with a beautiful figure." He refers MacFall to the appropriate pages in his typescript, where he describes the Gage residence in Fayetteville, New York, just east of Syracuse. It is a "fine old house," full of books and antiques, with the first piano ever brought to Onondaga County. Maud's grandparents had been abolitionists who ran a station on the Underground Railroad. They raised Maud's mother, feminist Matilda Gage, to question authority and to think deeply. Maud Gage grew up with pride in her ancestry, which her family claimed to trace back 250 years. Frank Joslyn claimed to find in her family "hereditary tendencies" which surfaced in Maud and which made her "vindictive, harsh and stubborn." She is the heiress of a lineage that her son approves at the same time that he wishes to implicate her in its severity. What emerges is a convoluted and shadowy representation from a writer who not only has not fixed on a clear image, but whose conflicted motivation suggests competing images. The son feels himself more closely aligned with the less ambiguous figure of his father, who emerges more clearly as a sweet-tempered, gentle, free spirit, who comforts the child who is weeping from harsh discipline and tells him a fantasy story.

Frank Joslyn's lack of resolution about his family conflicted with MacFall's sense of plot. But for Frank Joslyn, his father as character forms the center of the narrative, not the plot line. His comments indicate a concern about maintaining a focus on his father as this unitary center of the text. In his extensive criticism of MacFall's first chapter, for example (letter of 11 December 1956), he claims to like the idea of opening with the

musical but then expresses concern about the number of characters that the chapter introduces. He worries that in suggesting the role of others in producing the Broadway show, his father's role will be diminished. And in aggrandizing that role, in giving the picture he wants to create, he suggests that he is not even above inventing some detail. "What we want to do," he writes to MacFall, "is emphasize the life of Baum, even if at times we have to use a bit of imaginative material"—a remark that may well make us suspicious about some of his information. While Frank Joslyn's project in writing may at times run parallel to MacFall's—his use of anecdote and incident, for example, conforms to MacFall's need to show specific dramatic details—they run counter to one another at several points. Baum wanted a character sketch of his father that emphasized his strengths and virtues, that showed him as a kindly story-telling father figure. MacFall wanted a dynamic, dramatic, clearly-plotted narrative.

In the biography as published, Maud Gage Baum remains an enigmatic figure, though still the strong-willed practical disciplinarian. As with her husband, the biography here also suggests a clearer narrative line, though she remains static and one-dimensional. Depicted as exasperated with her husband's whimsicality, concerned about the family income, she attempts to remake that very quality in practical terms. Guided by her feminist mother Matilda Gage, Maud is the motivating force that enables *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to be written: she encourages Baum to write and publish his stories—not because she has any sympathy with Baum's fantasy world but because she sees publication as a way to make money. "I have to admit," she is depicted telling her husband, "the children keep coming here to listen to your stories, and some of their parents are interested, too. Mother was usually right about things, and she kept telling us your stories would sell if you would only write them down" (p. 110).

Just as readers have tended to take the story of the Tin Woodman biographically (in part because the biography has written Baum in the image of the Tin Woodman), so too has the supposed antagonism between Baum and his wife and mother-in-law been used to read his texts, particularly the immediate sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Land of Oz*. Critics often suggest that General Jinjur and her Army of Revolt in that text are satires on feminism and particularly on Maud Gage. But it is Frank Joslyn's manuscript that explicitly states: "As Frank had for many years heard Maud's mother, an ardent feminist, constantly talk about the rights of women and how they should force the men to agree to their demands, the army of revolt was undoubtedly a subconscious expression of Mrs. Gage's personality" (p. 239). As more recent critics have noted,



General Jinjur answered the Guardian of the Gate as follows: "Surrender instantly!"
Illustration by John R. Neill, from *The Land of Oz* (1939).

General Jinjur and her rigid military style are more likely to be a satire on the military school which the young Lyman Frank Baum attended and which he clearly hated. As Frank Joslyn admits, his father and mother always got along well (though he attributes that to his father's deference to his mother's wishes); and all evidence suggests that L. Frank Baum got along extremely well with his mother-in-law. He seems to have had no problem with strong women in his personal life. What is perhaps more remarkable than the depiction of General Jinjur and her army is Baum's perpetual fascination with little girls as main characters, though they must constantly be helped by fantastic male figures—Dorothy, to choose the

best-known example, is the little girl protagonist of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, although the three friends who accompany her seem to be disguised males, adult perhaps in size but whimsical and child-like. And, as critics have also remarked, the power of Baum's magical female characters, such as witches and sorceresses, tends to be real, while that of men, such as the Wizard, tends to be illusory. Women tend not to be particularized but to be depicted in the broadest possible terms: witches are good or evil; Aunt Em is weathered but kindly; Glinda is beautiful, good, and powerful. What the books seem to suggest is not a specific biographical conflict—antagonism to a wife or mother-in-law, as Frank Joslyn says—but culturally-rooted ambivalence toward women in general.

In addition to the memoir, Frank Joslyn contributed considerable research between 1956 and 1958, when the first draft of the book was completed. In his letters to MacFall, Baum writes about details of his father's life (often evidently in answer to MacFall's question), more family anecdotes, family history, and possible publishers. Sometimes he expresses exasperation, when he feels that MacFall's questions are answered in his original manuscript—which, he clearly feels, MacFall has not read attentively enough. Letters between the two men fly quickly, separated at most by a couple of days. Frank Joslyn is engaged in correspondence with possible publishers; he is collecting more information about his father, such as the manuscript of L. Frank's road hit, the *The Maid of Arran*; he finds some old stories by his father. The correspondence is so steady that on 27 October 1957, when Frank Joslyn has not heard from MacFall in two months, he writes to ask why.

Then on 26 February 1958, Frank Joslyn sends a handwritten letter (his usual habit was to use a typewriter) to MacFall to tell him that he is in the hospital—for a heart “check-up” he says; but clearly the situation is more serious than that. He expects to be in the hospital for about a week. In fact he has had a heart attack and is in the hospital for over a month.

Although Frank Joslyn did recover from the attack and returned home in April 1958, and although he makes light of it in the letters and does not mention it after his return home, most likely he never fully recovered. On 27 November 1958, Baum sends MacFall a copy of the biography that he had retyped from MacFall's “scripts,” as he says, “with such changes as I deem necessary,” with his letter calling attention to these changes or to points that he wants MacFall to consider: his father's experience at military school caused his life-long hatred of the military, yet he supported Frank Joslyn in his military career; Matilda Joslyn Gage had written *Woman, Church and State*; more information about composer Alberta M.

Hall is needed; can't some of the details from Frank Joslyn's memoirs be added? His suggestions are not extensive; they are sometimes perceptive and other times misguided; but they always suggest a closely-considered reading of the manuscript—and if they do occasionally resound with a little wounded pride about his own writing, he seems to be a good reader, open to suggestions and finally concerned about the production of a readable text. He also suggests enlisting the help of critic Edward Wagenknecht, who had promised his help to Frank Joslyn earlier and who had written one of the earliest serious critical considerations of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1929). About a year later, after Frank Joslyn's death, Wagenknecht would write to MacFall some advice about publishing the manuscript.

On 22 November 1958, Frank Joslyn wrote to MacFall about the book's title. Baum wanted to title the book "The Royal Historian of Oz," while MacFall favored "To Please a Child," from an inscription that the elder Baum had written to his sister Mary Louise in a copy of his first book for children, *Mother Goose in Prose*:

When I was young I longed to write a great novel that should win me fame. Now that I am getting old my first book is written to amuse children. For, aside from my inability to do anything "great," I have learned to regard fame as a will-o-the-wisp which, when caught is not worth the possession; but to please a child is a sweet and lovely thing that warms one's heart and brings its own reward. I hope my book will succeed in that way—that the children will like it. You and I have inherited much the same temperament and literary taste and I know you will not despise these simple tales, but will understand me and accord me your full sympathy.⁶

Frank Joslyn liked the title but wanted to capitalize on the word Oz itself. He thought that Oz in the title would sell more books.

That was his last letter to MacFall. Frank Joslyn Baum died on 2 December 1958. On 9 December his widow Elizabeth wrote to MacFall that funeral services had been held four days earlier, the day after what would have been Frank Joslyn's seventy-fifth birthday. At the time of his death, an early draft of *To Please A Child* was complete. Frank Joslyn Baum had

6. Cited by Michael Patrick Hearn in his Introduction to *The Annotated Wizard of Oz* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1973), 21.

devoted the last two years of his life to writing the biography that would preserve his story-telling father's memory.

Frank Joslyn Baum had lived to see the project substantially completed, though the biography was to undergo several more drafts. MacFall's original first chapter would be heavily revised, much of the revision consistent with the comments which Frank Joslyn had written to him. Finally, in 1961, the Chicago publisher Reilly and Lee, a firm that had published some of the Oz books, published *To Please a Child*, subtitled "A Biography of L. Frank Baum, Royal Historian of Oz." Taken together, the two titles reveal the different, sometimes crossed, purposes of the coauthors: Frank Joslyn Baum's to portray his father, if not as a saint, as a royal storyteller and to enshrine his father's place in history (as he discovers his own in his family); MacFall's purpose was to write of L. Frank Baum's "true vocation," found within him and leading him to success, as surely as the yellow brick road led Dorothy to the Emerald City.