

“My! What a lot of Kings and Queens!”: The Meanings of Monarchy in L. Frank Baum’s Fantasies: J.L. Bell

Monarchs are often at the top of society in Baum’s fairylands, and show characters coming to hold monarchical power in many ways. Baum himself was active in partisan politics, and shaped novels around elections and government reform for older readers. Yet, he consistently set all his fantasy stories in monarchies. He might ridicule individual rulers or shape plots around removing unworthy monarchs from power, but his stories never undercut monarchy itself. Baum even depicted animal species and immortal races as led by kings and queens. Bell will seek explanations for this pattern, using psychological and political-science theories about how children understand governmental authority and literary scholarship about Oz as a Utopia.