

Government Surveillance in Oz: Megan Lynn Isaac

L. Frank Baum described Oz as an effort to create literature that was “moral,” “modernized,” and “American.” Baum married the daughter of suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage and took up her cause advocating for “the political future of our wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters.” Isaac explores public authority and gender across the Oz novels by looking at female leaders as monarchs, diplomats, and members of advisory councils, and also connects the role that magical forms of surveillance play in governance with female authority. Superior intelligence is favored over superior force by Baum’s female authorities, but the invasive strategies used for gathering intelligence contrasts with the democratic values his new “American” fairy stories promote.