

Noel Diem

Dr. Richard Androne

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Following the Yellow Brick Road:

Feminine Roles in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked*

L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has situated itself as a classic American fairy tale enjoyed by generations, all while having a young female protagonist – something almost unheard of at the time of release. L. Frank Baum claims that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* breaks with traditional fairy tales by disavowing morality and replacing moral instruction with pure entertainment. *Oz's* moral message is clear and manifold, however: a child can escape the harshness of the real world and adulthood by developing her brains, heart, and courage through both experience and imagination all while overcoming adversity. Baum's choice of a female instead of a male for this central role is itself significant in several respects. Many of the rulers and protagonists in the first Oz book were female, especially the three most important characters – Dorothy, Glinda, and the Wicked Witch of the West. In an update of the story through his own novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, Gregory Maguire tries to fix the feminine stereotypes while at the same time giving added depth to some of the characters. He takes the Wicked Witch of the West and gives her a name, Elphaba Thropp, paints her in a sympathetic light, and makes her the heroine of the story while demonizing G(a)linda, Dorothy, and even her own sister Nessarose or the Wicked Witch of the East. Elphaba, as Dorothy does in *Wizard of Oz*, becomes her own strength, and we see her resoluteness in finding a home, much like Dorothy did throughout *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked* work together to juxtapose the women against each other, revealing the strength beyond the stereotypes and the duality of human nature in terms of good and evil.

The Oz that Maguire paints is very different from the Oz created by L. Frank Baum. Oz has a splendor and a sense of awe that few other fictional settings have been able to replicate. The town paved with yellow bricks and the green towers of Emerald City are an almost Cirque-de-Soleil fantasy for young Dorothy. Michael Riley emphasizes that Oz is a replica of all the seasons that Kansas, Dorothy's hometown, goes through in a year (57). Baum's Oz is the city from the viewpoint of Dorothy, a wondrous city with unprecedented opportunities. To Dorothy, the Emerald City and Oz in general is a place of magic. It is only the forest, a dark and dank place, which holds any evil. Riley further goes on to suggest that Baum's Wizard is an extension of Oz because he is the figurehead of the Emerald City – but perhaps Glinda is the representation of the whole country (110). Maguire's Oz is seen through the eyes of Elphaba. She progressively through the end of the novel sees the problems that reside in Oz. She sees firsthand the patriarchy and prejudice that the Wizard represents. The Emerald City was Elphaba's New York City, it was the place she dreamed to escape to from her small town life in Munchkinland. Maguire cites that his Oz is indeed darker because it is seen through the eyes, for a majority of the time, of a woman ("The Gregory Maguire Interview"). He wanted this Oz to be a microcosm of the United States, not only Kansas. Readers are introduced to Kiamo Ko, where Elphaba's castle resides. Kiamo Ko overlooks Oz, but is hidden from a majority of the government and the wars waging around Elphaba. Corruption is the center of Maguire's Oz; Madame Morrible, The Wizard, and Glinda constantly battle each other for control. The Wizard is a country bumpkin, himself from Munchkinland, Madame Morrible is from Emerald City and possesses the cool city charm,

Glinda is from the Upper Upperlands and it shows through her personality – each region of the world is distinctive (Burger “Wicked and Wonderful” 172).

The primary protagonist of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* saga is Dorothy Gale, a young girl from Kansas who is transported to Oz in her house during a tornado and upon landing, kills the Wicked Witch of the East. As one of the first female protagonists in children’s literature who is independent and fights for herself, Dorothy grows quickly throughout the course of the novel, not fearing the future and instead pressing forward (Burger, *American Myth* 142). By encouraging the development of the inner person and not having Dorothy rescued by a prince on a white horse, Baum takes a first step in highlighting healthy portrayals of women. Even in appearance, Dorothy is different from other female protagonists: “She was not a dainty thing but a good-size farm girl, dressed in blue-and-white checks and a pinafore” (Baum 3). This is in direct contrast to “dainty” Glinda who is introduced later in the novel (Baum 18). Dorothy needs to have the strength to last in Oz both mentally and physically. She walks “quite a distance” (Baum 21) to the Emerald City with few mentions of stopping or eating. The Wicked Witch underestimates Dorothy throughout the novel, however, because of her farm girl appearances. Karr in “The Wise Witch and Wonderful Wizard” states that is Dorothy’s greatest strength – that she appears unassuming and “down home” enough that the Witch thinks her an adversary – a fatal mistake (16). Dorothy’s greatest strength is that others around her do not assume she is capable of the amazing feats she can achieve, albeit with a little help.

The Dorothy Gale introduced in *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* is completely different from Baum’s Dorothy. Maguire describes her as a “wretched farm girl” (452) with no sense of morality or manners. She is not the girl that was once out for blood, but is instead apologizing for her wrongdoing to Elphaba. This Dorothy does not understand the

world around her. Instead of being powerful and seeing the corruption, the world is something of wonder, and Dorothy is unable to find the corruption beneath the shiny emerald veneer (Duncan 73). Elphaba understands Dorothy far more in Maguire's version of the text than in Baum's: "I see myself there: the girl witness, wide-eyed as Dorothy. Staring at a world too terrible to comprehend, believing...that beneath this unbreakable contract of guilt and blame there is always an older contract that may bind and release in a more salutary way" (383). Dorothy Gale wants to please everyone in this novel, Glinda, the Wizard, the Scarecrow, and herself. Everything comes easily to her, setting her in direct opposition to Elphaba Thropp as will be explained later. This is why she can so easily destroy the Wicked Witch, because her success is simply an accident. Duncan further questions Maguire's affections for the girl, citing his usage of the word "normal" and "plain" to describe her throughout the altercation with the witch (76). Dorothy Gale is a mere shadow in terms of sturdiness in comparison to the Dorothy in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. It seems almost odd that Maguire's Dorothy was even able to achieve her mission from Glinda because she lacked the sheer force that Baum's Dorothy possessed and used throughout the novel.

Dorothy only learns of her own power as she travels through Oz and conquers certain death and the temptations along the way. During the book, whenever the characters come across danger, Dorothy is usually the one to stand up for them, not just thinking of herself. Dorothy is always helping the characters out instead of waiting for one of the male characters to help them instead (Loudermilk 102). Readers are told how Dorothy discovers the Tin Man (Baum 34), and how she reacts to him strengthens her leadership. Dorothy tells her traveling partners "we must cross this strange place in order to get to the other side," and she says this without worrying. She is taking charge (Baum 167). Leadership plays a strong part of Dorothy's characteristics, as she is

not always relying on others for direction. Throughout the story, readers start to see that Dorothy is a sturdy, knowledgeable, and autonomous character (Ritter 72). These are important qualities for any character to have, because if they were not strong or they were dependant on others, they would not be able to achieve anything in their lives and they would not be able to lead others. A character who is a young female (though her age is never specifically stated and has only been deduced) is rare and particularly special to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Duncan 55). Facing what would reduce anyone to tears, Dorothy willingly saved the life of her dog, Toto. She knew that “Toto would be killed, and heedless of danger, rushed forward and slapped the Lion upon his nose as hard as she could...” (Baum 50). At this point in the novel, Dorothy is already with the Tin Man and the Scarecrow, who both cower as she attacks the Lion. Dorothy quickly becomes the source of everything for these “men” in their travels. She acts both in a maternal and paternal sense, protecting and providing for them. In a sense, Dorothy falls into a traditional female role but she is able to overcome that and be both the fearless leader and the soft, maternal woman at the same time.

There are many varying ways that Dorothy differs from most female protagonists from myths:

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is now almost universally acknowledged to be the earliest truly feminist American children’s book, because of spunky and tenacious Dorothy. Homely little Dorothy refreshingly goes out and solves her problem herself rather than waiting patiently like a beautiful heroine in a European fairy tale for someone else, whether prince or commoner, to put things right. (Ritter 178)

Ritter continues to praise Dorothy in “Liberation for Little Girls” (72) for being “a brave, resourceful girl who rescues three male characters and destroys two evil witches.” Baum’s books are full of girls who are enterprising, ingenious, adventurous, or imposingly self-reliant” (Ritter 75). Dorothy constantly seems old for her age, especially in the flagship novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Though later in the series (specifically in *Wonderful Wizard* and *Marvelous Land*) she seems a younger character and not one who could survive the attack, her initial characterization is of one who is strong. In the original novel Dorothy emerges as the most powerful and intelligent person in the book. Dorothy emerges the victor with the Wicked Witch of the West, who immediately retreats to the defensive after the death of her sister. The dynamic between the women can only be expressed as a battle of wits and a battle for dominance, one that Dorothy wins initially and continually throughout the rest of the novel.

Dorothy in Baum’s text shows anger when the witch takes one of her silver shoes, and reacts almost immediately. She takes action by throwing a bucket of water, which made the witch melt (Baum 69). Dorothy stood up for herself although she did not know that the witch would melt. She is not afraid to come to her own defense, surprising even the Wicked Witch of the West: “I have been wicked in my day but I never thought a little girl like you would be able to melt me and end my wicked deeds” (Baum 69). Dorothy is brave enough and strong enough to stand up to the witch and to defeat her, something even Glinda the Good and the Wonderful Wizard of Oz had been unable to do.

The book portrays a much stronger and proactive heroine than the popular movie does in the showdown with the Wicked Witch. Baum has the Scarecrow helplessly scattered across the land, the Tin Woodman dashed to the bottom of a rocky ravine, and the Lion helplessly harnessed in her courtyard (Baum 163). Dorothy engineers her own escape by purposefully

throwing water onto the witch. While Dorothy did not know this would kill the witch, her subsequent actions show her as a brave heroine. Moore helps to interpret Dorothy's actions: "In a struggle over Dorothy's magic shoes, of which the wicked sorceress knows the worth, while Dorothy does not, [. . .] water is spilled over the girl's enemy, who is at the time also her captress. The witch promptly melts away 'Like Brown sugar before her very eyes.'" (154). Dorothy then proceeds to free the Lion and orchestrate the rescue of the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman (165-67). Dorothy is unequivocally the hero in Baum's novel.

Dorothy's goal is to get home to her regular, ordinary life, "We people of flesh and blood would rather live there (in her dreary and gray home) than in any other country, be it ever so beautiful. There is no place like home" (Baum 21). The value of home is questioned in Dorothy's response to the Scarecrow (Durand and Leigh 111). In Baum's perspective, Dorothy enjoyed having those adventures, she happily returns home as an American heroine who had unforgettable experiences. The adventures helped shape her personality and view of life. Although she is an only child, one as a child can discover many hidden characteristics never experienced before. All that she has learned will help her to develop into a powerful and intelligent woman (Durand and Leigh 186).

The girl backed away, stumbling over furniture, knocking over the beehive, and stepping on the queen bee, who had emerged from the fragments.

"Everything I have, every little thing I have, dies when you come across it," said the Witch. (Maguire 400)

Dorothy is not strong, smart, or vindictive. Instead, Maguire paints her as lucky. Destruction follows in Dorothy's wake, and yet she is considered some sort of second coming of Ozma, the *Wicked* version of God. Just as Elphaba turns into a mythic figure of evil through *The Wizard of*

*Oz*, Dorothy becomes a mythic figure of sainthood. Unlike in the Baum version, readers have seen the “real” Wicked Witch of the West, and they know how hard she worked and how misunderstood she truly was. While the other characters in the *Wicked* novel may see Dorothy as a saint, readers know the truth – that she was nothing extraordinary and may have killed the one person who was truly extraordinary (Paige 148). Maguire’s Dorothy has no interest in harming Elphaba, and it is only when some of the flaming broom catches Elphaba’s dress alight that Dorothy throws water on the Wicked Witch of the West in an attempt to save her life. Maguire’s Dorothy is a sincere and caring Dorothy in need of forgiveness and the parallel of Elphaba herself, who sought forgiveness from a dead lover’s wife, only to be denied forgiveness by her lover’s wife’s death (Roman 216).

The focus Maguire puts on Dorothy’s gender in *Wicked* is much greater than that of Baum. There are constant allusions to “curls” (400), “bows” (405), “dresses” (403), and “gentle” (404, 406, 409) in reference to Dorothy. Throughout the text there are very few times when Dorothy is referenced without a feminine adjective before or after her description or name (Paige 149). Elphaba repeatedly refers to Dorothy as being “raised in a barn,” juxtaposing the way the narrator views Dorothy and the way the other characters view her (Maguire 454). Baum may not have focused so much on Dorothy’s gender in order to sell the book, whereas Maguire monopolized on it to put Elphaba and Dorothy into direct contrast (Roman 225). Duncan and Leigh cite Maguire’s overt feminization of Dorothy as a way to make her seem not as sympathetic to a post-modernist mind (114). She is so typically feminine in the way she speaks and treats other characters that readers immediately put up walls when she goes against the atypical Elphaba. Throughout the novel, Elphaba had become the female readers were rooting



for because she was so different from the ultra-feminine characters around her so it is obvious that when she fights a losing battle with the girl, she would get the support.

In *Wicked*, Dorothy's eventual, though incidental pivotal involvement, is only related as an implied back story plot element. Baum creates Dorothy, the innocent and persistent farm girl, which Maguire transforms into a slightly aloof, gentle girl who is different only at the very core. Compared to Maguire's Dorothy, Baum's has far more gumption and drive (Roman 226).

Dorothy changes as a character in a different direction than the other women in the conversion from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to *Wicked*. Dorothy is almost completely gone from Maguire's book, only serving to torment a character already plagued by hardships. Dorothy is another person to hurt Elphaba for Maguire – she holds very little significance in the grand scheme of Maguire's story. Instead of giving her more of a story, Maguire relegates Dorothy to the exact position of the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. In doing so, Dorothy becomes the villain that the reader does not know about, instead of the Wicked Witch being said villain. Maguire opens up room for there to be more changes amongst the true “witches” of the book – both Glinda and of course, the Wicked Witch of the West to Elphaba Thropp.

Witches in literature are typically complex beings, powerful and frightening, and capable of strong emotions. They often come to the aid of those seeking their favors and their lives are most often entangled with powerful men. Traditionally, witches were women who went against the Christian religion (Burger, “Wicked and Wonderful” 127). Beginning in the early 1900s, however, witchcraft was no longer always associated with magic that had been seen in folklore and fairytales (Sempruch 16). Instead, a witch might just be someone of which an example need be made. In *Wicked*, Glinda symbolizes the classic ‘good’ witch; dressed in white, wielding a wand and performing good deeds. Elphaba is the classic ‘wicked’ witch, with her green skin,

pointed hat, broomstick and propensity for evil deeds (Gibson 97). Gibson further notes that witches in literature have been redefined, easily becoming protagonists in works of literature. Still, there is a stigmatism that comes with witches in literature that they can never be wholly good, which is exactly what Maguire hints at in *Wicked*.

Readers only get a small peek at the Wicked Witch of the East in Baum's novel – she is simply the witch under the house. Still, readers were told of the “unmentionable” acts she committed for she had kept the little Munchkin people "in bondage for many years, making them slave for her night and day" (Baum 22-3). She was also the owner of the magical ruby slippers that the Wicked Witch so desperately wants. Paige asserts that the Wicked Witch of the East was undervalued because there could only be one evil witch, and the Wicked Witch of the West was already in place. She suggests that the shoes could have had a significance to The Wicked Witch of the West. According to Paige, the Wicked Witch knew that she was going to fight for her life to protect them (152-3). Maguire plays into this expertly in *Wicked*. He gives this witch a name, Nessarose, and establishes her as a “downtrodden, tragically-beautiful girl who cannot seem to fight her own battles” (Haller). The novel describes Nessarose and her voice, “She was as Elphaba had said: gorgeous, pink, slender as a wheat stalk, and armless... ‘Hello, good sir,’ she said, nodding her head very slightly. ‘The valises are on top. Can you manage?’ Her voice was as smooth and oiled as Elphaba’s was serrated” (131). The two witches are put against each other in school, by their family, and by society. Corley even goes so far as to say that the only reason Elphaba even makes friends at Shiz is because Nessarose is enigmatic enough to bring people into their group of friends (31). Maguire's use of Nessarose stems from the need for competition for Elphaba as well as another sympathetic figure that Dorothy conquers. As much as Elphaba and Nessarose do not always agree, they are still

sisters. Elphaba mourns the loss of her sister more than anyone truly sees (Corley 32), which pushes her over the edge to being the wicked woman. Nessarose becomes just another speed bump in the novel that represents everything Elphaba never had – a natural grace.

The first witch who Dorothy encounters in the novel is Glinda the Good: or the Good Witch of the North. Glinda represents maternal power in the novel, far from the “cookie-cutter good fairy who descends in a dash of glitter to make everything right again” and “far from being an air-headed fairy with a helium voice...she is a linchpin of the plot” (Hayter-Menzies 20). Glinda is the only character in the novel to give Dorothy any solid advice. In fact, “Glinda succeeds where the wizard has failed, instructing Dorothy on the use of her magical silver shoes and reuniting her with her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry” (Burger, “Wicked and Wonderful” 131). Glinda exudes power over the young girl and the entire situation in Oz at the time of the novel’s onset. She gives Dorothy information about getting to Oz to see the Wizard, but it is of limited quality. Rushdie argues that “One can also see Glinda’s obliquities as proof that a good fairy or a good witch, when she sets out to be of assistance, never gives you everything” (345). Glinda’s insistence at having some semblance of control over the situation shows just how much control she has. Once again, she is one of the only characters actually possessing magical powers (surprisingly, a strictly feminine trait in this world). Glinda acts as a calming force for Dorothy as well, giving her strength before her trip down the Yellow Brick Road to Oz stating that she would help protect her: “I will give you a kiss, and no one will dare injure a person who has been kissed by the Witch of the North” (Baum 23). This is once again manifests, a sense of superiority over the girl, and causes her to act in the way she wants. There are times when she does not listen to the worries of the other characters and instead worries only about her quest. Glinda pushes her to this, though Dorothy’s strong will comes out multiple times with Glinda’s help. Throughout

the novel, Glinda has an omnipresence, fixing things and helping Dorothy along the route, underscoring some of Dorothy's own power (Burger, "Wicked and Wonderful" 129). At times, it almost seems as if Glinda is the true "wizard" in Oz instead of the actual Wizard.

Glinda's political power in Oz is somewhat complex and not completely revealed throughout the course of the novel. When the woman appears in Oz, she immediately is regaled with the utmost respect from the Munchkins, especially those in the Lullaby League and the Lollipop Guild (Baum 18). Her magical powers are confusing as well – it is not clear whether or not Glinda can do any of the great magic exemplified by the Wicked Witch of the West. She can affix shoes onto Dorothy's feet and turn from a bubble into a human, but nothing of significance ever comes to pass (Paige 138). Rushdie once again stresses that Glinda's powers are so "saccharine" that she is nothing to fear or anyone of great power; appearances are fleeting (44). Glinda never uses her powers against the Wicked Witch, but instead uses them for good to help Dorothy as she travels.

Glinda still has moments where she seems to lack control of the situation at hand. The Wicked Witch has the edge in the race for Dorothy's shoes until the very end of the book. "In her serenity, so unruffled there is opportunity for detached amusement at the inexplicable wickedness of the Wicked Witch of the West [Glinda] glows with a calm that is everything but worried or frantic" (Hayter-Menzies 22). Glinda, the one good witch, is the only major character who does not represent an actual person from Kansas. The implication is that women who are powerful *and* good are imaginary; they do not exist in reality. She misleads Dorothy too, telling the young girl only near the end of her exhausting trip that she "had the power all along" (Baum 166) to get back to Kansas and her family. It is not clear whether or not Glinda has the inability to help Dorothy, or if the main intention of the plot is to have Dorothy help herself.

In *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, Glinda the Good is initially called "Galinda", and (through her mother) is descended from the noble clan of the Arduennas of the Upland (Maguire 132). Though originally characterized as snobbish and superficial, she is also intelligent enough to be accepted to Shiz University's Crage Hall, where she is forced to share a room with Elphaba. She is treated much like other "popular girls" at her school – like someone to be put on a pedestal and worshipped (Wolf 3). There are brief moments when it all appears to be an act, however, and the real Glinda shines through. Behind closed doors she feels sympathy for the green witch, often trying to get to know her better when no one is around (Maguire 210). She learns quickly while at Shiz, and is smart enough to look around and evaluate the patriarchal world around her. Maguire's Glinda is not so much a complete role reversal, but a deliberate look at the woman before Glinda the Good – Galinda Upperland of the Upper Upperlands.

At the start of their relationship, Elphaba sees Glinda as a confused teenager: "She reasoned that because she was beautiful she was significant, though what she signified, and to whom, was not clear to her yet" (Maguire 65). The character is seen extensively in the first half of the novel, but disappears for most of the second half, compared to her *Wizard of Oz* counterpart. Maguire's Glinda is not the syrupy-sweet Glinda that Baum paints – she is a young girl desperate to fit in her world, and more than willing to knock people over who could get in her way. Still, Glinda shows some signs of depth. She is not stupid, as some of her conversations with Elphaba reveal. She also shows hints of being capable of craftiness and manipulation (Wolf 5). She did fabricate an entire medical condition for her Ama Clutch and then boldly sold the lie to Madame Morrible in order to keep out of the dreaded "Pink Dormitory" since living in said dormitory would not allow her to rise in the social ranks (Maguire 154). Glinda is shrewd and

looks out for herself above all others, but through these displays, she shows her cunning and desire to be on top. Her adult identity is really up in the air, which contrasts with Elphaba, who, in a lot of ways, seems very rooted in herself even at a young age. Glinda still has time to change, though, and her arc is perhaps the most drastic in the novel.

Throughout the first half of the novel, Glinda went by “Galinda” but changed because her Animal teacher could not pronounce her name. Due to the politics surrounding Animals, Dr. Dillamond is removed as a teacher – marking a huge change for Glinda. The name "Glinda" is a tribute to the slain Doctor Dillamond, but the name change is really more a result of Galinda's guilt (Boyd 13). She felt she needed an external change to reflect the huge changes she has undergone internally. But perhaps this shift may also be a method of self-preservation, a way to keep certain parts of Galinda unchanged and allowing Glinda to assume the changed aspects (Maguire 133). However, what causes Glinda to change the most is not the death of her teacher – but instead her budding friendship with Elphaba and relationship with school-hunk Fiyero.

Glinda spends the bulk of her life apart from Elphaba, but it is clear that Elphaba has had a huge impact on her life. When they reunite, it is almost as if they have not been apart for fifteen or so years. Their shared experiences were so pivotal that it does not matter that they actually spent relatively little time together (Hayter-Menzies 20). Nevertheless, what is really fascinating about the reunion is how Glinda's speaking style and attitude has evolved into the Glinda shown through Baum's novel. Glinda now seems like a blend of the superficial Glinda and the more savvy Glinda. She uses her niceness and the aloofness others assume she has to her own advantage, easily manipulating everyone around her (Boyd 18). In a way, Glinda the Good Witch is the culmination of all of Galinda and Glinda's different parts, both good and bad. In this respect, she is a lot like Elphaba. The two women may appear to be polar opposites, but Boq

(who later transforms into the Tin Man) notes some striking similarities between them: “Glinda used her glitter beads, and you used your exotic looks and background, but weren't you just doing the same thing, trying to maximize what you had in order to get what you wanted” (Maguire 357). Glinda’s character in *Wicked* does not quite come full circle, much like Elphaba does not in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. When the Wicked Witch of the West dies, there is nothing else to learn about Glinda. She has a broken heart, she is questioning the world around her, and she still does not know the extent of her power – though she does know that it is not greater than the power Elphaba possessed.

Glinda in *Wicked* is the perfect mixture of the powerful feminine and the masterful trickster. Hayter-Menzies cites Glinda’s ability to use the feminine charms, something previously seen in Dorothy, as the key quality of Glinda’s personality in Maguire’s novel. Glinda is in charge of her femininity and knows when to use it, and more importantly, when to turn it off (22). It is suggested in *Wicked* that Glinda marries a higher up official in the Ozmopolitan government. Maguire leaves some of Glinda’s story open ended because even Elphaba does not know the fate of her friend. That too says a lot about how Maguire feels about Glinda’s character. Maguire himself said that he wished he could have ended the book on a happier note for their friendship, wishing that “Glinda could know the fate of perhaps the one – and only – true friend she ever had,” he further goes on to suggest he may explore that one day (“The Gregory Maguire Interview”). The Glinda seen in *The Wizard of Oz*, then, is a shell of the Glinda that once was in academia.

The Wicked Witch of the West brings chills to the minds of many people, old and young, with just the mere mention of her name or the sound of her cackle. The Wicked Witch of the West desires power, or rather seeks to compensate for her lack of power. By possessing the ruby

slippers – which it seems enabled her sister to dominate Munchkinland, the Wicked Witch of the West will become more powerful than both Glinda and the Wizard: “I’ll be the most powerful person in Oz”, she shrieks (Baum 20). Baum uses the Wicked Witch of the West as the direct opposite of Glinda the Good. She is terrifying to the young Dorothy and seemingly heartless. Elphaba is mourning the loss of her sister and taking the aggression out on the young girl – a fact Glinda the Good seems to overlook (Schneider 23). W. W. Denslow's illustrations for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* depict her as an overweight old woman with three pigtailed and an eye-patch (Baum 21). L. Frank Baum himself specified that she only had one eye, but that it "was as powerful as a telescope," enabling the witch to see what was happening in her kingdom from her castle windows (Baum and Hearn 231). The Wicked Witch also has a hat that gives her all of her powers – which are numerous. The hat follows the motif of clothing being important to the witch (Schneider 21). There is not much on the Wicked Witch as the story focuses on Dorothy and only establishes the Wicked Witch as her enemy.

While Baum’s novel lacks character development for the Wicked Witch, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* gives her entire life story – from accidental birth to accidental death. He establishes her as a real character, a real human being with real emotions and a real drive (other than for a pair of shoes) and the reasons behind her apparent wickedness. The most basal level of establishing her in a better light is giving her a name – Elphaba Thropp of Munchkinland. But Maguire does not stop there, he gives her many names in addition to The Wicked Witch of the West, but also: Elphie to Glinda (262), Auntie Guest to Sarima (285), Auntie Witch to her flying monkeys (273), Fabala to her sister Nessarose and lover Fiyero (150, 307), and Fae to her father (192). Giving Elphaba a name immediately takes away some the evil surrounding her and brings her to an equal playing field with the other witches of the novel



(Walters 139). Maguire himself stated that the reason so few people call Elphaba by her real or full name is because no one truly knows Elphaba, not even herself. From birth she is ostracized because of her skin color (green) and her mother's adulterous affairs. As a child Elphaba is silent, shy, withdrawn, and angry. Her own family is both repulsed by her and scared of her. It is no wonder that young Elphaba's first word is "horrors." Elphaba spends her entire life dealing with other people's reaction to her skin color, and as a result she gets very defensive about it: "Like everyone else you refer to my looks. And you make fun of them" (Maguire 199). Her defensive nature and skin color cause her father to have disdain toward the girl, often pushing her to the side in favor of her sister, Nessarose. Elphaba's self-confidence is not surprisingly low, "I wouldn't mind leaving myself behind if I could, but I don't know the way out" (Maguire 109), all stemming from the lack of parental relationships. Elphaba is a child of two worlds, and her greenness is a key part of that. This is the major thing Elphaba never grasps about herself. She struggles with her oddness, she tries to embrace and emphasize her own uniqueness in her youth (particularly through her pro-Animal quest), and she seems at least somewhat aware of her "special" nature (Kelly 12). Glinda is actually the person to grasp just how special Elphaba is:

Elphaba looked like something between an animal and an Animal, like something more than life but not quite Life. [...] You'd almost call it unrefined, but not in a social sense – more in a sense of nature not having done its full job with Elphaba, not quite having managed to make her enough like herself. (Maguire 78)

Everyone around her knows this weakness, and they exploit it. Madame Morrible and the Wizard use Elphaba's love and affection for Fiyero to bait her into submission (Schneider 24). They also pray on her more maternal instincts in the Animal debate, purposefully showing her Animals and animals that were mistreated by government officials (Burger, "Wicked and

Wonderful”126). At this point, Elphaba’s emotions and liveliness have waned. The Wizard and Madame Morrible get an opening both times to reveal Elphaba as weak, crazed, and somewhat emotional. This is particularly evident in the scenes where Elphaba is tending to a wounded Chistery (her beloved Flying Monkey). Elphaba is so worn thin by this point that when Glinda comes to her to talk about Elphaba’s origins, she simply snaps at her and pushes her away. By the time she starts getting answers about herself and her origins, including the fact that the Wizard may in fact be her father, she is almost too jaded to register them.

Elphaba constantly sees different versions of herself from everyone around her – her father sees her as an embarrassment, her sister sees her as a curse to the family, Madame Morrible sees her as a talent, the Wizard sees her as a means to an end (Rountree 216). It is only through Fiyero’s love that Elphaba is able to see herself as beautiful – in time for him to be taken by Glinda the Good and then transformed into the Scarecrow. Maguire gives Elphaba this identity and then rips it away just as quickly, the second half of the novel results in her getting called “Wicked Witch” or simple “the Witch” constantly, even by Fiyero. Rountree sees Elphaba’s descent into insanity and “evilness” as a direct result of losing Fiyero and her identity at the same time (226). Constantly failing to win any of her battles, and losing the final family she has – Sarima and her tribe eats away at the once self-assured woman. Elphaba is no longer the self assured woman seen throughout the novel, instead she is the little girl who was constantly pushed into lakes and streams (Walters 163).

During Elphaba’s middle age years, she has a purpose, a name, and beliefs that make her human to readers. She is constantly putting her heart on the line and trying to “outrun her appearances” and help others who are downtrodden (Rountree 216). Her humanity is only furthered when nothing she tries ever works in her favor. She fights for Animals, showing a clear

insight into her own mental space in society. “She feels like one of the Animals she so flagrantly represents, she so easily could have been one of the Animals caged and dehumanized” (Kelly 8). Elphaba seemed poised for greatness in government, and was told she would by Madame Morrible and the Wizard himself, but never reached her full potential. In Baum’s novel the Wicked Witch is feared by many; instead Maguire paints her as a woman hated by society. The hatred is rooted deep within their culture, preached by the teacher, the church, and government (Rountree 221) to the extent that Elphaba has to go into hiding. She has become one of the Animals she so desperately fought for and she would spend the rest of her life in her own cage, her castle.

Part of the reason Elphaba has such a rough time is that fate is conspiring against her. Various powerful forces really are working to control her life. The Wizard, Madam Morrible, and Glinda all try to hurt her or diminish her abilities. People around Elphaba tend to recognize that there is something special about her, but Elphaba herself does not. This is crucial, because it is other people who create and define the Wicked Witch of the West (Rountree 229). Elphaba only becomes more wicked because those around her see it as such from the beginning: “Elphaba, on all fours, advanced on the uneven planks of the flooring. She bared her teeth – as if she knew what a dragon was, as if she were pretending – and roared. Her green skin made her more persuasive, as if she were a dragon child” (Maguire 44). In essence, Maguire created two different Elphabas: the way other people understand her and the way she herself deals with the identity. The reputation of the Wicked Witch is established at the very start of the novel: “Of course, to hear them tell it, it is the surviving sister who is the crazy one,” said the Lion. “What a Witch. Psychologically warped; possessed by demons. Insane. Not a pretty picture” (Prologue 4). This comes true later because she has been so cut off from things that her own reputation has

taken on a life of its own – a life largely influenced by rumor and gossip (Walter 159). In many ways, the Witch is a fabricated, exaggerated identity that has been almost arbitrarily tacked on to Elphaba. Yet, Elphaba is the Wicked Witch of the West – or at least there is enough of Elphaba in the Witch to make her identifiable as such. Maguire never truly answers the question about whether or not Elphaba is truly as evil as Baum paints her to be. Elphaba herself asks the question readers are left with: “Does the devil ever struggle to be good again, or if so is he not a devil?” (231).

Maguire’s tale sets the witches of Oz on their heads and makes them very real, very three-dimensional characters that possess both good and evil. Much of the story is darker than Baum’s tale could ever have been. Glinda’s award of the silver slippers to Dorothy is a coldly calculated propaganda, self promoting move designed to help the Wizard crush the Munchkinland rebellion (Hayter-Menzies 22). The Wizard himself is revealed as a tyrannical Satanist who hints at having performed human sacrifice to get to Oz from the Other Land in order to retrieve an earthly Grimmoire, effectively sacrificing his own daughter in the meantime (Kelly 19). Maguire’s *Wicked* shows the true evil side of human nature in an attempt to bring the characters of Baum’s novels into a more realistic, modernist light.

Elphaba rebukes herself as a failure, seeking redemption from her sins even while she vehemently denies that redemption is possible. The evil of this witch, it seems in the end, is in squandering her love on the inanimate and unconscious, while ignoring or rejecting the people that surround her (Boyd 118). It is only in Maguire’s final chapters that she finally sees herself and those around her, which is what makes her death so heartbreaking. Elphaba is not all good, nor did Maguire intend her to be (“The Gregory Maguire Interview”), instead he wanted her to be real. Elphaba is real, if only slightly pathetic in her views of the world. But instead of

celebrating her death, Maguire brings readers to the place where they mourn the death of the beloved character.

If L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* is one of the greatest children's stories ever told, then Gregory Maguire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* is its counterpart for adults. The greatest difference between these two stories is the intended audience. Baum's version is written with a child in mind, and it shows in the way the darker tones of the work Dorothy lives are overlooked (Duncan 67). Maguire's novel goes deeper into the psyche of each woman in the text, even Dorothy. Not much can be said of what Dorothy thinks or feels, aside from a deep desire to get home. Baum shows an Oz that is full of trickery at the hand of the Wicked Witch of the West. *Wicked*, on the other hand, presents a far more tumultuous, multi-dimensional Oz (Burger, "Wicked and Wonderful" 123). Rather than being a villain, the Wicked Witch is a passionate, talented young sorceress named Elphaba who becomes a civil rights leader. The Wizard is a ruthless dictator, slowly taking away the rights of all the talking animals in Oz. Though she has her faults, Elphaba is sympathetic and heroic, a far cry from her presentation in *The Wizard of Oz*. While *The Wizard of Oz* is a story of the comforts of home, the oppression faced in small country towns, and the politics of 1890s America, *Wicked* hits much closer to home with its themes of beauty, racism, acceptance, good and evil, and friendship (Kelly 18). Gregory Maguire fashioned *Wicked* as a new story for a newer, modern generation that is not so concerned with the "fairytale" offered by last century's *The Wizard of Oz*.

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