Evil in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked*

Ashley Johnson

Honors Project

Supervisor: Dr. Troy White

Committee Members: Dr. Jeanna White and Elizabeth Ponder

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Chapter One: Introduction

Part I: Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time… Like a familiar friend, these four simple words welcome us into a world most of us know well—a world alive with fulfilled dreams and happy endings. We encounter these words as children, and then come to appreciate them as adults. Like many children, my memories of fairy tales come from my parents' bedtime readings of "The Princess and the Pea" and *Peter Pan*. My most intense memories, however, are of my brother and I snuggled on our worn sofa watching the magic of Walt Disney. I vividly remember squirming with excitement as the opening melody for *Cinderella* began to play, and then wrinkling my nose in disgust when Lady Tremaine and her selfish daughters were introduced. Like many children, I held my breath when the evil stepmother locked poor Cinderella in the attic, and then sighed with relief as Cinderella was rescued and allowed to try on the sparkling glass slipper. From then on, those four simple words, *once upon a time*, were inscribed in my memory as a channel to a world of "happily ever afters" and true love, where evil is always vanquished.

Thanks to the beautiful stories from Walt Disney and other rewrites of the Grimms' stories, fairy tales pervaded the popular culture of the twentieth century. Fairy tales as today's audiences usually hear them are based on nineteenth-century constructions by those like the Brothers Grimm in their stories for children. These fairy tales are familiar to most audiences and often follow a similar outline. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes says that traditional, or *classical*, fairy tales hold a "set pattern of ideas and images that reinforce a traditional way of seeing, believing, and behaving," and, furthermore, in these set patterns "a traditional and socially conservative world view is confirmed" (9). Traditional fairy

tales of the nineteenth-century, such as the Grimm's "Aschenputtel" ("Cinderella") attempts to preserve a conservative view of morality. In these tales, characters are morally black and white. Fairy tale value systems that present and preserve an easily-identifiable evil engage audiences because they present comfortable, accepted views of evil. In a discussion of culture's reaction to evil, James Bachman, Peter Senkbeil, and Kerri Thompson say, "Many expressions in popular culture work from some sort of picture of a morally ordered universe. In this approach good and evil can be seen and understood. Evil should be punished; good should be rewarded…" (412-413). Pop culture constructions, including fairy tales, tend toward an easily-identifiable system of good and evil, based upon the traditional fairy tale's conservative view.

The clear-cut morality of nineteenth-century fairy tales allows readers to escape reality into a fairyland where they can easily label people and actions. Regarding fairy tales as escapism, author Nalo Hopkinson says, "We imagine what we want from the world, then we try to find a way to make it happen. Escapism can be the first step to creating a new reality, whether it's a personal change or a larger change in the world" (Bacchilega 39). Hopkinson is saying that through the escapism of fairy tales, audiences can make the world feel different while reading a text. If a reader desires a simplified evil, rather than the complexities of reality, he or she may escape into a traditional fairy tale. Fairy tales allow us to escape to an alternate reality that we find comfortable, and in fairy tales, that reality may be the conservative reality where evil is easy to identify, and, therefore, more easy to engage.

Additionally, these fairy stories are engaging to a wide audience because the elements remained consistent from story to story. Traditional fairy tales follow a standard—an outline that allows readers to know what to expect. Though the hero may go through heartache, and the villain seems as if he or she will triumph, readers engage in the story because they know,

according to the traditional clear-cut construction, the hero will win in the end. This holds true almost every time for traditional nineteenth-century fairy tales because they tend to teach a clear distinction between good and evil. These set conclusions, along with the clear-cut definition of evil within the tales, engage readers. Surprisingly, a system of morality that one can follow like a roadmap remains interesting to readers. Though readers know what will happen, they choose to engage over and over with traditional fairy stories.

Once, as my brother and I watched Cinderella ride away with her prince, my brother looked at me with a grin of exultation and said, "Isn't it great that the bad lady wasn't happy? Hurray!" As a little girl, I cheered along with him. Today, however, his reaction strikes me profoundly. We hope for the traditional happy endings in the stories, but then put limitations on who can experience these endings. As an adult, sometimes I can engage with the "bad guy"; so why do we support these characters being given an unhappy ending? Traditional fairy tales equate evil with a predestined unhappiness. Evil characters have no hope for a happy ending because these fairy tale narratives simplify the notions of good and evil, in part by associating them with the certain conclusion.

Some stories of the twentieth century, however, undermine the conservatism of traditional fairy tales by asking readers to view an accepted evil character as good, in opposition to the traditional outline. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Zipes suggest that progressive fairy tale authors "question conformity to the dominant civilizing process of a society" (xi). This dominant civilizing process includes the beliefs—what is accepted as good or evil—within a society. Citizens of a society tend to follow the established beliefs without questioning them. However, a society's dominant civilizing process may actually need to be examined—the system may or may not present an idea of good and evil that is just. Progressive fairy tale authors may

question the morality of conforming to a traditional, clear-cut understanding of evil. One way that these authors challenge the traditional idea of evil is by making the wicked characters not so wicked. In undermining the conservative view of evil, authors revise the classical fairy tale plot structure, along with their moral systems and endings. In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Zipes states that "the purpose of producing a revised fairy tale is to create something new that incorporates the critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to changed demands and tastes of audiences. As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader's views of traditional patterns, images, and codes" (9). Because society and culture change, people exist in a constant state of change, gradually moving from one value system to the next and back again. Thus, value systems and presentations of ideals constantly change, and the most striking way to present this change is by adjusting the moral systems of well-known fairy tales.

In the progressive twentieth-century tales, audiences have sometimes been invited to relate to the villain and hope for them to be good and even to have a happy ending. Authors offer a more complex value system, presenting traditionally evil characters as sympathetic and even valiant. In more progressive twentieth-century tales, "good guys" and bad guys" are brought into question, so the ideas of good and evil may become ironic—they might be mere labels that a wider view could reverse. The villain might be better than we always categorized him or her to be—the villain could even be good. Examples of this kind of re-categorizing can be found in books such as Jon Scieszka's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1989) and Daphne Skinner's series of children's books entitled *My Side of the Story* (2005), which focuses on Disney villains such as Snow White's evil queen. Scieszka's and Skinner's stories explain that the traditional villains were simply misunderstood, and did not intend to harm the protagonists,

presenting traditionally evil characters with good traits. This element disrupts readers'

engagement with the traditional fairy tale outline—audiences no longer know what to expect, so

they must find new ways to engage with the story. Thus, readers may choose to relate to the

villain and engage with their unique perspective—a new type of engagement. Unlike the comfort

of a traditional fairy tale ending, this ending may at first be uncomfortable for audiences. They

may not know how to react to or engage with the reimagined characters. The discomforting

feeling may eventually become comfortable in its own way as audiences learn the newer outline

for fairy tales, and become familiar with the new "roadmap." The uncomfortable element of

liking a villain may engage readers more in its own way.

Readers of more progressive twentieth-century fairy tales do continue to engage in fairy

stories, although the presentation of evil within them sometimes differs from the traditional

outline. The villains in these twentieth-century tales become engaging to audiences because

authors present new layers to the villains. Villains become relatable because they have a depth of

personality that encourages audiences to engage with and attempt to understand the villains'

unique point of view. The new point of view asks readers to sympathize with the "villain." In

sympathizing with villains, readers engage not with an accepted system of morality, but with the

presentation of a flipped system in which characters are different than expected. We know the

original stories and characters, so they color our readings of the progressive twentieth-century

retellings: we are surprised and often pleased when the characters differ from their norm.

Furthermore, not only are these traditionally evil characters created to be sympathetic, but

they are sometimes presented as created and then condemned by an even guiltier system, that

system being the conservative protector of a dominant value system. Evil, then, is presented as

more systemic than individual. In these tales, the powerful use the value system to maintain

power, not because the system itself is good, but because it allows them to conserve their dominance. Thus, in this context, being "conservative" means trying to maintain an unjust value system, unlike in traditional nineteenth-century tales, where the conservatism attempted to keep a system of morality—a set idea of what was good and what was evil.

The two types of fairy tales—traditional and progressive—may engage readers differently because each way teaches a different view of evil. Jane Kelley notes that "many literary critics and educators believe traditional literature (myths, legends, fables, folktales, and fairy tales) aimed at children communicates a universal set of values and beliefs" (32). Each kind of fairy tale attempts to teach the values specific to the society of the time. Nineteenth-century conservative fairy stories tend to teach by distinguishing between each clear-cut group (good guys and bad guys) and then showing that we should prefer to be on the good side. Most progressive twentieth-century fairy tales teach by muddying the distinction of the first type; they do not present a clearly good or bad person, but a good or bad system. This second type suggests that we should be careful in our preference for good and evil because the distinction is often not clear. Ruth Bottigheimer writes that, "Bruno Bettelheim implies that as children's psyches develop, their changing psychological needs result in their projecting complementarily constructed fairy tale plots to provide solace for and understanding of their own young lives and experiences" (3). Thus, the changing lessons in fairy tales may be a response to the changes children experience as they grow and as their own society changes. Children's own understanding of their world may have changed from a view that evil is clear-cut to a view that evil is be complicated.

Furthermore, the different teachings may have been influenced by the changing educational system in America. In the early 1900s, American education systems began to

subscribe to a system that wanted to reestablish traditional morals within children. As noted in *School: The Story of American Public Education*, educators were interested in teaching and learning that was based upon children's experiences (76-77). John Dewey, a prominent education theorist of the era, believed that schools were a place to gain knowledge as well as gain life experiences, placing emphasis upon children's contexts to learn. Dewey caused "many educators to pay greater attention to the interests and needs of the child than in the past. Education, at least in prominent theory, was becoming more child-centered and activity based" (Leming 21). This educational system wanted to teach the difference between good and bad to children. Thus, the nineteenth-century story's tendency to create clear distinctions may have been a response to the new education system.

Around the 1950s, this system began to disappear from schools as content became more important than context to educators. Schools began to focus more on academic improvement than on teaching morality. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, which resonated throughout America, completely changing how society viewed education. Educators began to increase academic rigor and implemented testing standards as many "reform strategies aimed at increasing performance in schooling" gained popularity (Mehta 21). This change in the education system may have influenced progressive twentieth-century retellings; the stories no longer tended to teach a clear moral, but highlighted the complication of evil instead.

Thus, I suggest that later twentieth-century fairy tales, specifically retellings, have introduced a new way of considering morality and a new presentation of traditionally wicked characters. These stories challenge the traditional understanding of those evil characters and complicate evil within their narratives. The familiar phrase *once upon a time* may not offer the

audience stories with predetermined happing endings and obvious villains, but rather they teach audiences that evil is not simple. Two texts that effectively exhibit this complication of the concept of evil are L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and Gregory Maguire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1995).

These two texts demonstrate the morality and endings of both traditional and progressive fairy tales. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* presents a narrative that adheres to a conservative view of evil as clear-cut, with the traditional fairy tale conclusion—evil is vanquished in the end. Maguire's *Wicked* adheres to the more progressive idea that evil is complicated, and the ending reflects that idea while maintaining the traditional fairy tale's conclusion—evil is vanquished, but the Wicked Witch's death seems tragic rather than deserved. Although the texts tend to fit in the two categories—traditional and progressive—some elements of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* complicate the traditional fairy tale system to make it a progressive tale, and some elements of *Wicked* adhere to the qualities of a traditional fairy tale. In both texts, audiences are asked to participate in the traditional fairy tale engagement they are familiar with, where they can use escapism to view a world where evil seems "clear-cut." In *Wicked*, audiences are also asked to participate in a more progressive fairy tale engagement along with the traditional patterns of engagement. The progressive engagement uses realism to ask audiences to relate to the villain and view evil as complicated, which is unfamiliar. Readers of progressive tales, however, tend to engage with the villain, although engaging with him or her may be uncomfortable at first. Authors and audiences may prefer the progressive fairy tale engagement because society has changed. In addition to the introduction of postmodernism, people began to experience developing psyches and changes in education that lead to a more progressive view of the world. While *Wicked* mainly adheres to the progressive system, it does

present some traditional elements; similarly, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* adheres to some elements of progressivity, implying that Baum's tale is ambiguous and not as completely simple as some traditional fairy tales. Both tales use the elements of traditional and progressive fairy tales to present different systems of evil.

In order to explore the constructions of evil, I will first define the evil of fiction, and then I will examine evil in the character of Wicked Witch of the West, a character featured in both *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked.* In doing this, I will acknowledge that both texts were innovative in their times. Baum's tale has also been read by historians and audiences as a political allegory, or with a populist connotation, as we see in the publication of Henry Littlefield's "*The Wizard of Oz*: Parable on Populism" and Ranjit S. Dighe's *The Historian's Wizard of Oz: Reading L. Frank Baum's Classic as a Political and Monetary Allegory.* Maguire's *Wicked* has been studied with political connotations as well, such as in Christopher Roman's "The Wicked Witch of the West: Terrorist? Rewriting Evil in Gregory Maguire's *Wicked.*" *Wicked* has also been studied as a retelling with a feminist agenda in articles such as "*Wicked* Feminism" by Pam R. Sailors and "Wicked? It's Not Easy Being Green" by Kevin Durand. I, however, would like to focus specifically on the systems of evil within the texts, and will choose to integrate these studies to help me explore the systems.

Chapter One: Introduction

Part II: Defining Evil

Some moral systems contain a myth of evil that presents evil as clear-cut and easy to identify. This myth is found in fiction as well. Scholars Jacob Edwards and Brian Klosa suggest, "The overall story, the characters, and the lessons that can be derived from the myth of evil offer a vocabulary to simplify and comprehend the world around us" (35). The myth of evil helps simplify our lives and place events and actions into fixed categories. The myth of evil in fiction gives readers and audiences an outline by which to judge the fiction's reality. Just as we use outlines to organize our ideas and we use roadmaps to establish our intended routes, we use stories to understand our world; with a seemingly universal myth of evil, we all have a common foundation for judging actions. If the myth of evil is common to most traditional fairy tales, then all evil actions and motives can be judged by the same standard. Thus, an accepted definition of evil allows readers to agree on what is evil in literature, and consequently, in reality. This means that when audiences engage with fairy tales, they expect the proposed system of evil within the tale to fit within their accepted definition of evil.

Edwards and Klosa state that "fantasy narratives often have clear dichotomies of good and evil, light and dark, black and white, right and wrong" (33). The clear dichotomies help create the myth that evil is simple, and this myth functions well in fairy tales because it creates a world that is easy to understand. To effectively explore both traditional concepts of evil and the alternatives, we must understand that evil can be considered in many different, and at times complicated, ways. When determining what is meant by the term *evil*, one must take into account the vast quantity of denotations and connotations the word suggests. The study of evil is difficult

because it is challenging to determine one definition for the word. Not only are there numerous accepted definitions for the word *evil*, but there are a vast number of connotations for the word as well. Connotations may be vast because the connotative definitions for the word are based upon value systems that deal with morality, and these value systems are subjective because human beings, who are inherently subjective, create them. These value systems present a wide, often one-sided view of controversial ideas such as evil. Thus, attempts to define the term prove to be difficult.

Nonetheless, many value systems within fiction define evil as a fixed idea—that is, certain characters and their actions are fixed as evil and certain characters and their actions are fixed as good. This is true of traditional fairy tales. As discussed earlier, conservative nineteenth-century tales teach by distinguishing between each clear-cut group of good and evil. Thus, characters within fairy stories often fall into fixed categories. These fixed categories, or codes, are presented in anticipation of audiences' acceptance of a fixed definition of evil. Audiences follow patterns and expect stories to follow patterns as well, so audiences tend to anticipate for characteristics coded as evil to lead to a character that is evil. For example, within fairy tales, such as in the 1857 version of Grimm's "Aschenputtel" ("Cinderella"), stepmothers display traits such as being overbearing, mean, and oppressive. Then, the reader anticipates that the stepmother is evil because her coding fits the evil pattern. Although readers know that this is not true of all stepmothers in reality, the fixed category remains intact for readers because of the accepted fixed definition of evil presented in conservative nineteenth-century fairy tales.

The fixed definition of evil may be based upon a widely accepted definition of *evil* as "profoundly immoral and malevolent" (*The Oxford English Dictionary*). Although "immoral" is an ambiguous and subjective term, it is accepted by most communities to describe evil because

evil is based upon a widely accepted foundational system of morality, which is subjective in itself. Even though the words to define evil are ambiguous, they overlap at the profound level. The words are still shared among definitions because the definition is subjective and can be used by different value systems. Value systems are created by societies, which are created by human beings. Humans are inherently subjective, so when these systems are imposed upon fairy tales, they could create an ambiguity in understanding what evil is. The definition, although complicated, represents the fixed evil found within traditional fairy tales. In traditional fairy tales, the value systems presented often support the accepted fixed definition of evil as profoundly immoral, or so evil that the actions fall beyond the comprehension of the value system and its subscribers. Fairy tales deal with "profound" immorality and not the "lesser" immorality that would cause questioning of value systems in general. In these cases, "profoundly immoral" means that, within the traditional fairy tales, these villains are so evil that most value systems would rate them as solidly evil. Thus, when wicked witches and malicious stepmothers commit acts that are beyond comprehension—profoundly wrong—readers find it difficult to sympathize with the characters. These profoundly immoral characters support the conservative nineteenth-century goal to teach audiences to choose the "good" side.

Some examples include the monstrous dragon that destroys whole villages because of an inexplicable impulse to destroy, or the immoral king who oppresses his subjects merely because he has the power to do so. Baum's Wicked Witch of the West fits this definition as well: she oppresses citizens of the Land of Oz simply because that is her role. These examples are common within fairy tales. The actions of characters like monsters and oppressive kings can be interpreted as profoundly immoral and selfish—readers often cannot identify a reasonable motive for their actions; the only visible motive seems to be a desire for pain or destruction.

Looking at these examples, we can conclude that according to an accepted dictionary definition, evil has been traditionally interpreted within fiction as wickedness for its own end. This kind of wickedness is easy to see: it is blatant and uncompromising. This is an evil for no purpose, not for the self or for others. Evil characters such as these support the traditional fairy tale morality which states that only in good can a person benefit themselves and others. Edwards and Klosa address this idea, maintaining that:

> Within many fantasy story arcs there is a clear polarity between good and evil. There is no compromise. There is no neutrality. Villains are portrayed as having vast and cunning powers, where they use that power for their own wicked ends. Many of these evil characters are selfish, have no concern for others, and will use any means necessary to achieve their goals. (35)

Thus, in many fairy tales, evil is easy to see, and it stems from a selfish desire and a lack of empathy—absolute selfishness. Such selfishness is so extreme that the reader does not find it at all relatable, and thus it is not perceived as a genuine motivation. Such evil is embodied in the villains of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fairy tales, such as the evil stepmother in *Cinderella* and the "Big Bad Wolf" in *The Three Little Pigs*.

In more progressive twentieth-century century retellings, such as in Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods*, authors give all of the characters, even villains, unique stories explaining why they are the way they are. These stories may attempt to teach readers that they should be careful when coding characters as good or evil because good and evil are complicated concepts. Edwards and Klosa note that, "Modern fantasy texts offer greater complexity as to what constitutes evil… the clear-cut evil character of the myths of old are being recast into more composite and complicated characters of the present. In turn, this added complexity redefines the

story arcs of modern fantasy texts" (33). The story arc is redefined because the character is redefined, or de-coded. Perhaps the character is allowed to choose to do what is right or wrong. Because of this choice, when the villain chooses evil, the audience might sympathize with him or her. Audiences might understand why the villain chose to abandon his or her foundational morals to commit evil acts because they see the character's life as complex. We all experience moments of selfishness, and have dealt with pain and difficulty, just as these villains do. Thus, retellings create a sense of understanding for the villain and give them a human element audiences can identify and engage with, creating a new character that is not totally to be blamed.

Furthermore, the evil of the villains might be described as more systematic than individual, imposed, at least in part, by a social value and power system; thus, their evil is in part external, and the characters are freed from the traditional view of villains as inherently evil. A value and power system might then not only push the villain toward evil, but simultaneously inscribe or code that villain as evil. Progressive fairy tales suggest this possibility. The villain is thus revealed, at least in part, to be a victim, and in that role becomes relatable and engaging.

Even though the evil is imposed onto characters through a system, the characters still have a choice, though the system limits the choices. In more progressive twentieth-century fairy tales where evil is complicated, the system is shown to be only reducing the villain's choices, rather than as in the traditional fairy tales where a villain's personality and choices are reduced to nothing. Since the villain is forced to those choices by a larger system of evil, rather than an inherent desire to cause destruction, the villain's choice becomes relatable: perhaps because audiences can relate to a world where larger systems make choices for people in those systems.

Within these retellings, the villain does normally choose to be evil, and even though the characters have a reason for their actions, they still lose in the end. Examples of this type of

retelling include Gregory Maguire's *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* (1999) and Disney's *Maleficent* (2014).

So, why are the fairy tales retold? Why are new villains created? Our postmodern society might encourage audiences to resist and recast traditionally evil characters. Nicol states that "'[P]ostmodernism' has become more or less established in critical discourse as a term that refers to a shift in what it means to be a subject in late twentieth-century society and to designate a related attitude of self-reflexivity or ironic knowingness that permeates our culture as a result" (2). The essence of postmodernity is found in its inquiry, and postmodern thinkers engage with stories by asking about everything, attempting to decide if established norms should still be accepted today. Scholar Jane Flax notes, "Postmodern philosophers seek to throw into radical doubt beliefs still *prevalent* in (especially American) culture but derived from the Enlightenment" (624). Postmodern thinkers often use inquiry to reshape traditional concepts of spirituality, morality, and truth. For instance, it asks what the traditional concept of evil is, and then reevaluates and redefines the concept. Therefore, fairy tales written within this frame of thinking may complicate ideas of evil by removing the curtain from the traditional fairy tale, showing a backstory or how a villain's choices are reduced by a system. Society's apparent shift to postmodern thinking may lead to an interpretation of evil as systematic, rather than individual, and that evil is not easily identifiable. Thus, postmodern thinking may urge readers to question why a character has been coded as evil. Fairy tales written under a society influenced by postmodern thinking may engage readers by asking audiences to acknowledge a system of values within stories that motivates characters' actions, just as societal systems (such as postmodernism) motivate decisions in reality.

Society influenced the definition of evil in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century fairy tales. Society changes often, so it becomes difficult to firmly define evil. Though subjective, the definition of evil as "profoundly malevolent" seems to be an accepted definition throughout American society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and evil within fairy tales reflects that definition. The morality of these fairy tales is based on the myth that evil is simple. These fairy tales teach that because evil is clear-cut, we should and can easily choose to be on the side of "good." Progressive twentieth-century retellings complicate that definition, perhaps due to postmodern influences within the society. These progressive twentieth-century fairy tales reflect a society that understands the restrictions of dominant value systems. Readers and authors understand that there is a dominant system that can sometimes be restricting, such as the traditional system that categorizes evil as simple. In light of that understanding, audiences are open to understanding and engaging with traditional villains.

In contrast with the dictionary definition of evil as "profoundly immoral and malevolent," I will define evil according to a character's choice made within his or her society's value system or power system. Through approaching evil this way, rather than strictly as "profoundly evil or malevolent," I can better analyze the texts to understand how the systems work to code characters as evil. I will define choice as an action, so I will examine the character's actions by investigating the possibilities available to the character. When exploring evil within *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked*, I will pay attention to the dominant value system within the texts. Narrators often establish a specific value system that determines what is considered good or bad. This value system includes the arrangement of the society within the text—who holds power and what the power-holders determine as valuable (good or evil). Thus, each narrative may have its own moral system, determining what the narrator, and in turn, the audience, will

perceive—at least initially—as good and bad. A narrative's intrinsic value system may differ from the norms of society; thus narrators will need to present and explain the definitions of good and evil to audiences. I will consider whether the dominant value systems influence the Wicked Witch's choice by reducing her available possibilities to choose good. The dominant value system may even paint the witch as inherently evil. The choices the Wicked Witch makes, in answer to the systematic value system, will determine whether she will be coded as good or evil. This approach to exploring evil will help me to study a retelling that seems to move from a traditional fairy tale, with traditional morality, to a progressive fairy tale with progressive morality.

First, I will examine the possibilities offered to the Wicked Witch: all the conceivable choices she could hypothetically make. After I determine what the possibilities are, I can pinpoint the specific choice the witch makes within those possibilities and give an analysis of that choice. Then, based upon the value system offered in the narrative, I can determine whether or not and why her actions might be considered evil.

In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked,* Baum and Maguire present similar tales but with a noticeable difference in their depiction of evil. Baum's fairy tale presents evil as a nature, where the choice seems to be fundamental to the personality of the character. Essentially, the characters coded as evil are presented with a choiceless choice—they are bad because that is how the narrator (and the system) has labeled them. Within the story, the Wicked Witches are not given many chances to be good. Choice is not an issue for them—they are simply presented as bad. The possibilities available, therefore, are limited. In *Wicked,* however, Maguire presents evil more as an action: a choice. This choice, however, is also presented according to a system—a system governed by the Wizard of Oz—and the witch's choices are influenced by the system.

The characters, specifically the Wicked Witch, have an opportunity to choose whether they will follow the path of good or evil. The characters in Maguire's narrative are open to many more possibilities. The availability of more possibilities to Maguire's characters than Baum's hinges upon the presentation of evil—Maguire's as an active choice and Baum's as passive. Both stories, however, do offer possibilities to the witch, and both stories present a value system imposed upon the witch by the Wizard of Oz. Therefore, although the stories differ in their presentations of evil, they both offer similar features that lead the Wicked Witch to be coded as evil.

The different approaches to evil (active and passive) within the narratives create two separate systematic value systems for readers to understand and engage with. The number and kind of choices presented by the value systems change the way we understand evil within the narratives. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the choices and hypothetical possibilities allowed for the characters seem to be simplified, due to the myth of evil and the fixed codes that categorize the characters, so we understand evil as simple. These fixed codes categorize characters as either wholly good or wholly evil. In *Wicked*, the possibilities and choices offered to the characters seem more realistic and less clear-cut, so we understand evil as complicated. Here, wickedness is less dependent upon intrinsic nature and more upon the value system presented by Oz and the choices made in reaction to that value system. In *Wicked*, coding is still visible, but not easily seen until the end of the novel when Elphaba is named the Wicked Witch, coding her as evil (though readers familiar with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* will anticipate this coding). Thus, due to the depth of Elphaba's character, it would make sense for Maguire's narrative to offer more possibilities to her and other characters. These passive and active approaches to evil help readers understand evil within the texts.

In Baum's narrative, evil falls into the familiar clear-cut evil of traditional nineteenth-century tales. In Maguire's tale, evil is attributed more to the dominant system's values than a clear-cut evil character. The two texts, however, both follow the accepted definition of evil as profoundly immoral, although reactions to the "evil" characters within the texts differ. The texts use traditional ideas of fixed evil and coding to define evil as profoundly immoral. *Wicked*, however, uses the code by breaking it, to de-code and develop the characters to teach that evil is complicated. Maguire's tendency to free the characters from traditional codes may be in conjunction with the postmodern influence under which he was writing. Although *Wicked* breaks the codes, the text still adheres to an idea of evil as extreme selfishness, just as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* does. The differing approaches to evil within *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked* determine how I will approach the texts to define and compare evil within them. The simplistic myth of evil, as well as the coding of specific characters may contribute to a difficulty in defining evil. Furthermore, evil is presented as complex within progressive twentieth-century retellings; thus readers can infer that authors resist the traditional myth of evil as simple. I will approach evil within the narratives by examining the differing representations of the Wicked Witch and will look at how and why the character may be considered evil. Also, I will show many ways which *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* changes or even complicates the traditional fairy tale system, and how *Wicked*, though a progressive fairy tale, maintains certain traditional elements from both *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and the traditional fairy tale.

Chapter Two: Evil in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

"Follow the yellow brick road." This famous line from MGM's film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) denotes a clear path to a happy ending. While nowhere in Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* does this exact phrase appear, there are some important aspects of Baum's tale that embody the values of that famous line. The command to follow the road "paved with yellow brick" (Baum 15) is beloved by many, and, with excitement and nostalgia, brings to mind ideas of hope. This familiar phrase helps audiences to remember the grand idea that good always triumphs over evil in the end, and there is hope for a happy ending, even when lost in a foreign land.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is an exemplary American fairy tale that authors and filmmakers have been recreating since L. Frank Baum published the story in 1900. The tale presents themes of hope, courage, adventure, and home that are relatable to audiences even today. Baum's fairyland is not only a beacon of hope for many but was also a new approach to fairy tales—it is a form of retelling. In the introduction to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* Baum explains:

> The old time fairy tale, having served for generations, may now be classed as "historical" in the children's library; for the time has come for a series of newer "wonder tales" in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and blood-curdling incidents devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident. Having this thought in mind, the story of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" was written

solely to please children of today. It aspires to being a modernized fairy tale, in which the

wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out.

Baum was essentially saying that he had attempted to uncomplicate fairy tales. He did not desire

to provide stereotypes or morals, only entertainment. In a way, he was sanitizing fairy tales just

as the Grimm Brothers had done. Because of Baum's innovative choice to leave out the

heartaches and nightmares, the story has been well received as a modern fairy tale just as Baum

desired it would be.

Baum's new wonder tale may have been popular because he was removing morality to

adhere to a new educational style. In this new educational system, schools, rather than religion

and fairy tales, educated children about morality. The narrative, however, did offer slight moral

themes; perhaps because in Baum's attempts to avoid morality, he could not avoid the traditional

fairy tale moral that good always triumphs over evil. It seems that Baum had to include instances

of morality to keep the plot of his narrative going, though those instances are few, and any overt

morality in the narrative is light-hearted. It is possible that Baum may not have been able to

avoid the traditional fairy tale teaching, because to entertain, one needs value, and value requires

morality. Furthermore, Baum states that he wants to entertain and please children; to accomplish

that, he would have had to include a moral for the story to be valuable. Examples include the

stereotype of the little girl as good and the morals of the story that home is the best place and

good is more powerful than evil. Even though morals are visible in Baum's narrative, the morals

are regarded with a light tone. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Baum's attempts to avoid

morality in conjunction with the new educational system created a story in which all major

incidents are regarded as light-hearted. This light-heartedness moves the plot along, so that

readers do not dwell too long on why the Wicked Witch is wicked or why the Wizard is a liar.

Baum's light-hearted approach to the events in the tale contributes to an understanding of evil as clear-cut and mainly unquestioned within the narrative.

Within Baum's original narrative it is seemingly easy for audiences to determine whom to cheer for. The first lesson readers get about evil is through the speech of the Good Witch of the North after Dorothy falls into Oz. She tells Dorothy, "We are so grateful to you for having killed the Wicked Witch of the East, and for setting our people free from bondage" (*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* 9). So our first lesson is that bondage is evil and freedom is good, implying that those who inflict bondage are evil, while those who liberate are good. Although Dorothy receives praise, her reaction to being called a killer shows her own value system within the text—murderers are bad. Dorothy's immediate denouncement of herself as killer of the witch suggests that she does not want to be labeled as such because then she would be evil. This exchange between Dorothy and the Good Witch of the North follows as: "'You are very kind; but there must be some mistake. I have not killed anything.' 'Your house did anyway,' replied the little old woman, with a laugh, 'and that is the same thing'" (9). Thus, Dorothy gets the virtue of killing without the possible guilt or sense of wrongdoing. Later, when Dorothy meets with the Wizard and he requests that she kill the Wicked Witch of the West, Dorothy begins to weep, and says, "'I never killed anything, willingly" (90). We learn that the Wizard desires for Dorothy to kill the witch because she is "tremendously Wicked" (90) and is oppressing some of the land's citizens. Within the value system of Oz, it seems as if murdering is okay as long as the killing leads to freedom for the population. This value system is foreign to Dorothy, and probably to readers, but the systematic values presented by the Wizard (the leader of the system) partially determine codes within Oz, so his values become important because they will help determine whether the Wicked Witch is good or evil. This system deems the Wicked Witch as evil and

Dorothy and the Wizard as good early in the narrative, making it easy for readers to categorize the characters.

Readers begin to see this system in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* when we learn that "The Great Wizard does not like to see anyone, and he usually has his own way" (Baum 45). The Wizard is obviously in control of the land. When Dorothy and her companions prepare to travel into the Emerald City, they are told, "He is powerful and terrible, and if you come on an idle or foolish errand to bother the wise reflections of the Great Wizard, he might be angry and destroy you all in an instant…he rules the Emerald City wisely and well. But to those who are not honest, or who approach him from curiosity, he is most terrible, and few have ever dared to ask to see his face" (46). The Wizard has created a society where he is respected and feared above all. In this god-like state, he creates the rules—he determines what is good and evil, for he is good, even though he is a liar and a swindler (an ambiguity I will discuss later), and the Wicked Witches are evil because they frighten him.

The Wizard's system is indeed powerful, so it is easy to see how the narrative could be interpreted with political connotations. Scholar Ranjit Dighe notes that Hugh Rockoff, in "The 'Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory," suggests that "the Wizard is Mark Hanna, the Republican Committee chairman and businessman who was widely perceived as the man pulling the strings behind McKinley," while suggesting that the Wicked Witch of the West is President McKinley (3-4). Thus, according to Rockoff's interpretation, the Wizard is "pulling the strings" behind the scenes with his illusions, and coding the Witch as evil while doing so. Just as society in the late 1800s influenced perceptions of evil in reality and, consequently in fiction, society influences perceptions of evil in Baum's narrative. We can infer that Rockoff's political interpretation can be used to support an idea of the Wizard's dominant system coding the

Wicked Witch as evil because his illusion of power and good was accepted as just. Furthermore, the Wizard has not only created a society where he rules, but an imaginary world for the citizens of the Emerald City to live in—a world deceptively tinted green. By use of illusion, the Wizard's value system helps code the characters as good and evil.

Audiences can also easily identify characters as good or evil in Baum's narrative through the characters' names. The names of the characters complement the value system that determines good and evil within the story—characters are actually named good and wicked, "The Wicked Witch of the East" and "Good Witch Glinda." One name that poses problems to this interpretation, however, is the Wizard's name: "Oz, the Great and Terrible" (*The Wonderful Wizard* 133). The Wizard is also called "little man" and "old humbug." His changing titles create an ambiguity for the character. Is he good or bad? Oz's titles generate an interesting depth in the story and allow readers room to decide for themselves whether he is good or evil. The narrator's choice to include the titles suggest that names are meaningful, so there is no mistaking that the Good Witches of the North and South must be decent, while the Wicked Witches of the East and West must be evil. Names generally code characters within narratives, but Oz becomes the exception in Baum's tale. His coding is confusing, but in the end, once stripped of the "Great and Terrible" and reduced to a humbug, the narrative's value system codes the Wizard as good— though with some remaining ambiguity. Furthermore, because of the story's light tone, the issue of his morality is never seriously addressed.

The light morality of Baum's story seems aligned with the relatable character of Dorothy (and her comrades): what frees her is good, what restricts her is bad. Thus, the Wizard is an obstacle for a time (but he gets to live and be sorry), while the Witch who is an obstacle is destroyed. Thus, in the conflict between Dorothy's value system and the Wizard's value system

of killing, the reader is inclined to side with Dorothy. However, the Wizard never forces Dorothy

to kill, and the killing is an accident, so the conflict doesn't matter as much. Readers may begin

to accept the Wizard's system and be okay with the Wicked Witch's death, because, according to

the Wizard's value system, those that oppress should be destroyed.

Thus, because the myth of evil prevails in the story, readers often view the witch as bad

and Dorothy as good, forgetting that there is another character who needs examining. Readers

overlook the Wizard of Oz—overlook his obvious deficiencies—to label him as a good guy. The

myth of evil states that evil is simple, so the Wizard poses a confusing problem to the myth of

evil—his role within the narrative is not simple, so he must be good. However, Dorothy

discovers that the Wizard is a fraud—he admits it—and readers get a glimpse of him as a coward

and an inept old man (not very "good" qualities). When Dorothy returns to gain her promised

reward from the Wizard, the Wizard tells her, "I have been making believe…I am just a common

man" (Baum 133). Dorothy and her companions learn that the Wizard has fooled them.

Nevertheless, readers label him as good: he helps Dorothy after all, doesn't he? Perhaps, the

Wizard is coded as good because readers develop pity for him. When the Scarecrow tells the

Wizard he should be ashamed for being "such as humbug" the Wizard sorrowfully replies, "I

am—I certainly am" (Baum 136). Furthermore, when the Wizard answers the previous question,

he is referred to as "the little man" rather than Oz the Great, which could lead to an audience's

acceptance of him as pitiful. He finally refers to himself as an "old humbug," yet is beloved by

many as a good character, and if not beloved, then at least not coded evil as the Wicked Witch is.

He is indeed beloved by the characters of the novel; although he is unable to help Dorothy home,

"the people [of Oz] remembered him lovingly, and said to one another, 'Oz was always our

friend. When he was here he built for us this beautiful Emerald City, and now he is gone he has

left the wise Scarecrow to rule over us'" (152). Perhaps, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz is often coded into the same category as good guys because he does try to make a way home for Dorothy; but he actually fails in that endeavor as well and the Good Witch Glinda must help Dorothy return home. Thus, the Wizard is normally categorized as good for those reasons, but closer inspection reveals difficulties—the Wizard is a deceitful, so readers may choose to resist the other characters' assertions that the Wizard is good. The narrative, however, presents him as good despite all of this.

This presents an interesting duality within the story. The Wizard is powerful in his ability to present illusions, causing an ironic picture of seeming and reality; for example, the beautiful Emerald City is an illusion—it is only seen as green because the citizens are forced to wear green-tinted goggles "night and day" (80). His illusions can be interpreted as restricting—his Emerald City physically restricts his citizens' sight, and he keeps the truth from Dorothy and her comrades; rather than telling them that they already have what they seek, he creates the illusion that only he can give them what they desire. Of course, sometimes the Wizard's ability to present an idea does reveal truth, thus we have the irony of his character. For example, Dorothy and her comrades are shown to already have what they seek, and he, with his power to present an idea, confirms that truth. Through the four comrades' journey toward freedom, readers learn that the characters already have what they seek through their trials. The journey, rather than the Wizard, teaches readers that the Scarecrow already has a brain when he must come up with a way to save Dorothy from the Witch's assault (103), and that the Tin Man does indeed have a heart. Ironically, only in the Wizard's illusions are the characters able to learn the truth about themselves. The characters ask the Wizard to answer their requests, giving the Wizard a chance to seemingly redeem himself in giving the characters a "true" illusion and by attempting to really

help Dorothy. The Wizard's chance to redeem himself becomes ironic, because the journey could have taught a lesson to the four comrades, but the lesson only becomes apparent to the readers. The comrades have to wait until they return to the Emerald City to learn from the Wizard's illusions. Thus, the Wizard reveals actual truth and freedom with his trickery; if he had his own way at first, he would have maintained this illusion and restricted their progress.

Nevertheless, the citizens of Oz loved the Wizard because he provided for them, even though he deceived them by creating an unrealistically green world and lied to them about his magical abilities. Even Dorothy, failed by the Wizard, likes him. When he leaves her, she "also felt very sorry at losing Oz" (153). Although the Wizard has been a liar, he has not been overtly oppressive, so he is not remembered as evil, but is instead loved by the citizens of Oz. Though the Wizard is not evil in the characters' perceptions, readers might think otherwise. Readers like Maguire have resisted both the text's light tone regarding morality (and moral ambiguity) and its categorization of Oz as a good character. Through the duality of the Wonderful Wizard of Oz's titles, "Great and Terrible," "Wonderful," "little man," and "old humbug," and the description of the Wizard's personality, Baum breaks down stereotypes of Wizards. Wizards are often threatening within traditional fairy tales, but Baum's Wizard is not—he is indeed just a little old man who is able to create illusions.

Although the narrator sets up a value system that will hinge upon codes and lead readers to cheer for Dorothy and dislike the Wicked Witch, Baum does something that is rare for early twentieth-century narratives. He presents a feminine heroine, specifically a little girl, who does not need to be rescued and who actually does the rescuing. Baum's protagonist Dorothy saves the scarecrow from his post and the tin woodman from his magical stillness. She even confronts a lion to save her trusty dog, Toto: "Dorothy, fearing Toto would be killed, and heedless of

danger, rushed forward and slapped the Lion upon his nose as hard as she could while she cried out, 'Don't you dare bite Toto! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a big beast like you, to bite a poor little dog!'" (43). Dorothy is unlike females in earlier fairy tales who needed a male hero to save them—she actively solves problems on her own. This is progressive, and is a break from traditional fairy tales where the champion is male. However, although she is an active heroine, who seems to choose to be good, her choices seem stereotyped. She is the good American girl, as reflected in her actions. Dorothy even tells the Wizard, when speaking of her need of his power, "'you are strong and I am weak; because you are a Great Wizard and I am only a helpless little girl" (89). Although Baum does present Dorothy as an innovative female character, he still follows the traditional coding in this depiction of Dorothy. Scholar Alissa Burger suggests:

> While Dorothy is an active heroine, her deeds are inevitably dictated and circumscribed by her coded position as a "good girl," a structure in which the dichotomy of good and evil continues to be upheld. In Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* good and bad women are clearly demarcated in accordance with the belief that "the single most essential law…is that good is more powerful than evil," and the book's plot and female characters are organized in reflection of this polarity. (57)

Therefore, stereotyped, traditional perceptions of evil are still represented in this newer fairy tale. The myth of evil prevails, and just as Dorothy will be good because she is a relatable little girl, the Wicked Witch will be evil because she is coded as a witch. Baum's adherence to the myth of evil further supports the traditional nineteenth-century fairy tale's agenda to teach that evil is clear-cut.

In the same way that he presents a progressive female heroine, he also offers another duality by presenting some witches that are good, going against the accepted code. When the

Good Witch of the North introduces herself to Dorothy, the little girl exclaims in astonishment, "that [she thought] all witches were wicked" (*The Wonderful Wizard* 11). The Good Witch explains to Dorothy that she is incorrect, and that she knows it simply because she is a good witch herself, so she cannot be mistaken (12). This idea is interesting because in many traditional fairy tales, witches are simply bad. Dorothy, as well as readers of *Oz,* believes that this good witch cannot possibly be good because she is mainly coded as a witch. Thus, Baum challenges the traditional idea of a witch, and offers a new way to think about stereotyped characters, much like how *Wicked* introduces a new way to consider the motives of these stereotyped characters.

Even though Baum presents a progressive "Good Witch," his infamous Wicked Witch of the West remains stereotyped and underdeveloped; she seems to commit evil acts just because she that is her role—as the Wizard says, she is "tremendously Wicked" (90). This coding asks audiences to engage with the text by accepting the Witch as evil according to the dominant value system that labels her. Furthermore, Dorothy learns that the witch has enslaved the Winkies and is using the Flying Monkeys, inhabitants of the Land of Oz (105). This knowledge supports Oz's value system, which states that those who oppress are evil. The witch's desire to oppress the citizens of Oz suggests a selfish desire for power, which adheres to the traditional fairy tale definition of evil, further stereotyping her within the narrative.

Furthermore, the Wizard is the one who actually calls the witch "wicked" within the narrative (90), coding her as evil within his dominant system. Additionally, the Wizard's value system not only suggests that those who oppress are evil, but also that wickedness is deserving of death. This system adheres to the traditional fairy tale's tendency to present a certain conclusion, in which the villain does die. Thus, we can infer that one essential element of the Wizard's value system is the belief that wickedness should be killed. We can assume that he wants the Wicked

Witch dead because she threatens his position (as a great wizard) and his creation (the Emerald

City) and its people. The Wizard's value system is essentially the value system of the traditional

fairy tale, though he is later revealed to be dishonest and morally ambiguous. This value system

does not acknowledge any choice between good and evil for the witch. She must be destroyed.

With the Wizard's value system in mind, audiences learn that "the Wicked Witch was

angry to find them [Dorothy and her comrades] in her country" and that she plots to destroy them

(99). Some might argue that an encroachment into her land would be reasonable cause to act

"wickedly." Her actions may be motivated by fear: strangers are coming into her territory. She is

not in control of the situation, so she is afraid. Her fear could also be interpreted as coming from

the "choiceless choices" she is presented with by the Wizard's dominant value system that has

coded her as evil. She has little control over what she is labeled as, resulting in a fear of how

people see and code her. However, according to the dominant value system presented by the

narrator, and most likely adhered to by readers of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, her fear is not a

reasonable enough cause to attempt to kill Dorothy and her friends. Her motivation, even if it is

fear, is insufficient for sympathy. The Witch possesses, as far as is revealed, an unreasonable

selfish desire to oppress. Thus, her actions display the traditional myth of evil: that an evil

character would do everything in her power to create darkness and ruin.

Her actions embody *Oxford Dictionary's* definition of evil—profoundly moral and

malevolent. Is she evil according to a progressive twentieth-century view of evil such as in

Wicked? Through an analysis of her actions, I would suggest the answer is yes. However,

although her actions are evil, Baum offers an innovative way of presenting the witch—unlike the

ways of nineteenth-century fairy tales. The Wicked Witch is evil, but in contrast with the over-

bearing, ever-present villains found in the Grimm's tales, such as Cinderella's evil stepmother,

she is barely in the text. She is noticeable as a character, but has very little dialogue and is in only a snippet of the story. The Wicked Witch of the West is an obstacle—another problem for Dorothy to solve to continue her journey home.

Since the Wicked Witch of the West is not in much of the story and because of her role as a foil to Dorothy, audiences often perceive the Wicked Witch as a shallow, one-dimensional character, but Baum humanizes her somewhat in his narrative (perhaps to avoid giving a clear-cut moral). His humanizing is ironic because even as he humanizes her, he does not seem to really care about making her relatable—his humanizing is light-hearted. We know the Witch was afraid of trespassers and loss of control, but Baum gives her other fears. The narrator notes, "The Witch was too much afraid of the dark . . . and her dread of water was greater than her fear of the dark… indeed the old Witch never touched any water, nor ever let water touch her in any way" (111). Everyone is afraid of something, so we can relate in some way to this description and engage with the witch. Her fears create a comfortable element within the text—the witch is now relatable. Even as her fear humanizes her, however, her aversion to water alienates her. Furthermore, although the witch is described as very powerful, she has a handicap. The narrator notes that "the Wicked Witch of the West had but one eye" (Baum 99). These characteristics do make her relatable, however, audiences will likely not find them as good enough reasons to sympathize with the Wicked Witch. This may be because she is coded as "wicked." Audiences know that this code denotes an evil character and an appropriate end. Audiences' refusal to sympathize with the witch may also have to do with their understanding of Oz's value system. Audiences know that the society of Oz values freedom as good and oppression as evil. Thus, because the Wicked Witch is oppressive, she must be evil. Even with her identifiable fears and

handicaps, the Wicked Witch of the West is mainly portrayed as an unsympathetic, alienated character.

The Wizard imposes his dominant value system upon characters and readers alike, coding the witch as evil. The narration attempts to sway readers to sympathize with Dorothy, the good girl, and despise the Wicked Witch—at least on the "light" level of moral engagement that the story maintains. The Wizard uses phrases such as "tremendously wicked" and "cunning" when describing the Witch. Furthermore, readers know that the narrator believes that good will always beat evil because the narrator explicitly explains, "The Power of Good…is greater than the Power of Evil" (Baum 107). With the imposed dominant value system and set of codes, readers will likely find it difficult to sympathize at all with the Wicked Witch of the West.

Sympathizing with the Wicked Witch of the West is also difficult because, within *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* the possibilities presented for the characters are clear-cut. They are coded, so their options are limited to their labels. In this type of text, protagonists (though coded) seem to have more choices than villains, and so Dorothy seems to have more possibilities to choose from than the Wicked Witch. Perhaps she seems to have more choices because the narrative spends more time with her, including moments of indecision. The more time we spend with Dorothy, the less likely we are to expect her to do anything wrong because she is coded as good, and we sympathize with her because of her goodness. Sympathizing with the Wicked Witch may be harder because she does not have many chances to choose to be good. Dorothy may have more opportunities because she is the protagonist and the focal point. However, the limited possibilities offered to the Wicked Witch say something about the myth of evil in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*: evil will be evil no matter the possibilities, and so the witch will not need as many possibilities as the protagonist.

Possibilities offered to the Wicked Witch of the West are indeed limited. First, when the Wicked Witch discovers that Dorothy is advancing towards her home, readers can infer that she has a few possibilities. She could allow Dorothy to come and confront her when she arrives on the doorstep, or she could attack Dorothy from afar, or she could avoid confrontation altogether and simply allow Dorothy to come into her home and speak with her. The Wicked Witch chooses the second possibility, attacking Dorothy and her friends from afar. She sends wild wolves, and crows, and black bees, and her slaves, the Winkies and the Winged Monkeys, to attack the little girl (100-105).

Next, once the Wicked Witch of the West successfully captures Dorothy and imprisons her in the castle, a few more possibilities become apparent. What will the Wicked Witch do with the poor little girl? The witch could kill Dorothy and her friends immediately. She could keep them imprisoned until she desires vengeance and then kill them. She could keep them as prisoners forever. These possibilities are only implied. Audiences do not get a glimpse into the mind of the Wicked Witch. They can only guess as to what the witch could do. Ultimately, the witch decides to keep Dorothy as her slave, imprison the lion, and dispose of the scarecrow and tin woodman. The Witch tells Dorothy, "Come with me; and see that you mind everything I tell you, for if you do not I will make an end of you, as I did of the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow" (108). The Witch is frightening and oppressive. Readers expect this, because the witch has been coded as evil.

Finally, after the Wicked Witch of the West has decided to keep Dorothy as her slave, she is presented with more possibilities. It is here that readers discover that the witch is power-hungry. This characteristic could create a relatable connection between some readers and the witch. Many of us have felt the desire for more power, whether that desire is for our careers or

our relationships. Power is also relatable to us because we know that it protects us from fear, which may explain why the Wicked Witch wanted power at first—she was afraid. The witch's desire for power, however, becomes excessive; thus, she moves from being a relatable character to an evil one because her desire for power pushes her to destroy others (including a little girl) to achieve her goal. This fits our earlier definition of evil that includes pure selfishness. When the Wicked Witch sees that Dorothy has the magical Silver Shoes, the narrator says, "if she could only get hold of the Silver Shoes they would give her more power than all the other things she had lost" (110). While attempting to deter Dorothy, she had lost the magic of a special golden cap as well as many of her loyal soldiers, thus she fixates on the shoes and does all in her power to retrieve them. The Wicked Witch acknowledges that Dorothy does not know that the shoes hold a significant amount of power: "She happened to look into the child's eyes and saw how simple the soul behind them was, and the little girl did not know of the wonderful power the Silver Shoes gave her" (108). Here, the witch could simply ask Dorothy for the shoes; but she is conniving and sly, so she decides to trip Dorothy and steal the shoes. She succeeds in tripping her, but is only able to retrieve one shoe. At this point, Dorothy is enraged, so she throws water on the witch, accidently causing her to melt away. This accidental killing once again relieves Dorothy from any of the guilt of killing, and functions within to the dominant system's light-hearted, ambiguous view that killing to liberate is not evil.

As the witch becomes a puddle on the floor, she exclaims, "I never thought a little girl like you would ever be able to melt me and end my wicked deeds" (112). The Wicked Witch of the West's acknowledgement follows the traditional nineteenth-century story's lesson that it is more beneficial to be on the side of good than evil—that evil people are punished for their wrongdoings. However, although the witch's death follows the traditional ending, it also

uncovers an inequality within the narrative, which in turn uncovers an inequality within the accepted myth of evil. Readers will likely feel that it would be bad if Dorothy dies, but good when the witch dies. This exemplifies a traditional myth of evil—that it is morally acceptable to destroy evil beings. This also adheres to the Wizard's dominant value system—it is okay to destroy oppressors. Thus, the myth of evil presents different standards for different characters: it is wrong for evil characters to kill and oppress the inhabitants of Oz, but it is right for Dorothy to begin the quest to kill the Wicked Witch.

The protagonists, however, reject the double standard that it is acceptable to kill evil beings. Their rejection creates a contradiction—there are indeed different standards for different characters. Although the Wizard's value system condones killing that serves to liberate, the comrades never accept that it is good to kill; the Wicked Witch of the West's death is an accident, just like her sister's death. Thus, the comrades do not have to deal with this potentially morally gray area. Three specific instances within the text illustrate this contradiction. First, Dorothy's accidental killings of the Wicked Witches are rewarded, rather than punished. She receives the silver slippers and a kiss of protection for killing the Wicked Witch of the East (13, 15) and the promise of a way home for killing the Wicked Witch of the West (90). Second, though the Wizard believes that wickedness deserves death, Dorothy and her comrades seem to believe either that it does not deserve death or that they will not be the ones to inflict death. However, when the Wizard tells each of the comrades that they must kill the Wicked Witch, they all agree that they cannot kill her, but embark on the journey anyways. Each one admits that they do not want to kill the witch, but that they must go. Dorothy says, "I suppose we must try it; but I am sure I do not want to kill anybody, even to see Aunt Em again" (96). Her comrades agree one after the other: "I will go with you: but I'm too much of a coward to kill the witch," says the

Lion, and the Tin Woodsman follows, saying, "I haven't the heart to harm even a Witch…but if you go I certainly shall go with you" (96). Even though they do not agree, however, they begin the journey to the Witch, and that journey becomes ambiguous in purpose. Third, the Tin Woodsman believes that he has no heart, which leads him to act like he does (and we assume he does) by not killing innocent things. However, he readily kills predators although he repeatedly says he will not kill, somewhat subscribing to the double standard. Thus, by the end of the narrative, though the protagonists have not totally subscribed to the Wizard's value system of killing, they have supported and have been supported by it. In doing so, they have relieved themselves of any guilt associated with killing wicked characters. The protagonists are not considered evil as the Wicked Witch is because they are protected by the Wizard's value system and by the accidental death of the witch, thus coded as good.

The Wicked Witch's evil is of her nature—it is intrinsic—one might say predestined or choiceless. Baum, however, does give her some possibilities to choose from. He gives her a choice, but readers know she will choose evil because the narrator proves that it is in her nature. These are hypothetical choices, and there are numerous other paths she could have taken, but most readers perceive all the likely possibilities as bad. Some of them are less bad than others, but none of them are good. Because traditional fairy tales teach readers to be on the side of good and create a set pattern that exhibits that idea, audiences expect that because the Wicked Witch makes (or is moved to make) bad decisions, she will be coded as evil. Readers of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* expect at the end that the witch will be defeated because she is coded as evil, and according to narrative patterns, evil characters are defeated. Within the tale, there is no reason to give her real choices—and no reason to relate to her—because she will be evil in the end, no matter what; thus, she is given choiceless choices.

The Wicked Witch of the West becomes the standard for evil—defining it, rather than only being an evil force. The characters in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* measure evil according to the standard presented through the Wicked Witch. Thus, although I attempted to determine the choices (or lack of choices) offered to the Wicked Witch within *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, I discovered that because she comes to be the symbol for evil, she does not possess a full scope of choices. The Wicked Witch did not need to a variety of possibilities, and when she chooses from the limited possibilities offered to her, audiences expect her choice to go against the narrative's value system. The narrator, therefore, uses his or her influence to pull readers into the "black and white" traditional viewing of evil, and in doing so, teaches that it is beneficial to be on the side of good. The narrator does all of this with a lighthearted tone that allows the moral ambiguity and moral contradictions to remain unaddressed. Consequently, we have the infamy of the Wicked Witch of the West as cruel. Within the narrative, we also see the interesting character of the Wonderful Wizard of Oz, who seems to ambiguously represent both good and evil but who is coded as good in the end. Even with Baum's desire to avoid morality in his narrative, morals come through in his value systems, as well as the codes of the Wicked Witch as evil and Dorothy, a homesick weary traveler who liberates a nation, as good.

Finally, because Wicked Witch of the West, though an important character to the plot, does not appear often in the story, readers might wonder whether Baum was concerned with evil in the narrative. Is evil not really an issue in his story? According to Baum's introduction, he did not wish to teach morals in his fairy tale. Perhaps, only including the Wicked Witch in a small section of the narrative was one way for him to avoid teaching morals. However, evil characters often teach that it is better to be on the side of good and that evil is punished, which Baum's narrative ultimately does.

Overall, the story presents one big moral, just like any traditional fairy tale, teaching that being on the side of good will bring you home. The famous "yellow brick road" leads readers to Baum's system, where good triumphs in the end. The tale is a retelling, with no fearsome moral, and uses coding and names to categorize characters as good and wicked. Even with codes, however, Baum's tale changes some stereotypes (such as presenting some witches as good), while retaining others. A stereotype that remains is that of the Wicked Witch as evil. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the Wicked Witch is presented as oppressive and deserving of death, according to the Wizard's value system; his value system enacts the traditional fairy tale moral system of evil as clear-cut. In the narrative, the Wicked Witch receives choiceless choices, and her inability to choose good makes her evil. Therefore, according to the fixed conclusions of fairy tales, she will be destroyed in the end. Although the narrative's system allows good to triumph, the systems within the text are ambiguous. Dorothy's value system suggests that good will triumph without intended harm, while the Wizard's suggests that good will triumph when oppressive evil is destroyed.

Perhaps, in Baum's attempts to completely avoid morality, the Witch's evil snuck in unintended and became one oppressive force of evil in the narrative. Baum wished to avoid "all disagreeable incident," but by including the Wicked Witches, he invites unpleasant episodes into the text. First, a house falls on the Wicked Witch of the East. Then, the Wicked Witch of the West attacks Dorothy and her friends with frightening animals. Finally, Dorothy kills her. Baum wished to leave out the nightmares, but seemed to have been unable to avoid leaving all unpleasant incidents out, though they are presented lightly. Since Baum could not leave out all unpleasant incidents and morality, a light-hearted moral ambiguity arises in the text. The main moral ambiguity is in the character of the Wizard, who, even with his illusions, is coded as good.

By extension, the Wizard's condemning of the Wicked Witch to the label of "Wicked" and the sentence of her death becomes morally ambiguous. This is where Maguire seems to have begun his own work. Thus, although innovative in its time, with some moral ambiguity, Baum's fairy tale ultimately follows the outline of the traditional nineteenth-century fairy tale and teaches that those who remain on the side of good will triumph.

Chapter Three: Evil and *Wicked*

Maguire's *Wicked* serves as a reaction to Baum's classic tale. *Wicked* presents the Wicked Witch of the West like we have never seen her, and it was readily accepted by contemporary audiences as a postmodern spin on the popular *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.* Maguire chose to rewrite Baum's story, complicating the earlier story's presentation of evil. He reacts to Baum's desire to write a story "solely to please children of today…in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out" by writing a fairy tale specifically for older readers in which wonderment is retained as well as heartaches and nightmares. In his *Wicked*, Maguire suggests that evil is a matter of choice rather than destiny, and that choice is often determined by a dominant value system imposed upon the character. Maguire's progressive twentieth-century retelling teaches that the distinction between good and evil is not always clear. Baum presents a Wicked Witch who is traditionally coded as evil within his fairy tale, but Maguire attempts to decode her. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* though the Wizard and the text's dominant value system influences readers to believe that the witch is surely wicked, some readers may resist that idea. It is in this resistance that retellings such as Maguire's are created. We can infer that Maguire, as a reader of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* resisted the notion that the Wicked Witch was inherently evil, and as we discussed earlier, that the Wizard, even in his moral ambiguity, falls on the side of good.

In his resistance of the Wicked Witch as inherently evil, Maguire makes numerous changes to Baum's infamous character. First, Maguire gives the Wicked Witch a name—Elphaba Thropp. He gives her an identity all her own. Maguire's name for Baum's Wicked Witch functions to decode her as "tremendously Wicked" because "Wicked" is no longer her original

identity. Maguire takes Baum's description and deepens it, and then adds descriptions of his own. His adaptation of the witch to match his own reading of her is a good example of a reader's resistance to the coded evil character. Maguire does let his Wicked Witch be afraid of water and desire the silver shoes, just as in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In Maguire's narrative, however, Elphaba desires the silver shoes not because she is power-hungry, but because they belonged to her sister, Nessaroe (a humanizing name that Maguire creates for the Wicked Witch of the East), and she has a sentimental attachment to them. When Glinda tells Elphaba that she gave Nessaroe's shoes to Dorothy, Elphaba is "dumb with rage, "and exclaims, "Nessa promised I could have them when she died!" (443). Elphaba's desire for the shoes no longer stems from an evil motive, and the Wicked Witch's identity is no longer controlled by an inhuman selfishness. Rather, her motive stems from love for her sister and a desire for justice.

Furthermore, not only does Maguire give the Wicked Witch a name and a relatable motivation, but his physical description of her is more detailed than Baum's. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* the Wicked Witch of the West is a menacing character, but the narrator gives minimal description of her physical appearance. As mentioned earlier, the narrator says that the witch has only one eye. Furthermore, readers are told that the witch does not bleed because she is "so wicked that the blood in her had dried up many years before" (*The Wonderful Wizard* 110). The narrator explains that the witch is afraid of the dark and afraid of water, and longs for the silver shoes, so she has faults and insecurities; however, the narrator also explains the she is "very cunning" (110-111). Maguire resists the idea that the Wicked Witch could be so terrifying, and readers are able to see his resistance in his detailed, humanized description of the Wicked Witch. In *Wicked,* readers receive a description of Elphaba as a child and then see her grow and mature. Maguire notes that when Elphaba is little, she is monstrous: green skinned

with sharp teeth and an aversion to physical touch (32). As she grows, however, she becomes prettier, and is almost normal, except for her green skin. Although Maguire's description of Elphaba is more detailed and humanized than Baum's, Maguire still presents (albeit ironically) the trope of evil associated with ugliness. Baum uses this trope to code the Wicked Witch as evil. Since Maguire normalizes Elphaba except for her green skin, he makes her ugly from the perspective of the dominant value system of the text. In this way, Maguire does not challenge the preconception that ugliness equals evil by making her entirely beautiful, but rather allows her to retain at least one "ugly" characteristic. Maguire's decision further complicates the traditionally evil character, and because he includes one evil code among many good codes, readers may not know how to accurately code Elphaba. Maguire's adherence to this traditional trope supports this type of narrative's tendency to teach that good and evil are complicated, and it is not easy to decide who is good or bad.

Due to Maguire's resistance to the coded Wicked Witch presented in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* Maguire presents a definition of evil that is more complex rather than black and white in *Wicked*. His definition is based more upon choices made within a dominant value system rather than an intrinsic characteristic. In Maguire's narrative, the witch still seems to be coded, but it is her final choices that are coded rather than her personality. In *Wicked*, evil can be defined as an action morally wrong that a character chooses to commit at times under the influence of a dominant value system, and one's environment rather than an intrinsic nature.

In *Wicked*, Elphaba struggles with ideas of good and evil, morality and immorality. Maguire's witch knows that there is a difference, while it seems that Baum's witch does not. We see Elphaba struggling with this when she moves to the university. She asks her roommate, Galinda (who will later become Good Witch Glinda), whether she believes that evil "exists at

all" (102). Her questioning becomes a theme throughout the novel, and her journey deals with her attempts to understand what it means to be good and what it means to be bad. Near the end of the novel, Elphaba has a conversation with her friends discussing what makes evil *evil*. Her friends suggest that "evil is moral at its heart—the selection of vice over virtue," and that "evil is an act, not an appetite…everyone has the appetite. If you give in to it, it, that *act* is evil. The appetite is normal" (474). Elphaba disagrees, saying that evil "isn't any of what you said…the real disaster of this inquiry is that it is that nature of evil to be *secret*" (475). Thus, the definition of evil is even debated within the text, creating a complication in how readers can understand what will be identified as evil. Elphaba's journey throughout the narrative deals with her desire to understand what evil is, and readers can learn along with her.

Audiences do learn how the dominant value systems view evil in *Wicked* just as they did in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Though Baum approached his narrative as non-moral, due to society's imposition of a modern moral education, Baum's story ultimately offers the traditional fairy tale's lesson that the side of good is best. Baum attempts to tell a story without teaching, but Maguire may have perceived that some kind of teaching was going on. Perhaps he resisted the idea that *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was amoral and was therefore moved to create his own story in which morality is featured prominently. Maguire's approach teaches morality in regard to a dominant value system that establishes a morality, but is itself immoral. His lesson is that it is difficult to identify characters as good and evil because evil is complicated. In Maguire's narrative, the hero (who has traditionally been a villain) rebels against the value system because it is unjust, unlike in Baum's narrative, in which the value system is identified as mostly just. Maguire's hero, however, becomes wicked in the end, adhering to the traditional fairy tale conclusion and supporting the lesson that evil is not easily identifiable. Through the value system

Maguire presents in *Wicked*, audiences learn that evil is complicated, and sometimes characters may be coded as evil within the dominant value system even though they are fighting towards good.

Elphaba does fight toward a system of good as she grows, and she learns that specific choices lead to a specific fate, which supports the traditional fairy tale's theme of fixed endings. The complication, however, is that the Witch—the evil character—knows about the fixed conclusions. In the novel, she remembers that, "No one controls your destiny. Even at the very worst—there is always choice" (472). Maguire's Wicked Witch is aware that the choices we make determine our endings, and also aware that she can choose her destiny. She is not presented with the choiceless choices that Baum's Wicked Witch is presented with. Therefore, we can infer that in *Wicked,* evil will not be a nature but a choice.

Scholar Paul Simpson suggests that the main theme of the book is that it is hard to be good (209). This differs from the way Baum presents his Wicked Witch. Baum's witch doesn't get to try to be good. The Wizard pulls the strings of society with his illusions and codes the Wicked Witch of the West as evil before she has a chance to try to be good. In *Wicked*, however, she does. Maguire's audience gets an opportunity to see the infamous Wicked Witch of the West as an awkward, alienated little girl, and then watch her overcome her differences to make friends in university and ultimately find love. Readers also see what makes Elphaba happy and what makes her angry. Audiences can sympathize with the character as they see her fight for what she believes to be right and know that Elphaba recognizes what injustice is and desires to combat it—she is choosing to commit good actions. Edwards and Klosa suggest:

> The Wicked Witch of the West is a much more sympathetic and even heroic character in
> *Wicked*. In creating more depth for the character, Maguire presents the witch going

against her stereotypical "evil" nature through his vivid portrayals of selfless acts she

performs. In each section of the book…the Witch works for goals larger than herself that

will benefit others. She becomes a sympathetic and heroic figure as she builds

friendships, falls in love with Fiyero, fights for the freedom of Animals and attempts to

oppose the Wizard. But her attempts to save others clearly illustrate how evil is

complicated within the story arc of *Wicked*. (45)

Just as with her name, the witch's sympathetic characteristics work to decode her as evil, and in

doing so teaches readers to decode, perhaps even teaching that coding is evil. When Elphaba is

young, she does not engage in activities that correspond to the codes of a witch. In fact, she does

not even know she has magic (one major factor in being a witch) until she is well into her time at

the university. Her younger years are spent trying to learn about the world around her and fight

for the oppressed rather than exhibiting the traits that would code her as a witch. Elphaba's

youthful attempts to fight selflessly for social justice counteract coded evil selfishness. Elphaba's

awareness of choices and her decision to be good functions to de-code her to audiences who are

familiar with Baum's original Wicked Witch of the West.

In the end, however, readers get to see the point where Elphaba makes the decision to

walk astray. Near the end of the novel, in the grips of depression from lost love and

hopelessness, the Wicked Witch begins to commit evil acts. These are small at first, but begin to

grow wickeder and wickeder. In our examination of evil acts, we are forced to ask this question:

What causes evil? Is it circumstances? Are villains simply victims? In Maguire's narrative, the

Wicked Witch seems to be affected by her circumstances and influenced by the dominant value

system within the Land of Oz. At the end of her life, when Elphaba has become a hermit, she

knows that the Wizard will send Dorothy to destroy her. Elphaba waits for her doom for several

days with little sleep; she is so tired that she feels dizzy while waiting in the tower to confront

Dorothy (510). Her head is not clear and she feels that she will have to fight for survival.

Elphaba does not see herself as wicked, but those around her do, so she calls herself the Wicked

Witch of the West. She accepts her circumstances and begins to adhere to them, allowing herself

to be coded as evil, even though she may not believe herself to be evil, saying, "That's why I call

myself a witch now: the Wicked Witch of the West, if you want the full glory of it. As long as

people are going to call you a lunatic anyway, why not get the benefit of it? It liberates you from

convention" (457). Elphaba is merely trying to stay alive. When Dorothy arrives in the Witch's

tower, Elphaba tells her, "in times like these, my little one, you must kill before you are killed"

(513). Here, readers can see that the Witch is not determined to kill Dorothy for the sake of

evil—she is merely prepared to do anything to survive. Her circumstances have led her to fight

for her life, and she is prepared to kill to save her own life. Fighting for survival is an

intrinsically human characteristic, and thus, Maguire's Wicked Witch is relatable to audiences

even to the end of her life. Elphaba seems to commit evil acts because she has been pushed to

them by her circumstances. Does this make her evil? If we are examining evil as a nature as

Baum presents, then no. We could even see her as a victim of a society that alienates its citizens

if they do not adhere to the prevailing social constructs. She is also a victim of loss; she loses her

family and her true love, Fiyero. Though she is a victim, she knows that she can choose her

destiny. She chooses to be cruel to Dorothy, even though she has other possibilities at her

disposal. In the end, Elphaba commits evil actions and so, according to the narrative value

system and the value system of readers, she is considered evil.

Thus, the reader sees Elphaba as the same Wicked Witch presented in *The Wonderful

Wizard of Oz.* Just as Maguire is a reader of Baum's narrative, the audience may be as well and

will recognize that Elphaba, even with her heroic attempts, will turn out to be evil in the end. However, unlike in the reading of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* readers of *Wicked* may feel sorrow and regret for the path Elphaba has chosen to take. The audience has seen that she is capable of good and sympathizes with the poor witch who tries so hard to be good, who is pressed by her circumstances to be wicked.

Earlier in the story, however, Elphaba becomes evil in a different way—a way that the audience will likely not interpret as evil at all: "Maguire creates an Elphaba who is not evil in the traditional way because she is not sinful nor is she cruel to others; rather, she is wicked because she chooses to challenge the government violently" (Roman 215). In fighting the government, she is labeled wicked, but this seems to be a different kind of wickedness. The wickedness suggested by Roman is evil that is subversive and attempts to rebel against an unjust value system—the Wizard's dominant value system. This kind of wickedness, though wrong according to the dominant value system, may be accepted as good according to a reader's personal value system and according to Elphaba's own value system. The wickedness that the Wicked Witch of the West (both Baum's and Maguire's) ultimately becomes differs from this "good" wickedness. Elphaba's final acts of wickedness do not serve her own value system and, though they may be attempts to survive, are unnecessarily cruel. Her final actions would be considered evil by the dominant value system, as well as the reader's own value system.

Therefore there seems to be two definitions according to two differing value systems: one adheres to the traditional code of wickedness, and the other creates a new, subjective code. Elphaba's attempt to undermine the dominant power's unjust value system complicates evil. Elphaba chooses to fight for justice for the people of Oz—she chooses to try to liberate them. True, she does this through terroristic acts; but according to her value system, it would be okay

to kill to achieve justice for the majority (just as it was good for Dorothy to kill the Wicked

Witches to liberate the Land of Oz). Within Elphaba's personal value system, and probably

within the reader's value system, this is good. Thus, just as in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, those

who liberate are working on the side of good and those who oppress are evil. The value systems

presented in the texts differ, though, and unlike in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Wicked*'s

dominant value system (as enacted by the Wizard) does not value the liberation of the citizens as

good. Furthermore, Elphaba's final decision to be cruel to Dorothy becomes selfish, denoting an

evil choice. Her decision to be ultimately evil is, according to all present value systems,

(Elphaba's, the reader's, and the powerful Wizard's) evil.

Although she ultimately is categorized as evil, Maguire's witch has numerous

possibilities and choices throughout the novel. She is the protagonist, so she is faced with

decisions throughout the narrative, rather than just in a single encounter with Dorothy. To show

the differences between the possibilities presented to the Wicked Witch of the West in the two

narratives, I will examine the possibilities offered to Elphaba during her encounter with Dorothy

in Maguire's narrative.

In *Wicked,* the Wicked Witch knows that Dorothy is coming into her territory, just as the

witch in Baum's narrative does. There are innumerable possibilities for what Elphaba could do to

prepare for her visit from Dorothy and get her sister's shoes back. She could use her magic to get

rid of the girl from afar. She could go out to meet Dorothy to send her away or hear her

intentions. She could allow Dorothy to enter the tower and have a peaceful conversation or she

could let Dorothy enter and kill her upon her arrival. These are only a few of the hypothetical

possibilities that the Wicked Witch could choose. Readers do not know what to expect from

Elphaba because she has exhibited good characteristics for most of the novel. Yet, due to her

present circumstances, readers know that Elphaba is on edge and could teeter off into wickedness at any moment.

Just a few chapters before the encounter with Dorothy, Elphaba proclaims to her friend Boq that she has killed Madame Morrible, and Boq suggests that she has sunk to the level of those she had once fought against (481). Readers begin to expect her to be wicked, but they still might hope for her goodness. This hope is what distinguishes the portrayal of the witch from Baum's narrative to Maguire's. In the actual encounter with Dorothy, she invites the little girl in for dinner and begins to form a plan for retrieval of the shoes (507). Elphaba then takes Dorothy upstairs to her tower and asks for the shoes, but Dorothy reveals that they are stuck on her. The witch is enraged and begins to interrogate the little girl about her intentions. Dorothy exclaims that she only wishes for forgiveness for killing Elphaba's sister (514). The Wicked Witch cannot believe that she will not get her precious shoes and is being asked to forgive the person who took away her sister—the shock and unfairness of life engulf her and she snaps, swinging a fiery broom at Dorothy: "She was caught, twisting, trying, full of will, but toward what? A fragment of the brush of the broom fluttered off, and lit on her skirt" (514). Elphaba catches her own dress on fire, and dies when Dorothy throws water on her to put out the flames. She dies in the midst of a selfish tantrum, thus fulfilling the idea of the coded witch presented in Baum's narrative, her actions inclining the audience to an interpretation of her as evil.

According to her final choice and the value system offered in *Wicked*, Elphaba's demise is justified, but some may not accept her final choice as coding her as good or evil. Readers know that Elphaba refused to accept the binding social constructions offered to her in the Emerald City under Oz's rule. Elphaba fought against the very social structure of Oz's city because the established understanding of good and evil was unjust. How could a supporter of

social justice who had put her life on the line for what she believed in be evil? Readers hope for the Wicked Witch's salvation because Maguire presents a character that readers can sympathize with—she has been humanized with real choices and real problems. When she makes that final choice to commit an evil action, readers understand her choice because they know her circumstances and know that evil will be punished. yet readers still may wish that she could have been saved.

Maguire's depiction of the Wicked Witch as a sympathetic character allows her to fill the role of a hero. Joseph Campbell, a popular scholar of mythological studies, suggests that heroes are easy to identify and always follow a similar mythic path. Campbell maintains that the universal mythological formula of the adventure of the hero includes perils, obstacles, and good fortunes along the way. There is also a guide—a willing helper at a critical time (Campbell 22). He suggests that "the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation-initiation-return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (30). Although Elphaba ultimately fulfills the traditional code of a witch at the conclusion of *Wicked*, she loosely follows Campbell's hero formula. As she fights for justice in the unfair society of the Emerald City, audiences will likely engage with her plight for justice and hope for her to heroically establish a society of equality.

As mentioned earlier, Maguire's sympathetic depiction of the Wicked Witch of the West lends to a sympathetic reaction to her and may lead a reader to hope that she will ultimately be a hero. Thus, I would like to compare Elphaba's journey to Joseph Campbell's "standard path" of a hero to determine if she displays characteristics of a heroic character.

The first rite of passage for a hero is *separation* or *departure*. This stage begins with a call to action. Elphaba receives a call to action when she is separated from her sister and sent to

attend a school in the city where she will be asked to stand up for the persecuted. At her first social party, Elphaba is first exposed to the fact that individuals within the city, particularly Animals, are discriminated against. Animals are sentient beings, similar emotionally and mentally to humans, but discriminated against because they are physically different from human beings. Everyone in the room, except for herself and an Animal professor at her university, Dr. Dillamond, seem unfazed by the prejudice. Elphaba addresses the problem in class the next day, asking Madame Morrible, the headmistress and inflictor of the prejudiced comment, what she meant by her remark. Madame Morrible embarrasses Elphaba and shuts her down, allowing for no further questioning; Elphaba leaves the subject alone, although she desires to fix the problem. This is her *call to action*, and she begins to assist Dr. Dillamond with fighting for Animal rights.

Campbell's second rite of passage is the *trials and victories of initiation.* Elphaba reaches this stage after Dr. Dillamond is murdered. She understands now that the Animal Rights Movement is a cause that needs immediate attention. During a class experiment, a lion is displayed, and no one knows if the lion is an ordinary animal or an Animal, so Elphaba saves the lion from the experiment and then wishes to save other creatures from being harmed this way. She travels to meet with the Wizard of Oz to request that he stop oppressing the Animals. He refuses, so she becomes a silent vigilante fighting for justice. These attempts for justice are her victories of initiation—she works to bring social justice to the Emerald City and is successful in many of her attempts.

Campbell's final rite of passage is the *return* or *reintegration into society*. Elphaba does not achieve this rite. After her love Fiyero dies, she makes a journey to his village, far from the city of the Wizard, and lives out her days there. She does not achieve reintegration into society. Rather, she loses her grip on reality and waits for death to come to her. She knows that the

Wizard will send Dorothy to kill her but she does not attempt to save her life or return to her home and family.

Because Elphaba does not return, she does not complete the cycle of the hero. Thus, according to Campbell, she is not eligible to be considered a hero. Even though she is not a hero, readers may have wished she could have been one and may admire her for trying to be good. In the end, however, Elphaba becomes harsh—she is jaded by the world around her and loses hope in a world that is fair and just. The narrator begins to refer to her as "the Witch," and she becomes hard-hearted. When Dorothy comes to her, the Witch is torturous and taunts the girl. Here, the Wicked Witch is hurt and misunderstood—she has lost everyone she loves and wants her sister's shoes back, which have been magically attached to Dorothy's feet by Glinda so Dorothy cannot give them to her. In this tense encounter with Dorothy, however, audiences might begin to lose the desire to sympathize with the witch because she is selfishly cruel. The Witch waves a flaming broom around Dorothy to frighten her, accidently setting her own dress on fire. In an attempt to help, Dorothy throws a bucket of water upon Elphaba, causing her to die in the same way that the Wicked Witch dies in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.* In the end, she is remembered by all in the land as the horrible Wicked Witch of the West. Although audiences could almost have accepted Elphaba as a hero, she is coded as a witch in the end.

Maguire concludes the narrative with a remark about the fixed conclusion for the life of a witch: "In the life of a Witch, there is no *after,* in the *ever after* of a Witch, there is no *happily;* in the story of a Witch, there is no afterword" (519). Although Maguire resists Baum's impression of the Wicked Witch of the West as evil through and through, he concludes with the traditional fixed conclusion that fairy tales repeatedly assert. Even with Elphaba's final choice to be evil, Maguire's narrative supports the progressive twentieth-century story's lesson that suggests that

we should be careful in our preference of good and evil because the distinction is often not clear. Throughout the narrative, Elphaba seems to be good, but in the end, her choices lead her to evil. Even with a reevaluation of evil and an in-depth analysis of an infamous villain, Maguire's conclusion remains the same. Villains do not get a *happily ever after* and the fairy tale ending remains intact. Although the traditional ending remains, Maguire introduces irony into the idea of the witch (good may be bad and bad may be good), thus the ending is the same but also completely different, because we now see another layer of meaning in Elphaba's death.

While Maguire is working to present Elphaba as a hero, he also works to change the character of the Wizard. Baum's Wonderful Wizard presents an interesting complication in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, but his character, though confusing, is coded as good. Maguire challenges that coding by re-coding the Wizard of Oz as a villain within *Wicked*. In Baum's narrative, the Wizard presents the dominant value system that simply says that all wickedness is deserving of death. That Wizard is not overtly oppressive, and is therefore coded as good. Maguire flips the character. In *Wicked,* Oz, the Great and Terrible is unjustly oppressive, clearly immoral, and has taken control of the land for his own selfish gain. The Wizard even tells Elphaba that he is not "right-thinking" (Maguire 238). His value system is overtly corrupt, and Elphaba challenges that system. Maguire's value system teaches that those who oppress are evil and those who liberate are good, just as Baum's; thus the Wizard is coded as evil. Just as in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the evil character in *Wicked* only speaks in one chapter of the novel, but is referred to multiple times throughout. A difference, however, is that in *Wicked*, the Wizard is the biggest obstacle for the heroine Elphaba, rather than one of many. In the conclusion of *Wicked*, the Wizard abdicates his role as leader and must return home, leaving behind his wealth and power. Readers learn that "a suicide was waiting for him back in his own world" (517). Thus

Maguire allows the evil Wizard to receive the traditional fixed ending for a villain—death. This is interesting because in *Wicked*, both the Wizard and the Witch are ultimately labeled as evil, and follow the fixed conclusion of fairy tales. A difference, however, is that the Witch ultimately dies a sympathetic death, while the Wizard seems totally deserving of his end.

Though the conclusion seems to remain the same for the witch in both narratives, Maguire suggests that the witch's death is a tragedy, providing the lesson that evil is complicated because those who seem good could be evil and vice versa. Maguire flips Baum's value system—the Wicked Witch is now somewhat a victim, and the Wizard of Oz is the villain who, through his value system's influence, causes her to become a villain. Therefore, Maguire's depiction of Elphaba's death as a tragedy offers an ending that readers might not be entirely comfortable with, even though the conclusion follows the familiar fixed conclusion of traditional fairy tales. Maguire's treatment of evil is a commendation of the traditional fairy tale on two points. First, he makes the witch's destined death ironic, so that we feel it is a tragedy; second, he makes the traditional fairy tale system into the villain of the story in the form of the Wizard. Thus, in regard to teaching, Maguire is teaching that the traditional fairy tale, which created villains, is in itself immoral, as personified in Maguire's Wizard. Traditional fairy tales use value systems to code characters into a simplified evil, rather than allowing them to exist in a value system that adheres to a belief in evil as complicated.

In their tellings of the fantastical Land of Oz, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked* are progressive in their own ways, but also both adhere to the traditional fixed ending of fairy tales. The narratives present morality according to value systems—individual and systematic— and within those value systems, evil is determined according to the actions of the characters. In Baum's narrative, characters' actions tend to be passive, and their choices seem choiceless. The

characters are mainly stereotyped into a coded good and evil structure. However, Baum offers some ambiguity, particularly in the character of the Wizard who, although presents deceitful illusions, is coded as good. Thus, the Wizard's system is allowed to remain as the dominant system within the text—readers may view his system as just because he is coded as good. The Wizard's system codes the Wicked Witch as evil, due to her profound selfishness and inherent wickedness, enacting the traditional fairy tale moral system. Within Baum's narrative, no fearsome moral is presented and a fairly simplistic view of evil leads to the traditional fairy tale conclusion. Maguire may have resisted Baum's depiction of evil and his lack of intentional moral teaching within the narrative. This resistance led Maguire to attempt to utilize progressive fairy tale engagement, asking audiences to relate to the villain. He develops the Wicked Witch and redevelops the Wizard to decode the characters from their original codes. The power system within the narrative serves to influence the Wicked Witch's actions, rather than her intrinsic nature. However, even with Maguire's progressivity, the Wicked Witch cannot avoid her fate. In fighting the Wizard's unjust system, Elphaba eventually succumbs to evil and dies within the traditional fairy tale conclusion. Looking at both tales, we can say that the yellow brick road leads to a lesson: within fairy tales, although good and evil are complicated concepts, it seems that good will always triumph in the end.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: A Retelling Retold: *Wicked* on Broadway

In conclusion, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked* present two different types of evil—passive and active—with the same conclusion. The fixed conclusion remains, but each tale teaches a different lesson through their textual value systems. Baum and Maguire teach by defining evil through systematic and individual evil. Their dominant value systems include depictions of the Wicked Witch of the West as evil based upon her choices and codes within the narratives, particularly her choice to be selfish in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and mostly selfless in *Wicked.* To achieve the goal of teaching that evil is clear-cut, Baum presents the Wicked Witch as underdeveloped, unrelatable, and choiceless, and the Wizard as a powerful character who defines the Witch and seems to be good. Maguire flips Baum's presentation of who is evil by presenting the Wicked Witch as developed, relatable, and heroic, ultimately decoding her until the end. To support his presentation of the Wicked Witch as good, Maguire presents a Wizard who is somewhat underdeveloped and though he is powerful, is just an obstacle to be overcome. Within the different presentations of characters as evil, some elements of the narratives remain the same: both tales attempt to teach through the use of textual value systems that suggest that freedom is good and restriction is evil. Furthermore, in both stories, the Wizard functions as the traditional fairy tale morality, coding the witch as evil and sentencing her to death. In Baum's narrative, the characters passively create freedom, mainly through a series of happy accidents that lead to the liberation of the land from the Wicked Witch of the West. In Maguire's tale, the characters actively make choices to liberate the people the unjust

system. Maguire's narrative successfully complicates Baum's presentations of evil by offering an active Wicked Witch who is relatable rather than detestable.

Elphaba is not the only villain whose story has been rewritten. Throughout the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century, fairy tales are consistently reevaluated in short stories and novels, as well as in plays, films, and television. Today, along with Maguire's *Wicked,* audiences can engage with retellings such as Anne Sexton's "Cinderella" (1971), Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* (1986), and ABC's current television drama, *Once Upon a Time* (first aired in 2011). Anna Kerchy suggests that retellings, "distinguished by a 'postmodernist' socio-historical attitude on accounts of 'repeating' the fairy tale and fantasy traditions 'with a difference,'" attempt to "playfully challenge" the meanings of traditional stories (iv). Thus, due to postmodern inquiry within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, authors and audiences seem to have more freedom to reinterpret traditional concepts, such as evil, and often find both structure and freedom in the reworking of those concepts. This reinterpretation of traditional ideas has become popular fairly recently, as we can see in the frequency of retellings like those mentioned above. Vanessa Joosen notes that authors of retellings "reflect on the process of telling and meaning making itself, and replace the fairy-tale code with one that cannot easily be deciphered" (177). She further notes that, "the freedom of expression of fiction allows for speculations," thus authors and readers may feel that the freedom of expression in our society allows room to question and reevaluate traditional ideas (177).

These reinterpretations suggest that readers feel more and more freedom to resist the traditional ideas of evil within fairy tale narratives, and that fairy tales will continue to attempt to teach that evil is not simple. Audiences can choose to resist a narrative's value system, just as Maguire resisted Baum's, deciding to oppose the idea of the Wicked Witch as wholly evil.

Rather than the witch being evil, she only commits acts understood to be evil—inversely, she also committed acts understood to be "good." Therefore, this reevaluation of evil asks if anyone can be defined in his or her nature as good or evil. If good and evil are essentially actions committed under the influence of a dominant value system, then the actions might support a certain character trait that denotes a character as good or evil, rather than good and evil arising from an intrinsic nature. Maguire's retelling suggests that the difference in evil between *Wicked* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is where evil originates, either from an inherent nature (passive characteristic) or an action under the influence of a dominant value system (an active choice). Either way, the character that is labeled wicked, whether by nature or action, does not receive a happy ending. This is a constant through both fairy tales. Further postmodern retellings, however, might ask what would happen if villains were to get the happy ending, and rewrite the tale to allow the villain to conquer, becoming a hero.

For the rest of this conclusion, I want to look at one more step in this process of retelling a fairy tale. Although Maguire's *Wicked* presents a new look at the traditionally evil Wicked Witch of the West, creating a sympathetic character and allowing audiences fresh insight into her life, his narrative still concludes with her demise as a villain. Maguire resists Baum's telling, recasting the Wicked Witch so that she could at least initially have a happy life, yet resolves in the same way Baum's narrative concludes. Some individuals, however, might resist Maguire's retelling of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* particularly how he maintains the Wicked Witch's death as a villain. Audiences may resist Elphaba's final choice that defines her as evil and completely recast her character, making not only make her a sympathetic character, but redeeming her even to the point of giving her a happy ending. This resistance could lead readers to go one step further in the retelling process, not only giving the evil character good

characteristics, but allowing her to overcome the coding completely in order to obtain a happy ending.

An example of this complete re-coding is the Broadway musical *Wicked* (2003) by Stephen Schwartz and Winnie Holzman, an adaptation of Gregory Maguire's *Wicked.* In the Broadway production, Schwartz and Holzman push Maguire's story one step further, choosing to allow the Wicked Witch of the West to find love and get her happily ever after.

The Broadway musical, *Wicked,* like the novel it is based on, allows audiences a chance to engage with and relate to a traditional villain. Audiences, therefore, hope for her to be good, just as they might while reading Maguire's *Wicked*. This hope is rewarded as audiences watch Elphaba fake her own death to escape the Wizard's soldiers. Just as in Maguire's narrative, Dorothy throws a bucket of water on the Wicked Witch, but instead of actually dying, Elphaba only pretends to. The Wicked Witch of the musical does not receive the traditional fixed ending. Although Elphaba falls from the grace of society and is forgotten, she does not meet the end of her life as a villain. Instead, she finds her true love, Fiyero, who is alive (as the scarecrow) and is reunited with him. In the Broadway production, the infamous Wicked Witch of the West, Elphaba, has the opportunity to engage in the protagonist's traditional fairy tale ending. Elphaba, however, gets a happy ending outside of the Wizard of Oz's value system, rather in the system as most protagonists do. Elphaba dies in the perception of that value system, but continues happily outside the scope of it. Her happiness suggests the limited nature of the value system. Oz's dominant value system is finally proven to be limited because Elphaba resists it—she finds a way around its injustice and finds her happy ending. Elphaba is triumphant at the conclusion of the play, allowing audiences to sympathize with her and more completely engage with her as a hero.

Elphaba's return to find her happy ending presents an interesting element—she is coded and named as "Wicked" in the end, yet receives the standard *happily ever after.* This "wicked" could refer to the kind of evil that goes against the dominant value system. In regard to Oz's value system, she is evil, but in being evil this way, she is actually good. This further complication of her character supports the lesson that in reality it is difficult to identify characters as good and evil. Within the constraints of the dominant value system, this type of evil becomes true good, because the "good" she opposes is actually evil. Elphaba's "wicked goodness" is ironic: she is celebrated because she is evil in the evil value system that she is opposing, thus she is good. In this context, wicked means a particular type of good that is willing to oppose an evil value system, even when opposing that system will define you, within that system, as evil. This irony complicates evil within the story because perceptions of evil are flipped around—what is good (according to the dominant system) is evil and what's evil is good. Elphaba becomes a hero because she is not just following set rules, but evaluating those rules and establishing new rules according to her own value system. Her tendency to do this places the principles of the individual against the principles of the established dominant system. Thus, through the juxtaposing of the two value systems, her actions teach that the lines between good and evil are often complicated.

Ultimately, in the musical, though labeled as "wicked," Elphaba gets to be good, presenting a new identity for the Wicked Witch of the West. She refuses to help the Wizard and fights for liberation of the Animals, thus retaining a higher moral ground. Even though she commits wrongdoings near the end of the play, she attempts to find a way to atone for her sins, and ultimately chooses to sacrifice herself to save her friends—she commits the ultimate act for liberation. Elphaba's new identity even leads to discussion of her as a Christ figure, completely

flipping her character from Baum's undeveloped, tremendously wicked witch. As noted in *God's Wrath Against Sin: Echoes in Contemporary Culture*, Elphaba's "punishment was only temporary, and she took it upon herself in order to resolve the main conflicts in Oz. Not only has the moral authority of those who would try to punish Elphaba been completely discredited, Elphaba herself has become a sort of Christ figure" (421). Thus, the further complication of the Wicked Witch as good leads to a completely new coding (or decoding) of Baum's infamous character. This new coding may actually be considered a code in which the author or characters fight code, with the coding being a representative act of the potentially evil system. The resistance to the code ultimately decodes Elphaba within the text, liberating her from the constraints of a traditional villain. Elphaba's decoding may be a reason some scholars have interpreted her character as a Christ figure. Christ himself is a template for breaking code; he opposed the established ideals, becoming a sort of villain. In that act, he was redeemed and redeeming—through his opposition of the establishment, he was ultimately good, just as Elphaba's opposition makes her good.

Furthermore, the Broadway production of *Wicked* not only suggests that Elphaba could have a happy ending, but in doing so, asks the same questions about good and evil that Maguire does. For example, in the opening scene of the play, as the "Ozians" sing of the Wicked Witch's death, one citizen asks Glinda the Good why wickedness happens. She responds, "That's a good question…Are people born wicked, or do they have wickedness thrust upon them? After all, she had a childhood…" (Schwartz Act 1 Scene 1). Therefore, in this retelling, characters continue to discover what evil is and what makes an individual evil.

The three differing accounts of the Land of Oz and the Wicked Witch of the West wrestle with what it means to be wicked. The stories become increasingly more concerned with evil and

what defines an individual as evil. Within all of them, however, the belief that those who oppress are evil and those who liberate are good remains constant. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* even while attempting to avoid moralizing and maintain a light tone, first introduces evil according to the traditional myth of evil as simple, with categories of coding to determine Dorothy as good and the Wicked Witch of the West as evil. Years later, Maguire's *Wicked* introduces another way to understand evil, expanding Baum's narrative to create a system of evil based upon actions rather than categories of codes. In Maguire's retelling, Elphaba is initially perceived as good, but then according to her cruel actions, she is determined to be evil in the end.

Finally, Schwartz and Holzman's Broadway musical *Wicked* complicates traditional ideas of evil even further than Maguire's retelling by avoiding the fixed conclusion of classic fairy tales. The musical attempts to broaden the definition of evil, and allows the Wicked Witch of the West to be perceived as both wicked and decent in the end. This broader definition of evil allows the villain to receive a happy ending, contrary to what the definition of evil in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* would allow. The three accounts suggest that humans continually desire to understand and define evil. The traditional nineteenth-century fairy tales defined evil as a stark contrast from good—as simple as "black and white." Retellings of fairy tales in the twentieth-century and continuing into the twenty-first century resisted the definition of evil as simple and explored evil, attempting to create a new, broader definition that allowed room for human mistakes. The exploration of evil found at the end of the twentieth-century and into the twenty-first century could be attributed to postmodern inquiry. Our society resists accepting something that seems unexamined: extremes of good and evil seem unexamined, thus our society would attempt to reexplore and redefine evil. Nonetheless, the simpler moral systems provided the material for these later retellings to explore and rework.

In *Wicked* the musical, evil is completely reevaluated through the introduction of Elphaba's individual value system. Thus, the audience might want to cheer for the Wicked Witch and hope for her redemption while other characters in the play, such as the "Ozians," are excited about her death. The musical presents a duality to what is perceived as evil. Just as Baum presents the duality to the witches and Maguire offers an unclear division between good and evil in which audiences are not sure whether they know what is good or bad, the Broadway production presents a new element to the fairy tale structure—Elphaba's happy ending. *Wicked* the musical allows the audience to see how characters might perceive the witch as wicked, but then invites us to recognize her as decent—maybe even good—and cheer for her when she is reunited with her love, Fiyero. Her happy ending suggests that Elphaba disestablishes the Wizard's illusions of good to present a truer good.

This is similar to the way Dorothy is anti-establishment in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy uncovers the illusions of the Wizard, but her actions are presented in a lighter tone. Her anti-establishment behavior differs from Elphaba's in *Wicked*, both the novel and the musical, because Dorothy's behavior does not really change the view of the established system—although the Wizard deceived the land, his system continues to be good. Dorothy's role in the narrative supports Baum's decision to avoid morality. Dorothy's role suggests that Baum may not have been interested in exploring morality beyond the simple definitions that kept the plot going. In the two versions of *Wicked,* the Wicked Witch of the West complicates evil by allowing her to present a truer good. In the musical, her success in presenting her value system as good further complicates evil by allowing her to receive a happy ending.

This ending suggests that retellings will further progress to allow traditionally evil characters to redeem themselves, and will continue breaking categorizations of characters.

Although villains have been coded as wholly evil, our postmodern society resists the idea of a character that has no redeeming qualities, and attempts to recast them. The retellings create more realistic characters with believable and relatable struggles and dreams. Realism is important in these retellings because, as mentioned earlier, postmodern inquiry resists accepting ideas that seem unexamined. Realistically, characters would be multi-dimensional, with complicated motives. Through examining evil and traditionally evil characters in the fairy tales, new characters are created that are more believable, thus more relatable. These reinvented characters no longer adhere to the system of extreme good and evil that seemed shallow and unexamined.

Those systems of evil that seem shallow and unexamined were visible in traditional fairy tales. It seems that all the tellings of the Land of Oz wished to rewrite that system. Baum wanted to avoid that system of evil by avoiding morality. However, his narrative does present the clear-cut morals of traditional fairy tales—good is better than evil. His presentations of morality maintain simplistic categorization, but present morality in a lighter tone in an attempt to remove obvious moral instruction. Baum's decision to avoid the shallow system of evil may have created the confusing ambiguity within *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. His simplistic coding of characters, such as the Wicked Witch of the West as evil and American-girl Dorothy as good, does present a system that seems shallow and unexamined. Although he tried to avoid this system, he could not totally avoid the traditional clear-cut morals.

Maguire responds to the ambiguity in Baum's narrative by also trying to avoid a system of evil that seemed shallow. Baum's disinclination to present morals may have compelled Maguire to completely moralize his systems of evil in *Wicked*. In an attempt to present a system of evil that is not shallow, Maguire complicates evil, making the Wicked Witch of the West a good character, who dies as evil under the influence of a dominant system. Her death further

supports Maguire's deep system of evil because it allows for the interpretation of Elphaba as a Christ figure. Within Maguire's narrative, Elphaba had to die as an anti-establishment figure, just as Christ does. During her death in Maguire's novel, however, she is not freed from the Wizard's system, thus is not a redeeming figure. The Broadway production of *Wicked* presents a system of evil that is not shallow, just as Maguire does. The complication of evil in the production goes further than Maguire's complication, allowing the Wicked Witch of the West to receive a happy ending and live as a redeeming Christ-like character.

Society's desire to understand and redefine the concept of evil will likely continue to influence and change the fairy tale structure. Newer fairy tales may create a middle ground in which everyone, even villains, get a happy ending. The progression, however, could be cyclical. The fairy stories change because reader response changes. Will readers eventually tire of the gray middle ground presented in modern fairy tale retellings and begin to write newer retellings the revert back to the "black and white" definitions presented in traditional fairy tales? We should remember that twentieth and twenty-first century retellings are retellings and thus require something to retell: their subversion is powerful because it contrasts with the earlier story, so the retellings are most strikingly able to complicate stories that are simplistic. For now, it seems that as society progresses, it will continue to subvert and reinvent the traditional perceptions. Fairy tales will likely progress with society, eventually creating a new code and structure for fairy tales to follow—one that might conclude with all characters living happily ever after, even the wicked witches.

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